SERMONS ON JEREMIAH THROUGH DANIEL

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THE LESSON OF THE ALMOND TREE  
NO. 2678

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, You have seen well: for I am ready to perform My word.”  
Jeremiah 1:11, 12.**

OBSERVE, first, dear Friends, that before Jeremiah becomes a speaker for God, he must be a seer. The name for a Prophet, in the olden time, was a “seer”—a man who could see—one who could see with his mind’s eye, one who could also see with spiritual insight, so as vividly to realize the Truth of God which he had to deliver in the name of the Lord. Learn that simple lesson well, O you who try to speak for God! You must be seers before you can be speakers.

The question with which God usually begins His conversation with each of His true servants is the one He addressed to Jeremiah, “What do you see?” I am afraid that there are some ministers, nowadays, who do not see much. Judging by what they preach, their vision must be all in cloudland, where all they see is smoke, mist and fog. I often meet with persons who have attended the same ministry for years—and when I have asked them even very simple questions about the things of God, I have found that they do not know anything. It was not because they were not able to comprehend quickly when the Truth was set forth plainly before them, but I fear that it was, in most cases, because there was nothing that they could learn from the minister to whom they had been accustomed to listen. The preacher had seen nothing and, therefore, when he described what he saw, of course it all amounted to nothing. No, my Brother, before you can make an impression upon another person’s heart, you must have an impression made upon your own soul. You must be able to say, concerning the Truth of God, “I see it,” before you can speak it so that your hearers shall also see it. It must be clear to your own mind, by the spiritual perception which accompanies true faith, or else you will not be able to say with the Psalmist, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” Let me say again that sentence which I uttered a minute ago—the speaker for God must first be a seer in the Light of God.

And, next, the true speaker for God must see what God sets before him. In this case, the Lord had set before Jeremiah’s eye “a branch of an almond tree.” We might have thought that as a preparation for his prophetical work, he would have seen mysterious wheels full of eyes, or flaming seraphs and cherubs, or the wonderful creatures that were caused to appear in the dreams of Ezekiel and the Revelation to John. Instead of this, Jeremiah simply sees “a branch of an almond tree” and, beloved Friends, when you look into the Bible, you will see some very simple things there—such things as save little children’s souls—such things as men with no education can understand and believe! Be not anxious to be numbered among those who are so “eclectic” and “cultured” that if God sets before them the branch of an almond tree, they cannot condescend to notice it.

That is something which everybody can see, so why should such remarkable eyes as theirs behold the plain things which ordinary individuals can perceive? They want to see—I scarcely know what they want to see, except their own foolish dreams—and even those are hidden from them. God give us Grace to see branches of almond trees when He sets them before us—I mean may He give us Grace to see such simple Truths as these—“You must be born again.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” What do your see, my Friend? Do you see what God would have you see, what He has put before you in His Word? If so, I may say to you what the Lord said to Jeremiah, “You have seen well.” But if not, however gorgeous the panorama or pageant which you have invented for yourself to behold, you might as well be blind, for you will only be following some will-o’-the-wisp that may amuse for a while, but will ultimately destroy the souls of men!

Further, those who would speak aright for God must also take care to see with all their eyes. I do not suppose that everybody here who had seen the vision of a branch, would have known it to be “a branch of an almond tree.” I do not imagine that I would, though I think I could, after close examination, identify a branch if it were from an olive tree, or orange tree, having become familiar with them during my visits to the South of France. But I do not know that I would, in a moment, be able to say of a certain branch, “That is the branch of an almond tree.” But Jeremiah understood these things and, therefore, as soon as he saw what was set before him, he did not merely say, “I see a branch,” but, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” He distinguished at once the kind of branch that was revealed to him in vision, for he was a man who had those powers of discernment and discrimination which are most necessary in the Lord’s servants. And if you, dear Friend, are called to teach the children in the Sunday school, or if you try to win souls by private conversation, or if you are a preacher of the Word, blessed are you if you can see below the surface of the Truth of God and can peer into its hidden depths of meaning and get a spiritual insight into the Word of God so that you do not merely see a small portion of the Scriptures, but you perceive a far larger part than most people do! You should, if you can, see it all.

I think that many years of spiritual education and Divine training would be required for you to attain to that position—at any rate, to see all that is necessary for the due discharge of your ministry, all that may help you to know the meaning of the Truth and to bring it out for real, practical use among those to whom you seek to be made a blessing. O seer, ask to have clear eyes! Speaker, remember that your speaking must begin with your eyes and—though it may seem a strange thing to say— the first education for the true servant of God does not concern his tongue so much as his eyes! “What do you see?” Seek to be able to see all that you can see! And take care that you do not miss anything through inadvertence or neglect. “Search the Scriptures.” Be you one of those who gazes into the Truth, as the angels desire to look into it, so that when you see the vision, you shall be able to say, with Jeremiah, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

Next, the servant of the Lord must seek to win the approval of his Master as Jeremiah did. It will be a grand thing for you, dear Brothers and Sisters who try to speak to others, if you would receive such praise as God so freely gave to Jeremiah, at the very first moment of his ministry, when He said to him, “You have seen well.” You shall speak well if you have seen well. O my dear young Brothers in the College, you who are here tonight, I hope that it will be true of you, whenever you think of the Doctrine of Human Depravity, that you have looked into your own hearts and seen the evil of your own nature till you have wept over it! So shall it be said to each one of you, “You have seen that well.” I hope that you will so clearly see the truth of the Fall that you will recognize the evil that comes of it and the evil that abides in the corrupt nature of man.

And then may you get such a sight of the Cross—such a clear view of the atoning blood and understand so fully the great Doctrine of Substitution and the Divine plan of reconciliation, that God may be able to say to you, “You have seen well.” A lack of distinctness in our understanding of the Truth of God will lead to a lack of distinctness in our utterance of it. Oh, to have eyes like those of the Heavenly Bridegroom, of whom His spouse said, “His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set,” for, in His turn, He says to His bride, “Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves’ eyes.” The ministers of the Church of Christ, who have, to a great extent, to be her seers, need to have clear, far-seeing, and pure-seeing eyes! May God grant us the power to distinctly trace His wondrous Grace from the eternal Fountain of electing love, along the streams of never-ceasing mercy which bring final perseverance to the saints, right onward to the coming of our Lord and the blessed rising of all His Church to be with Him in His Glory forever and ever! Before you venture to tell anything of the Gospel message to others, you need to hear the Lord say to you, as He said to Jeremiah, “You have seen well.”

For this purpose it will be necessary that your eyes should be enlightened. What an appropriate prayer is that for you Sunday school teachers and Christian ministers to offer, “Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law”! I think that if I had, as a preacher, to make only one request to my Master, and He asked me, “What will you that I should do unto you?”—I should reply, “Lord, that I may receive my sight more fully than ever, and see Your Truth more clearly than ever,” because there is no fear about our speaking for God if our seeing is what it should be. That is the main matter and, therefore, the Lord asks each one of us, “What do you see?” If our answer proves that we have seen well, it is because the Spirit of God has enlightened us and, enlightenment from God having been once received, we shall proclaim to others right gladly what God has revealed to us.

Yet once more, those who see what they can see and take care to see it well, are the people who shall receive further instruction, for it was when Jeremiah said, “I see a branch of an almond tree,” that the Lord went on to explain the vision to him, saying, “You have seen well: for I will hasten My word to perform it.” Those who do not see what they can see shall not be allowed to see any more. If you will not use, in diligently studying the Scriptures, the judgment and perception which you already have, God will not give you further light since you neglect the gift that is in you. He will leave your fire to burn low because you do not stir it up—and it shall get to be more dim than it is now, for he who will not learn more when God is willing to teach him shall forget what he already knows. I charge you, who are called to teach others in any way whatever, to submit yourselves fully to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. A disciple is the only person who can become an Apostle. A scholar in the school of Christ is the only one who can be sent out to tell others what his Master wishes to have made known to the sons of men.

I have spoken thus with the view of helping those who are working for Christ. But now I must try to explain the vision mentioned in our text. “Jeremiah, what do you see? I see a branch of an almond tree.”

I. Observe, first, that THE ALMOND IS A WAKEFUL TREE. The Hebrew word which is rendered, “almond,” comes from a root signifying to be wakeful, so this passage might be read thus, “I see the wakeful branch. Then said the Lord unto me, You have seen well: for I will be wakeful concerning My word to perform it.”

When the other trees are asleep, before the warmth of the springtime has awakened them from their winter slumbers, the almond tree awakes and opens the lovely eyes of its abundant blossoms. In Jeremiah’s country it begins to bloom in early January and it is in such haste to produce its fruit that it is often ripe before the end of March. You know how, even in our suburban gardens, one of the first signs of the approach of spring is that the almond tree begins to blossom. The East wind often keeps it back, yet it struggles to its utmost to come out while other trees are asleep. Even before the chestnut, which is generally up as early as almost any of our trees, has been able to cast off the blankets in which it slept during the winter, the almond tree has opened its eyes and looked out as if it were asking whether springtime is not coming. The almond is a wakeful tree, and so says the Lord, “I will be wakeful concerning My word to perform it.”

Note, first, that God never forgets a promise. Alas, you and I do not remember all our promises! How often are they made only to be broken! But God never forgets one that He has given. We even forget God’s promises and, often, when we are in trouble, we can hardly recollect one that we can plead before Him. But God never yet forgot a promise—all these centuries in which He has been dealing with men, He has never yet failed to keep His word. “Has He said, and shall He not do it?”

What is equally wonderful, God has never forgotten a single person to whom a promise belonged—not even the least. Even if they have only desired to seek Him, or if they have only commenced to seek Him, He has been gracious to them—He has heard their cry and has delivered them. This is a big world and there are many millions of people in it, yet not one of them has ever been able to say that God has failed to keep one of His promises. More than that, in the whole universe, throughout all the ages, there has never been a forgotten soul! He who counts the brilliant stars, counts such dim things as our understanding—and He who numbers the very hairs of our head never fails to reckon the cries of our hearts.

Further, there has never been a single occasion of a promise which God has allowed to slip. When the promise has become due, He has discharged it to the tick of the clock! There are no dishonored bills recorded against God in the archives of men or of angels! No one can look up to the heavens and say to Him, “You have deceived me and I was deceived.” But we can say, “Faithful and true are You, O Jehovah; this is part of Your Son’s title, for He is the faithful and true Witness, and You are the faithful Promiser who always performs what He has promised.” “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness.”

Let me also add that there is not a threat in God’s Word which has not been fulfilled, or which will not yet be executed. He has been a wakeful God in that respect. When men have persisted in their iniquity, He has not allowed them to escape the just punishment of their evil deeds. Happily for us, we cannot hear the sighs and cries of the spirits shut up in Hell, but they are there. In His mercy God has made a great gulf between us and those who are tormented in that flame—but they are there, though we cannot see or hear them. As surely as God lives, their iniquity and transgression are already receiving their just recompense of reward—and there is a worse doom to follow. As God watches over His people to do them good, so does He watch over the transgressor who is finally impenitent—and makes him to know the terrors of His wrath. That is the black side of this Truth of God and it must not be ignored. You may rest assured that a judge who does not punish the guilty is as unjust as the one who does not acquit the innocent. There must be with every king who is worthy of the name, an execution of the sentence of the law upon evildoers, as well as the award of praise for them that do well. Paul says, concerning the earthly representative of authority, “He bears not the sword in vain.” And that sentence is certainly true concerning the King of Kings. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Look, then, dear Friends, at this branch of an almond tree and believe in a wakeful God who will surely deal with men according to His Word, whether in promise or in threat.

II. But the more obvious sense of the text is that which I give under the second head. THE ALMOND IS IN HASTE TO BLOSSOM AND BEAR FRUIT. Hence our translators have rendered the passage, “I will hasten My word to perform it.” The almond tree is not slow to bloom—it is one of the very first trees to tell us that springtime is near. And the Lord is quick to fulfill His Word.

Very briefly, let me remind you of the quickness of God to fulfill His threats. Do you realize, dear Hearers, you who are now hearing the Gospel, but have not received it, that God’s threats take effect at once? “No,” you say, “‘He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.’” That is most true, yet there is a sense in which His sentence takes effect at once. For instance, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” If you have heard the Gospel—and some of you have heard it many, many years—and yet have not heeded it, you will not be condemned for the first time at the Last Great Day, you are condemned even now! Some people say to us, “Why do you ministers, in your preaching, so constantly deal with another life, instead of dealing with this one?” Our answer is that we do deal with this life—we deal with it continually, for we believe that both sides of that text are true at this very minute, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.” Even now, at this moment, while you are in this building, if you are not a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the wrath of God is abiding on you!

Listen again. There is another immediate effect of the Word of the Lord which follows as quickly as the blossom appears upon the almond tree. Upon some hearers, it produces an instant hardening. You remember how Paul wrote, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life”? You, dear Friends, are deriving, from every Gospel sermon that you hear, either life unto life, or else death unto death. If you get no good from it, you will assuredly get harm. An unbelieving hearing of the Gospel is a multiplication of curses to your soul—another sermon for which you have to give account, another rejected exhortation recorded against you, another earnest invitation which you have refused—and for which you will be held responsible. You are heaping up to yourselves wrath against the Day of Wrath even while you hear the Word of the Lord. I am not now talking about what will happen to you when you die, or when you rise for the final judgment—I am speaking about what is happening NOW! The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins. Take heed that you do not soon see the almond tree blossom in this terrible sense.

There is also another sense in which a definite result is speedily coming, for you must soon die unless Christ comes shortly. In any case, it cannot be long before some here will be gone. We who have reached middle life must not reckon on continuing to live for many years—and others are already bald with age, or their hair is gray—so they must soon die. Suppose, however, that you young people should live to be ninety—yet how soon that period will be ended! Years seem to spin round, especially as we grow older. I thought, when I was a boy, that a year was a very long time. But, now, one scarcely seems to have time to kiss his hand before it is Christmas again! People say, “Christmas is coming,” as if it were a long way off, but the next one is coming as soon as the last one has gone! Time flies very rapidly as years advance upon us—it even appears to quicken its pace, though it does not really go any faster than it used to do. It will be but a short while and you, my dear Hearer, if you die without Christ, will find that God is not slack concerning His threat—that though He seems to tarry in long-suffering, yet He comes in due season after all. And when He comes—ah, when the last trumpet rings out and the Great White Throne is set and the angels gather in solemn pomp to the tremendous judgment of the grand assize—you will find that the time which seemed long enough, proved all too short, while the eternity, which you despised, you will dread with such despair as we cannot even now imagine!

Forever, forever, forever, forever lost! I see “a branch of an almond tree” for some of you, for it may be that I am addressing some who will never enter any place of worship again. I may be speaking to some out of these many hundreds who will not be alive this day next week. Out of our great congregation, there never is a gathering of the same people twice in this place week by week. Even among our membership, there are now, on the average, two a week who are taken Home, and I know not how many more out of the congregation. Who will be next? I see, for that next one, “a branch of an almond tree,” for God will hasten His Word to perform it.

While I have felt compelled to speak of these solemn Truths, I am glad to turn to the other part of the subject which is this—that God is quick in performing His promises. They are like the almond tree—they blossom and bear fruit very quickly. “What sort of promises,” you ask, “are thus speedily fulfilled?”

Well, first, the promise to give salvation to all these who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen—  
*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full thro’ His blood.”*

I see “a branch of an almond tree” here. The Psalmist says, “His word runs very swiftly,” and I am a witness that it does. Many years ago, I, a poor sinner, went into a place of worship to hear the Gospel preached. The preacher repeated the Lord’s command, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” I looked to Christ and I was saved that very instant. It takes no longer to tell the story than it did to work the miracle of mercy. Swift as a lightning flash I looked to Christ, and the great deed was done! I was a pardoned and justified soul—in a word, I was saved! Why should not the same thing happen to you who are here? It will happen to everyone who shall now be led to believe in Jesus Christ.

“Oh, but,” says one, “there are often long delays before peace is enjoyed.” Then it is because you make them, for God does not. “But sometimes we have to wait,” says one. Yes, yes. I know all about that waiting. Do you remember, in the parable of the prodigal son, where he waited? Why, with the harlots and others with whom he wasted his substance in riotous living, or with the swine when he was feeding them with the husks with which he would gladly have filled his own empty belly! That is where he waited! But when did he end his waiting? When he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” He did not wait any longer, for we read, “And he arose and came to his father.” And then it is written, “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and”—“and”—“and”—“and stood still, and waited for him to come”? No, no! I know that God waits to be gracious, but, according to the teaching of that parable, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran.”

Do you know how fast God can run? Come, now, there is a task for you! We know, sometimes, how fast fleet runners can go. What a rate they go! As we hear about them, we seem to realize the force of David’s description of Saul and Jonathan, “They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.” But again I ask, can you tell me how fast God can run? No, you do not know, you cannot tell. But you do know that He is all on fire with love to embrace a poor penitent sinner—and He speeds towards him at an amazing rate! Remember that hymn with which we commenced this service—

*“On cherub and on cherubim,  
Full royally He rode,*

***And on the wings of mighty winds,  
Came flying all abroad.  
‘And so delivered He my soul.”***

Swift as the lightning’s flash is the glance of Divine compassion that brings life to a penitent soul! Believe, then, in Jesus and “the great transaction’s done!” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Why, Sir, he only believed a minute ago! Has he already received eternal life?” Yes, he has everlasting life just as surely as if he had been believing in Jesus for 50 years! If you do but believe, this blessing is at once yours! “I see a branch of an almond tree.” Oh, that you also may see it blossom before your very eyes, although, when you came into this House of Prayer, it seemed as bare as the rest of the trees that have been nipped by the wintry winds!

This part of our subject is just as true about prayer. The man who knows how to pray remembers God’s promises concerning prayer and its answer. Think of that remarkable passage in Isaiah 65:24—“It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” That is quicker than the telegraph! “Before they call, I will answer.” God knows what petition is in your heart! He foresees what will be the utterance of your tongue and He has the answers all ready for them. I have found many of my prayers answered years before I prayed them. “No,” you say, “that could not be.” Well, there was one of them that was answered more than 1,800 years before I prayed it. That was when I cried to God for a Savior and He gave me One all those centuries before I was born, even the Savior who worked out for me a complete salvation on Calvary’s accursed tree! O you praying souls, “I see a branch of an almond tree!” When men begin to pray in faith, they are speedily heard!

So is it when God’s people want to have their spiritual life revived. When we get into a dull doleful state, as we sometimes do, if we cry to God, He is able to quickly revive our drooping spirits. You remember that verse in the Song of Solomon, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib”?—Which were, I suppose, noted for their swiftness—“I was dull, motionless, lifeless; but before I could tell where I was, I found myself almost flying along like the chariots of Amminadib.” So may it be with you, dear Friend! Though you are like Laodicea, neither cold nor hot, yet remember what the Lord said to the angel of that Church. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Renewed communion with Christ may be enjoyed at once, even by you who have fallen into a lukewarm state!

Our subject also applies to deliverance from trouble. “The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.” God may not take away your trouble, but yet, in a moment, He may give you Grace to bear it and turn the trouble, itself, into a source of joy. “I see a branch of an almond tree” full often. In times of deep depression, God can lift up the heart very speedily.

So can He bless His Word. As neither snow nor rain returns to Him void, so is it with His Word—it shall prosper in the thing to where He sent it, and it shall prosper at once. O you who want to win souls, go about your work very boldly, believing that God will bless you! “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” said Christ. When Peter preached, the Apostles and disciples did not wait for several years to find out the result of his sermon—though I daresay there were further results after a long time—but they picked up 3,000 birds which had been brought down by that one discharge of the great Gospel gun! Oh, that you and I would so work for God as to expect immediate results—and go and look for them! “I see a branch of an almond tree.” I believe that there are some here who will, tonight, lay hold on Christ. It was a great joy to me to have a Sister come in, just before service, to tell me that, years ago, she found the Lord when I was preaching at the Agricultural Hall. She said, “That will comfort you.” I said, “Yes, it does. It shows me that I was useful once, but,” I added, “I want to be useful now. I want to see souls brought to Christ now.” And so they will be! Let us believe it and see this branch of an almond tree blossom tonight!

III. Now, to close, I can only briefly remind you that THE ALMOND TREE SETS AN EXAMPLE TO ALL WHO WOULD BE LIKE GOD. He hastens His Word to perform it. Oh, that you and I would be in haste to perform our word!

Is there one here who wishes to seek the Lord? “Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near.” There will be a friend or two, on the lower platform, after the service, to talk with any of you who wish to say anything to them about your own souls and to hear from them some good words about the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not go away, even from this service, till you have sought and found the Savior! Seek Him now, you young people! Recollect that precious promise, “Those that seek Me early shall find Me.” Others shall find the Lord if they seek Him, but, certainly, the young shall do so even if others do not. Be up early, then, while yet you are in your teens, before you get to be a young man or woman—seek the Lord now, for you shall surely find Him if you search for Him with all your heart. God help you to do it!

Then, you who have found Him, be prompt in obeying Him. Do you know what David said? “I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments.” If you have found the Savior by faith, be baptized according to His command and His example. Unite yourself with His people and begin at once to serve Him.

And then, you who have been serving the Savior, if you have any good desire in your heart to do anything for Christ, do it. You may be dead tomorrow morning, therefore I would advise you to do something for Christ tonight. Are you going to leave something in your will for the Master’s cause? Be your own executor if you can—and whatever you think of doing, do it speedily. Do not leave anything till tomorrow that can be done today. “I see a branch of an almond tree.” There are some men who must act now, or they never will do anything, for it is pretty nearly the end of the day with them. Up, Brother, up! “I see a branch of an almond tree.” Do what you can tonight. Speak to your children about Christ tonight. Wake them up if they are in bed. Speak to that friend to whom you have often intended to speak. I know of one who resolved to speak to a man who used to come to his counter twice a week to buy some goods. He thought, “The next time he comes in, I will speak to him about his soul.” He never came again! On the morning when he should have come, there came a messenger to say that he was dead. Therefore, take advantage of every opportunity while it lasts. “In the morning sow your seed,” but do not wait for the morning! “In the evening withhold not your hand” and, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

And, lastly, be ready for your immediate departure. Be prepared to go Home to Heaven tonight. Come, now, are all things ready for your journey? If not, pack up all the luggage, label it, and have everything ready for the start at any moment. Blessed is that man who is ready to blossom in Heaven any instant. “Oh,” says one, “I should not like to die tonight. I believe that I am a Christian and that I am saved, but I do not feel ready to go.” Set your house in order, then, for your house cannot be right if it is not in order! If your house is in order, why, then you are ready to die! There is no right living except living as you would wish to live if you knew that this was to be your last day. The right way to spend the next hour is so to spend it as if it were your last hour. The Lord bring us into that happy condition that it shall not matter to us one single farthing whether we live or whether we die—and may He keep us in that blessed state, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 18:1-19.**

Verse 1. I will love You, O Lord, my strength. “I do love You, and I will love You yet more and more. I bind myself to You for the future as well as the present.”

2. The LORD is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. Note how David delights to heap up poetic imagery to describe his God. They who glory in the Lord would gladly speak worthily of Him and because there is no one object in Nature that can fully set Him forth, they mention many, as David does here. Like he, if we would convey even a faint idea of what God is to us, we must think of all things that are strong and worthy of our confidence—and putting them all together, we must say that our God, our strength, in whom we trust, is all this and much more,

3. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies. Prayer brings salvation. Prayer must, however, be mingled with praise, for prayer and praise make up the breath of the Christian life. Have I not often reminded you that we breathe in the air of Heaven by prayer, and then breathe it out again in grateful praise?

4, 5. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. “They were before me, behind me, all around my path whichever way I turned.”

6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. What a difference there is between this living God of David—our living God—and that impersonal nonentity which, nowadays, is regarded by many as God. The god of the pantheist—what is he? A nobody and a nothing! But our God made the heaven; and our God hears the prayer of all who truly cry unto Him.

7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry. The cry of one of His oppressed children stirred Him to anger! Nothing moves the heart of God like an injury done to His people. You remember how the Prophet Zechariah wrote to the captive Jews in Babylon, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, He that touches you touches the apple of His eye.”

8, 9 *.*There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under His feet. In this wonderful poetic description, Jehovah is represented as descending from His Throne at the cry of one of His children in distress.

10. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. So swift is prayer to reach the ears of God, and so swift is God to come and answer His people’s prayers!

11. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilions round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. Like an Oriental king who travels beneath his royal canopy, the Lord is pictured as coming to earth with the bursting clouds and opening heavens as the pavilion of the Deity.

12. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. These are some of the weapons with which He assails the adversaries of His people. With this dread artillery, He smote Pharaoh of old when He rained hail upon the land of Egypt, and fire mingled with the hail, and the fire ran along the ground.

13, 14. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them. God Himself came forth on His people’s behalf, and fought for them from Heaven. As we read that “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,” so did God make the very tempests in the skies to be like an invincible legion, sweeping before it the enemies of His anointed servant.

15-18. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity. They went before him, they blocked his way.

18, 19. But the LORD was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me because He delighted in me. Oh, how sweetly this record continues! Never was there a poem more lofty in its diction. Even Milton cannot equal the language of this Psalm! This Inspired writing rises superior to all human compositions, even if regarded only from the poetic point of view. Oh, what must have been the Psalmist’s experience when he was delivered after this wonderful fashion! And if God has delivered you and me in a quieter and gentler way, yet He has quite as surely delivered us! And blessed be His name from this time forth, and even forevermore!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—18 (Version 1), 900, 196.  
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“YOUR FIRST LOVE”  
NO. 2399

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 20, 1887.

**“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD, ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.’”  
Jeremiah 2:2.**

THIS was the Word of Jehovah to His ancient people. He remembered the faithfulness and earnestness of Israel when the nation was first born and came out of Egypt under Moses—and went after God into “the waste howling wilderness.” Alas, in later years, they would not obey, or trust, or rejoice in God! He therefore tells the Prophet Jeremiah to say to them that He remembers their better days—they seemed to have forgotten, “but,” says the Lord—“I have not forgotten. ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.’”

I. Using the text practically for our own profit, I make this first observation, that GOD REMEMBERS WITH GRACE THE BEST THINGS OF HIS PEOPLE’S EARLY DAYS.

Some of us were converted to God when we were very young and we look back with pleasure upon our early days. But, whether we look back upon them with pleasure or not, God does, and He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.” Why does God remember and prize so highly the early piety of His people, their first faith, their first love, their first zeal?

I think that it is, first, because all these were His own work. If there was anything good in us, in the early days after our conversion, the Lord worked it all! Remember Paul’s questions to the Corinthians—“Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?” If there was in you any light, or life, or love, it was the gift of the Spirit of God. If there was any repentance, if there was any faith, it was the work of the Holy Spirit! A man remembers his own work and God, the Holy Spirit, never forgets any of His work upon the spirits of men whom He forms anew.

God also remembers with pleasure those best things in His people’s early days because they gave Him great delight at the time. It seems a strange thing to say, but it is strangely, yet blessedly true, that it gave God great pleasure to see us repent. Those first tears which we tried to secretly brush away were so precious to the Lord that He stored them away in His bottle! That first faith of ours, though it was but the feeble tottering of a babe in Grace, was very lovely in God’s sight. You know how mothers love to recollect the first words their children began to speak and the broken notes and strange tones in which they lisped their first childish sentences? Well, even so does God remember His children’s early utterances which gave Him such pleasure when He first heard them. Let not any of you imagine that God is indifferent to your first prayers, your first praises, your first reformations and purging away of sin! No, He takes infinite delight in them all, for, “like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Therefore, you can be sure that the things which gave Him such joy in your early Christian experience have not faded from His gracious memory!

It is very sweet, however, to reflect that when God says that He remembers the love of our espousals, and the kindness of our youth, He does not mention the faults connected with our early days. Our gracious God has a very generous memory—we have often noticed this in the Scriptures. When the Lord and His angels came to Abraham’s tent in the plains of Mamre, to give the Patriarch the promise that a son and heir should be born to him, Sarah turned eavesdropper behind the tent doors. It was bad manners on her part and when she had overheard what the Lord said, she disbelieved Him and laughed within herself. This was worse manners, still, on her part, to laugh at the Divine Prophecy, and when she was brought to book for it, she denied that she had laughed, which was still worse! When she laughed within herself, she said, “After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?” And the Holy Spirit, writing in the New Testament about her, does not say anything concerning her lie, or her unbelief, but He mentions the only good thing about her speech, which was that she called her husband, “lord”—“For after this manner in the old time the holy women, also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling Him lord.”

Oh, the gracious goodness that spies out the diamond on the dunghill! There was but one bright star in all that murky sky, yet the Spirit of God saw it and moved Peter to write concerning it! That which was to Sarah’s credit is recorded, while that which was to her discredit is blotted out. “You have heard of the patience of Job,” have you not? The Holy Spirit is very careful to remind us, in the New Testament, of the patience of Job, but He does not say anything about Job’s impatience! Yet the Patriarch cursed the day of his birth in a very bitter and wicked fashion and this might have been remembered to his shame, but it was not. Ah, our blessed Lord, when He forgives our sin, forgets it, too! But He remembers all the excellencies and all the Graces which His Spirit works in the hearts and lives of His people.

Besides this, the Lord so remembers the best things of our early days that He recounts them. In looking back upon my first days with God, I can see much to deplore, much in which, as a young man, I fell very short of what I ought to have been. But God says to me, and to each one of you who are His children, “I remember you; and I do not remember your shortcomings, your blunders, your headstrong hastiness, your faultiness; but, ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of these espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.’” To my mind, it is very sweet that the Lord should so recollect all that was good in His people, in the days gone by, that He recounted it, and recorded it in His Word.

Now, to show how strong is the Lord’s memory of all that was good in His people at their beginnings, He gives a detailed account of it. He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth.” Let us try whether we can remember how we showed our kindness to our God in our early days. We resolved, when first we knew the Lord, that we would live wholly to His praise and we tried to begin, almost as soon as we were converted, to do a little something for our Master. We did all that we could do with the little strength that we then had. It was not much that we could do, but, in looking back upon it, we remember that it seemed a great deal to us, then. We prayed very earnestly over it. We went to our work with much trembling—we were very diffident in ourselves, but we had a firm confidence in the Gospel—and we had a sweet hope in God that even we might do something for His praise!

Now, perhaps, we go to our Sunday school class and forget to pray! We sit down, open the book and feel quite competent to teach. Possibly now we go into the pulpit and begin to preach. It is quite a matter of course with us—we have delivered so many sermons that we feel quite easy about our power to instruct the people—but it was not so at first. I can remember how my knees knocked together when I first preached the Gospel, for fear that I should not preach it all, and should not deliver my soul so as to be clear of the blood of all men! What sighs my sermons cost me—and what tears! And, surely, God remembers all this, for He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth. You were but a youth, but then your heart was all aglow with sacred fervor, your spirit was firmly confiding in your God, your zeal was burning for My Glory.”

Then the Lord adds, “I remember you... the love of your espousals.” Oh, some of us did love God very fervently in our early days! I can recollect the day of my Baptism very well. At this moment it comes back to my memory—I cannot help remembering it because the text suggests that we should, each one, think of our first days with God. It was a summer’s morning, the 3rd of May, 1850, and quite early, at the very rising of the sun, I was up, that I might have a quiet hour or two of prayer to God, as thus commenced my public life as a Christian avowing my faith in my Lord Jesus. Then there came a long walk of some eight miles or so to get to the place of Baptism at Isleham Ferry. As I walked along the country road, that week-day morning, with the birds all about me singing, oh, I did feel that I loved my Lord! My soul seemed to dance within me for very joy!

My friends were not believers in Baptism as it is taught in the Word of God and, therefore, I was about to do a strange thing, for none of my family had thus confessed Christ publicly by being immersed in the name of the Sacred Trinity! I remember standing by the river’s bank with a great crowd of people all around in barges and boats, looking on. And when I had walked some considerable distance into the stream to be immersed, and when I rose from the liquid grave, I remember how I felt that, if all the angels in Heaven and all the devils in Hell were gathered there, it mattered not one jot to me! I was Christ’s and I had given myself up to be buried with Him, to rise with Him and to live and labor for Him as long as the Lord should spare me! That day my love to my God was bright, and warm, and burning—and that evening, at the little prayer meeting in the vestry, I, who had been the most timid lad, perhaps, in all the world, and never opened my mouth for my Master in public, before, ventured to praise and bless God vocally in the midst of His people and, blessed be His holy name, I have never left off doing so from that day to this!

Many of you might tell a story of your early days which would be much more remarkable than mine. But whether there is anything in them to interest others, or not, God says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Those were good days, blessed days, days of Heaven upon

the earth!— *“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!”*  
And they also seemed to be as sweet to God as they were to us! You observe that the Lord speaks in our text of Israel’s going after Him  
in the wilderness—“I remember you...when you went after Me in the wilderness.” That was a grand Exodus when all the hosts of Israel that were  
in Egypt, without exception, took away all that they had and marched  
out into the desert! It was nothing but a wilderness; yet, when Moses  
bade them quit the flesh pots of Egypt, they all did so—“and the children  
of Israel went up harnessed (or, as the margin has it, “by five in a rank”)  
out of the land of Egypt.” Doubling up their unleavened dough and carrying their kneading-troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders, they  
went right away into the wilderness of the Red Sea, “in a land that was  
not sown,” where they could never reap a harvest, and where it was only  
natural to fear that they might die of famine. It was bravely done of Israel, thus, to face the howling wilderness as Jehovah led the way in the  
cloudy-fiery pillar!  
Perhaps I speak to some of you who, when you became Christians,  
had to give up your employment, or to quit some evil trade. Perhaps you  
had to run the gauntlet of a workshop where everybody pointed the finger at you and laughed you to scorn. Some of you had hard times in  
those days, yet I will not call them hard, for you never had, in all your  
life, such joy as you had then! When everybody gave you an ill word, then  
Christ was most precious to you and your love to Him burned with a  
steady flame! I think that the happiest days the Church of Christ has  
ever had, have been her days of persecution! What joy the Methodists  
had when everybody mobbed them! What bliss the Covenanters experienced when the dragoons of Claverhouse hunted them like partridges  
upon the mountains! God gives an extraordinary measure of joy to His people when, in their first days, they, for His sake, can endure anything and everything that they may glorify His holy name!  
Now, whatever you may have suffered in the days gone by, the Lord says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” God has a very lively recollection of the simple trust of His people when they began their Christian career, of their child-like confidence in Him, of their intensely earnest prayers, of their delight in His worship and of their readiness for His service! It is a thousand pities that this bright experience should ever fade, but whether it fades or not, God says, “I remember it.”  
II. So now, secondly, I want to show you that GOD REMEMBERS, WITH A GRACIOUS PURPOSE, THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS.  
He remembers them that He may make use of and honor us in our later days. There is many a man, now honored and beloved in the service of God, who would not have been where he is if he had not been faithful to God as a youth. And I believe that there is many a man who has missed his opportunity of serving God through not beginning well. Young man, I charge you, when you become a Christian, be out and out for Christ! Be true to your convictions through and through! Do not neglect the least thing that you see to be in the Scriptures, but determine to follow the Lord fully. If you do that, you will be the kind of man that God will use! There are plenty of young men who are pliant as the willow, they will bend to anything and anyone—and God says, “I can never make anything of them” and, though He saves them, He puts them in the background as far as His service is concerned.  
But if there is a young fellow who, from his very youth, is straight as an arrow, one who cannot be bribed, who must do the right and will carry out his convictions at all costs, yes, to the devil’s face if necessary, God will say, “That man will do for My service, I will make use of him. He shall be a pillar in the Church in years to come.” “I remember you,” says the Lord, “the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals and, therefore, I intend to use you greatly to My honor and praise, and to your own joy and honor, too.”  
And, depend upon it, God remembers these early faithful ones for another reason, namely, to instruct them and to reveal Himself to them. “There,” He says, “I would have taught that young man something, but he would not learn it, so he shall never know much—he will be only a poor fool all his life. I set a light before him, but he preferred the darkness. Consequently, he shall go on with just glimmer enough to get into Heaven, but a clear perception of My Truth, a deep joy in that Truth, he shall never know as he might have known it if he had, in his youth been faithful and obedient to his God.”  
I believe that the Lord also remembers what we do in our youthful love and kindness, that He may sustain us in the time of trouble. Some poor child of God is in great distress and he cries to his heavenly Father. He does not dare to plead anything that he has done—that would be quite out of character for a child of God—but, for all that, God says, “I remember you; though you have very properly forgotten what you did long ago, and have wept over your many defects since your early days, yet I remember the kindness of your youth, and I will help you. I will be with you in the hour of your need, and I will deliver you.”  
Especially do I think that this must be true in the time of old age. That is a sweet prayer of David, in the 71st Psalm, “O God, You have taught me from my youth: and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” I know what many firms do, especially in these days when business is so bad and competition is so keen—they begin to weed out the men who must go. The head of the firm says, “There is old John, you see, he is between 60 and seventy—he must go.” “But, Sir, he carried you on his back when you were a boy. He was with your father.” “I cant help it, he must go. He is getting too old and we can get a boy to do his work.” That is how men do, do they not? But that is not the way God does! He lets us remain in His employment when there is very little that we can do. We  
pray to Him—  
*“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord,”*  
and He says, “I will never cast you off.”  
Once His servants, we are engaged for life! Once enlisted in His army,  
He will never drum us out of the ranks of the soldiers of salvation! We  
shall be His, forever, for He says, “I remember you.” “I remember what  
you used to do when you could do it. I remember how you worked for Me  
when you could work for Me, and now that you are getting gray and old,  
and can do but little in your last days, I will uphold you and bear you  
safely through.” There is nothing in our service that we care to remember, on which we can build any claim upon God—but yet, in the fatherly  
discipline of His great house, He remembers all that His servants have  
done and, oftentimes, He sends them cheer, comfort, strength and honor  
which He might have denied them had they been unfaithful to Him! Therefore I would encourage you who are beginning the Christian life  
to walk closely with God. Beware of little slips while you are young men  
and young women. A little awry with you when you are single may make  
much awry with you when you are married and when your children are  
about you. He who begins amiss in the morning of life will probably go  
the more amiss before that life comes to its nightfall. I would charge everyone whom my voice can reach to be quite clear about what his duty is  
towards God as a Christian and, once clear as to what it is, to go straight  
ahead in the performance of it.  
I am obliged to refer to myself because we must, each one, tell his own  
experience. Well now, upon that matter of Baptism which I have already  
mentioned—reading in the Scriptures, I found that Believers were baptized. I had never heard anybody preach about Believers’ Baptism. When  
I read about it in the New Testament, I did not know another person in  
the world who thought as I did and I came to the conclusion that it did  
not matter to me whether anybody agreed with me or not—my duty was  
plain! If I was the only person who had found out the will of God, I was bound to obey it, for I believed it to be God’s will that Believers should be baptized on profession of their faith—and I fancied that I should be the first person in modern days to make such a confession! That idea made no difference to me, nor does it now—if there was anything that was taught in the Scriptures which had not occurred to anybody else before, I should not ask whether any other person had or had not seen it! If God commands it, it is not for us to ask whether it is fashionable, or according to the order of other people, but to obey it straightway without a question! I have found, through life, that the habit of going by God’s Word as far as I understand it, honestly and rigidly, and giving way to nobody, has kept my road pretty clear. At first, people used to get in my way. Then I drove along the right side of the road and if they did not move, I was obliged to run into them, or, if they ran into me, I could not help it. Now I find that they just let me take the right side of the road and go straight ahead! I should do that whether they let me or not—therefore I have got to be “a chartered libertine” in these matters—permitted to do what I conceive to be right according to the Word of God!  
If a soldier, in any of our barracks, does not dare to kneel down to pray before his comrades, he will have a hard time of it. But let him once do it boldly and he can do it, again, after that! If there is any young man here who is in a house of business, and he says, “I will be a religious man, but I will be very moderate about it,” he will have a hard fight of it, I know he will! But if you come straight out and say, “I am beholden to no mortal man as to what I shall do. I am only God’s servant and if He bids me do anything, I raise no question about what others may say of it—the thing has to be done and I am going to do it,” why, you will get respect before long! It is, after all, the easiest way to take the hardest way when that way is right! Up with your flag, man! There, let it brave the battle and the breeze, and all that may come to it—you will win the victory so!  
But to pop your flag up when everybody is out of the way, and then to stand and look through your telescope, and presently to say, “There is somebody coming, I must pull the flag down,” and then, after a while, say, “It ought to be up, the gentleman has gone. He will not look at it— haul it up again! Am I not brave? Oh, but here comes somebody else, pull it down, John, fold it up and put it away till there is nobody about— fly it at nights when no eye can see it!” That is a dastardly, cowardly way of pretending to be religious which I hope none of you will wish to follow! Oh, that in early life you may bravely fellow your God! He will remember it to your credit and honor in the days to come!  
III. Now, lastly, and this ought to have been the major part of my discourse, GOD WOULD HAVE US REMEMBER THE BEST THINGS OF OUR EARLY DAYS FOR OUR REBUKE.  
Ah, you are not what you used to be—not so decided, not so joyous, not so faithful! What have you been doing? Ask yourselves a few questions. Were you not happier, then, than you are now? If it was so, then go back on the old track! If it was better with you in your early days than it is now, get back to the old quarters! Pray the Lord to restore to you the joy of His salvation! Why, Pilgrim, by this time, if you had held on your way, you might have been very much nearer the gates of the Celestial City! What a deal of time you have lost—and now you have to go back to that arbor where you fell asleep and lost your roll! You have to go over the ground three times—first an advance, then a going back, and then a going forward, again—yet once might have been enough! You have been very foolish and you have lost a good deal, but now, by God’s Grace, since He says, “I remember you in better times,” answer to Him, “Lord, I remember those better times, too, and, by Your gracious help, I am going back that I may have them again.”  
For listen. Do you think you were a fool then? Why, you were up early in the morning that you might get to hear the Gospel! You used to get into a crowded place and stand in the aisle! Somehow you were not half as tired when you used to stand all the while as you now are when you sit! And the preaching—what wonderful preaching it used to be! I do not suppose that it was any better than what you hear, now, but still, it did seem all on fire, did it not? And those Prayer Meetings! And your own private devotions—what hallowed seasons they were! And the Bible, when you read it—how it used to shine out in letters of fire before your eyes! Were you a fool then? Were you deceived, do you think? If so, I do not wonder at your turning back! But if you were no fool, then, but a wise man, what are you, now, that you have gone away from all this blessedness? Oh, come back! I charge you, by the living God, return to the place from which you have gone astray! Do you not owe more to God, now, than you did then? You have come a good way on the road since then—ought you to love Him less? He has blessed you. He has preserved you. He has forgiven you. He has manifested Himself to you. You have had some grand times when your heart has burned within you—you have sometimes had a taste of Heaven upon earth! Should you not, therefore, love Him much more than at the first? Oh, come back! Come back with tears of deep regret and give yourself, again, to God! For, look, you have already slipped a long way down. Why, looking up, I can hardly see how high you used to be! You were so near Heaven’s gate, but you have come down, oh, so far! In the course of a year or two, more, if you keep on going down, you will be still lower! “The DownGrade” is awfully easy—where will you soon be? I hope that it will not come to pass that you will be drinking the cup of the drunkard, or singing the song of the profane. “Oh, no!” you say, “I will never do that.” I do not know. I am not sure. If a man were to fall off the Monument, when he had fallen some 20 feet, I do not see what is to prevent him from falling to the ground. Once begin to fall and who knows how low you may go? Oh, for a miracle of mercy to stop you in your dread descent! May God work that miracle and save you by His Grace!  
Do you not think, dear Friends, any of you who are losing your first love and turning from your first kindness to God, that you are sowing some ugly thorns for your deathbed? You may lie a long time, perhaps in sickness and weakness, and then it will be a wretched thing to turn on that uneasy pillow and say, “Ah, I did not serve God as I ought to have done! I did not live to God as I should have done.” It is amazing how some truly good men will, at the last, trouble themselves about very little things. I knew a dear friend who used to have a church in his house. A number of Christian people met for worship and when he grew ill, the singing was too much for him. I think that it really was too much for him to bear and the doctor said that his friends had better go somewhere else on the Sabbath—and they did—and I think very properly so. Yet, when my friend lay dying, I had hard work to comfort him, “because,” he said, “I turned the people of God out of my house.” I said, “No, you did not! You were ill and it was not fit that they should disturb you when you were so weak. I think that you were quite right, my Brother.” “Oh, no!” he said, “Oh, no! I shall never forgive myself for that.”  
And he was whipping himself for it most cruelly. And I thought, “Oh, dear me! The many that I know who have not such a tender conscience as this dear man of God has!” Still, let none of us do anything for which we shall have to flog ourselves when we come to die. Child of God, act so that when you have to look back upon it all, though you know that all your sin is forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus, you may also be able to feel, “In this thing God helped me to do righteously and to serve Him with all my heart, and so now, when I have come to the close of the chapter, it is with devout gratitude for having been preserved in integrity and not with bitter regrets for having been unfaithful.”  
Have you ever seen a waterlogged ship towed into harbor? She has encountered a storm and all her masts are gone. She has sprung a leak and is terribly disabled. But a tug has got hold of her and is drawing her in—a poor miserable wreck, just rescued from the rocks. I do not want to enter Heaven that way, “scarcely saved.” But now look at the other picture. There is a fair wind, the sails are full, there is a man at the helm, every sailor is in his place and the ship comes in with a swing! She stops at her proper place in the harbor and down goes the anchor with cheery shouts of joy from the mariners who have reached their desired haven! That is the way to go to Heaven—in full sail, rejoicing in the blessed Spirit of God who has given us an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! May you so live, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you shall go into Heaven that way, with an abundant entrance! And may none of us be found among those who have so lived on earth that they will not be missed when they are gone—and who will only be welcomed into Heaven as those who are “saved, yet so as by fire”!  
So I commend these thoughts to you. Let our days be such that we may look back upon them with pleasure! And if they are not so, now, let us begin to look back upon them with repentance—and turn to God with full purpose of heart, for His dear Son’s sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 2:1-25.**

Verses 1-3. Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem saying, Thus says the LORD, ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, says the LORD.’ God reminds His people of what they used to be in their first days, when they came out of Egypt. They had very sadly declined from what they then were. They were none too faithful to the Lord, then, but they had fallen back, even, from that condition! Does not this passage come home to some of you who are not, now, what you once were? May the Lord graciously speak through these words to your ears and to your heart, if you have backslidden from Him in any degree!

4, 5. Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? What faults have you to find with God, that you have left Him? What fault have you seen in the ever-blessed Christ, that your love to Him should have grown cold?

6, 7. Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when you entered, you defiled My land, and made My heritage an abomination. It is a sad charge against anybody that he forgets the care that God has taken of him in the days of his poverty and affliction. When a man becomes rich and is surrounded by earthly comforts, it is a terrible thing that he should then forget God, or that, the more God does for him, the less he thinks of God! This is strangely ungrateful conduct, yet the children of Israel acted thus. They were better in the wilderness—though they were bad enough there—they were better in the wilderness than they were in Canaan, better on the desert sand than they were in the land that flowed with milk and honey! And there are some, nowadays, who were better in their poverty than they are in their prosperity—and some who were better by a long way in their times of sickness than they now are in their palmy days of health! Alas, that it should be so!

8. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the Law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. It is always ill with the people when the ministers go wrong. If the dogs do not protect the flock, but are dumb dogs that cannot bark, what is to become of the sheep?

9-11. Therefore I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children’s children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Cyprus and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Have nations changed their gods, which are yet not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. God bids them go to the West, across the Mediterranean, to Cyprus, that is, probably Cyprus, or to go to the East, to Kedar, or Arabia, and see whether any Gentile nation ever changed its gods, which really were not gods. “And yet,” says the Lord, “here is a people that knew the one living and true God, but they have turned aside to idols—‘My people has changed their glory for that which does not profit.’” O Friend, if there is no truth in religion, I do not wonder that you give it up! But if you ever knew its blessed sweetness. If Christ was ever precious to you—if you did once enjoy the Gospel of His Grace—how is it that you have grown cold towards it and declined from its ways?

12, 13. Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. To go away from the flowing fountain to the stagnant waters of a cistern is great folly! But to go and hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water, but merely mock your thirst, is madness of the worst kind!

14. Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? God made him to be His son, not His slave, but Israel went aside from God and so became a slave, being carried away into captivity by the very nation whose gods the chosen people worshipped!

15, 16. The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noph and Tahaphanes have broken the crown of your head. The Israelites went and worshipped idols and then the very nations whose gods they worshipped invaded the land and broke the crown of their head, or made them bald, which was, to the Jews, a mark of mourning or of disgrace.

17. Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way? You who are depressed in soul. You who have grown spiritually poor. You who are in great trouble of heart, listen—“Have you not procured this unto yourself?” Did you not make the rod for your own back by going away from your God? It was well enough with you when you trusted in Him, but now that you have turned aside from Him, all these evils have come upon you! “Have you not procured this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken Jehovah, your God, when He led you by the way?”

18. And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? “The waters of the Nile,” or, as it may be read, “the waters of that muddy river.” The Israelites had suffered so much during their long captivity in Egypt that one would have thought they would never have wanted to go near the house of bondage again—“What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?”

18. Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? You are trying to find pleasure in the world. You are going to the resorts of sin, to seek amusement there. If you are a child of God, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?” What are you doing there, Elijah? You have lost the comforts of religion by your backsliding—and are you now trying to make up for them by going into the world’s gaiety? It will never do! You can never fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat. If you were one of the swine, you might do so—but if you are your Father’s son, it is only the bread in His house that will satisfy your hungry soul!

19-25. Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD, your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of hosts. For of old time I have broken your yoke, and burst your bands; and you said, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree you wander, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how, then, are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me? For though you wash yourself with niter, and take you much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they shall find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst, but you said, There is no hope—no— for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. God compares His erring people, in the delirium of their sin, to these wild creatures that cannot be tamed, but are driven by their ungovernable passions wherever they will. Alas, that men should be so sinful that God can only find a parallel to them in the wild donkeys of the wilderness!

See, also, what despair will do for its victims. When a man says, “There is no hope,” then he feels that for him there is no repentance. When he believes that God will not forgive him, then he will not turn from his evil ways. “You said, There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.” God save any here present who are getting into the clutches of Giant Despair! May they know the true goodness of God and may that goodness lead them to repentance! Amen.

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THE LOVE OF OUR ESPOUSALS  
NO. 2926

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 30, 1876.

**“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the Lord: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”  
Jeremiah 2:2.**

BRETHREN, we may forget the past, but God does not. He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth.” God’s mercies come to us in such a constant stream—they are so many and so varied that we are very apt to have a feeble memory towards them. But the Lord remembers what He has done for us and He expects a return. He remembers the kindness which He showed to us in our youth—for so some interpreters read this passage—and He remembers the love which He manifested towards us in the days of our espousals. As the husbandman remembers how he plowed the land—how he dug about the tree and fed it and, therefore, looks for a better harvest, or a larger crop of fruit, so does God remember what He did for us in our youth—how some of us were trained in godly households—sent to schools where the main part of our education was the fear of God—tenderly kept out of the way of temptation—fostered and nurtured in every good word and work. God remembers this.

If some now present are making no worthy return—when the Lord looks upon them for fruit He sees that they are bringing forth but wild grapes, though they may forget their indebtedness and their responsibility—let them remember that God remembers all of it and expects some response from them. Think, too, that there shall come a day when the Divine memory will touch our sleeping memory into activity—God will say to us, as Abraham said to Dives, “Son, remember”—and that remembrance may be the worm that never dies within the conscience and fuel for the fire that never shall be quenched! If men and women would but remember now what God did for them in years gone by, and remember what manner of people they ought to be in consequence of the mercy which has been lavished upon them, it would save them many regrets. It might, indeed, save them endless remorse!

I do not, however, think that that is exactly the meaning of the passage in the Hebrew. Our translators have, I believe, hit upon its real meaning which is that God remembers what we have done towards Him. He remembers our kindness and love to Him in the days of our espousals. He here alluded to the early history of the nation of Israel, when, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, they came out of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea and traveled the great and howling wilderness wherein were pits and all manner of dangers. Led by the fiery cloudy pillar, they faithfully traversed the roads which God marked out for them until they came to be settled in the land which He had given them by a Covenant of salt.

Those first days of the Israelite nation were heroic times. Most nations have a grandeur about their early history. Indeed, it is often so grand that our modern doubters consign the whole of it to the region of myth and suppose that it is a mass of exaggeration! The early history of Switzerland and its William Tell, for instance, has been disputed, though I no more doubt the existence of William Tell than I do my own. Even the early history of England has come under many clouds and questions— and all because there was something heroic about it.

The early history of every Christian denomination is also exceedingly bright. If you take up, for instance, one of modern times, the Methodists, there is no page of Methodist history that can compare with the first, when they suffered and yet as boldly proclaimed the Gospel everywhere with a self-denying zeal worthy of Apostolic times! I think I might say that it is generally so with almost every church. “You did run well: who did hinder you?” Under the leadership of some one man whom the Lord clothes with power, as He did the Judges, one after the other, in the history of Israel, great things are done and marvels are worked. But soon there comes lukewarmness—a gradual slipping back into the ordinary and the commonplace—alas, I might almost say into declension and backsliding!

Now, as it has been with nations, that they have a great and heroic history at first and as it has generally been with churches that the primitive glory is the brightest, so is it often with individual Christians. “They begin—oh, with what zeal!—with what energy!—with what prayerfulness!—with what consecration! If they do not begin so, the more is the pity, for they do not often improve upon their beginnings. But many do begin so and, after a while, the runner runs into a wall and the walker sits down, at last, in the Arbor of Ease and no longer runs with diligence the race that is set before him.

The point I want to call your attention to is this—that the Lord sees His people when they are in that good state, notes it down and remembers it, makes a record of it and says, “I remember you as you were years ago. I remember you, young man, when you were young. I remember you, woman, when you were yet a girl. I remember you—the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals—when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” God remembers those zealous times, those happy seasons, those enthusiastic hours! And if we have come to an ebb, if we are now cold and almost dead and have forgotten the better days—God has not forgotten them! He keeps a record of them for divers uses, some of which us we will try to think of now as God may help us.

I. Our first head, then, is THE LORD’S COMMENDATION OF THE YOUTH OF HIS PEOPLE. He commends Israel for what she used to be and He commends each Believer for what he used to be if he used to be as Israel once was.

God is never slow to commend His children when He can commend them. It is marvelous how the Lord sometimes seems to shut His eyes to the faults of His children when He would give them praise. You recollect Sarah, when she laughed and said, “Shall I have pleasure, my lord being old, also?” It was an unbelieving, wicked laugh, and yet the Holy Spirit commends Sarah and says of her that she called her husband “lord.” He puts down that which was the only good point about it and seems almost to wink at her mocking doubt because she called her husband, “lord.” Sometimes the Lord puts His eyes on what is good in His children and speaks of only that. As to what is wrong in them, there are other times when He will bring those wrongs to remembrance and chasten them in order to put their sin away. But when He is commending, He will fix His eyes on the pearl and not touch the oyster shell—He will see the star and say nothing about the black sky in which it shines!

Well, Beloved, when the Israelites came out of Egypt they were a long, long way from being what they ought to be. It was difficult to make them believe in Moses. They were ready enough to quarrel with him when the count of the bricks was increased and, even after all the miracles, no sooner did they get out of Egypt than they began to be afraid as they heard Pharaoh’s rattling chariots approaching! Then they were not far in the wilderness before they began to murmur because they had no water—and in a short time they murmured again because they wanted flesh to eat instead of the manna which God had given them. But now, the Lord seeing them altogether wandering away, looks back even upon that imperfect condition with something of satisfaction and wishes that, notwithstanding the faults of that early period, they were still as they were then. “I remember,” He says, “the kindness of your youth.” But has He forgotten their unkindness? Yes—that was His own promise. “Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.’” He has forgotten them. Does He not remember when, instead of coming after Him in the wilderness, they said, “Make us gods which shall go before us”? Yes, but He does not mention that, for He says, “I will cast all their sins behind My back.” He remembers now only the excellence of their former state and so, Beloved, He will remember whatever excellence there was in our first estate when we first came to Christ—in spite of all its failure and imperfection.

Now what can there be in our early life for God to remember? Well, I trust there is to be remembered at this present moment the love of our espousals. Let me call it to your mind. Do you recollect your first love? Oh, how clear it was—how warm! How undivided! How wholly given up to Christ! Did you love the Savior? You had been much forgiven and, oh, you did love Him! You could not be enough with Him, or think too much of Him, or even say too much about Him. Did you love Him? Why, if any scoffed at you for His sake, you were pleased beyond measure! You would have been willing to go to prison for Him! Yes, to have died for Him. Did you love Him in your first days? Why, you know how you shared of your substance with great delight for His cause. You sometimes wished you had a thousand times as much and then you would have thought it a mere trifle to lay it all at His feet. There was a great breaking of alabaster boxes in those early days and often was the house filled with the perfume of the ointment!  
You even grew angry if you heard anybody speak a word against Him and His cause! Sometimes you had a zeal that went far beyond your knowledge and you did some things in the earnestness of your soul which were not altogether wise. But you did love Him. Oh, how you loved Him! The zeal of His House did eat you up—every passion and power that you possessed seemed to be altogether consecrated to Him! Did you love Him? Why, you loved the meanest of His people—there was not a lamb in all the flock you would have disdained to feed. You loved His Book—the smallest promise charmed you. You loved His House—you used to wish that all the week were Sundays and that every Sunday lasted a month. You wished to be in the land—  
*“Where congregations never break up  
And Sabbaths have no end,”*  
because you could not take your fill of His sweet love. You wanted more and still more. That was the love of your espousals. God remembers it and looks back upon it and commends it. And I want you, with whom it may have been 25 years ago, as well as you with whom it is only lately, to look back upon it and remember it, too. I hope there are some who are in the middle of this spiritual honeymoon even now. May it last forever with you! May you never grow cold. May you never wander from your Lord. But where it is a thing of the past, remember it and think of it now with pleasure. Perhaps I might add that some of you should also think of it with regret and shame.  
The Lord commends His people because, in addition to that love, there seems to have been much exultation and delight and many acts corresponding to the love. He remembers the kindness of our youth. “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals.” I think it means not only that these people of old loved Him, but that they showed that love. Just see them when they have passed through the Red Sea and, for the first time, set their foot upon the desert sand of the other side. Miriam takes her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel go forth in dancing! And they sing, with shouts, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea.” “He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” Those were high days! How they exulted in that dear and glorious name! Why, there was not, throughout all their camp, a dog that dared move his tongue against Jehovah that day! Even those who worshipped the star of their god Remphan remained silent. Even the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt who knew not the Lord kept very quiet. The whole host seemed to be exulting in the Lord. There was not merely love, but it was love that overflowed. Their cup ran over. It was love that set the joy-bells ringing and brought out the timbrel and the harp again and again and again, that they might praise the Lord who had destroyed their enemies!  
Do you remember the experience in your own life that answered to this? I do, well. I go back in thought to the time when I felt as light as a feather—when my very soul felt like the dancing snowflakes that fell around me on that morning when first I was washed in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, the exultation I had in His salvation! Then did I wish that rocks and hills would break their everlasting silence to extol Him. No music then was like His charming name, nor half so sweet to me, nor is there now, blessed be His Grace! There are some, alas, who have gone back from that point who must, nevertheless, recollect those times of ecstatic joy when first they knew the Lord. The Lord remembers it too. “I remember it,” He says, “I remember it.” As the husband remembers the first love of his wife and, perhaps, tells her of it to bring back the sweet, young, fresh feeling again, so does the Lord remind any of you who have become cold about those blessed days, in the hope of compelling you to similar kindness towards Him now.  
Then, observe, He goes on to speak about how closely His people followed Him. He remembers the reality of our fellowship. “When you went after Me.” In those days we said and not only said it, but actually carried it out into action—  
*“In all my Lord’s appointed ways  
My journey I’ll pursue.”*  
“Where He goes, I go,” we said. “Where He bids me go, I go. Only let me be able by Grace to follow the example of Jesus Christ and it shall be my delight to put my foot down where He puts His and to tread in His footsteps with sedulous and anxious care.” Do you remember when you used to feel afraid to put one foot before another lest you should go aside? And whenever you did anything you always sought His guidance? How you often took the words out of your mouth and looked at them before you spoke them, lest you should say anything but what He allowed. Oh, that was a blessed time! I wish that carefulness, that watching of your soul, that intense desire to be right before the Lord even in little things and in nothing to offend the jealous heart of the Lover of your soul would always continue. We are never healthier than when we have a conscience quick as the apple of an eye, when our whole nature is delicately sensitive even to the thought of sin. Just as the sensitive plant begins to curl up its leaves the moment it is touched, as at those times our soul is wary, and coy, and tender at the faintest approach of sin. It was so at first and God commends us for it, for He says that we followed Him closely. He still commends us for it, where He finds such Grace abiding.  
He commends the people, in fact, because they came out in order to follow Him. He remembers the steadfastness of our purpose. “When you went after Me in the wilderness,” He says, which signifies that the ancient people came out from Egypt in order to follow God. Was it not a grand thing when every Israelite—for there was not one left behind—left his house and his home for God? It may not have been a very comfortable home, perhaps, for they had been dwelling among the pots and among the brick kilns, but everyone left his home. You would have thought that somebody would have said, “Poor as it is, it is where my children were born and I do not want to leave it.” But they all went out! Some of them turned all their little property into jewels so as to make it portable—and came away with the little dough that they had made up in what our version calls their kneading troughs. “Not a hoof was left behind,” it is said. That is to say, no man left so much as a lamb, or a sheep, or an ox—they came out, all of them, with all that they had. It was a wonderful thing that God’s power over them led them to make such a famous and perfect exodus!  
But it was also so with us in our first days. We came right out from the world. Perhaps we were rather noted in worldly circles—we had gone deep into its pleasures. There were a great many who thought us jolly good fellows and reckoned that we should never turn Methodist—never. But we snapped every tie, cut every connection, broke every link and out we came! You recollect what it cost some of you in those days? Perhaps you were in a workshop and you had to run the gauntlet of the sneers of all the men. Everybody knew about it, but you did not care a button whether all the devils in Hell knew about it! You defied them all. You gloried in the change. Perhaps you were a man walking in another rank of society. You thought it rather hard at first, but, by-and-by, you said, “If this is to be vile, I will be still viler,” and you came right out. Perhaps you lost friends by your conversion, or lost prestige—got on the wrong side of the door of society, as they call it, and found yourself dead to it— no longer one of its world. But that did not fret you a bit, you would have given up fifty thousands of such poor wretched worlds as this world to have Christ! You felt sorry you could not surrender so much as the martyrs did when they went to prison and to death—you almost wished you could do so, for it seemed such a blessed thing to come boldly out for Christ. You did not think, then, about the leeks and the garlic and the onions. Some of your older brethren have got that flavor in their noses a little and they have begun to think about the delicacies of Egypt. But in your early days, in the time of the love of your espousals, what cared you for leeks and garlic and onions? You were looking after that Heavenly manna! You were drawing from the eternal fountain, water that flowed from the Rock which God had smitten for you. You were satisfied, then, with the unseen things that faith grasped—and you were glad in the prospect of the good land towards which you had steadfastly set your face. Alas, if it is not so now!  
But still the Lord remembers the reality of our early faith. The Israelites came out with great truthfulness and self-denial. Whatever they had, whether little or much, they had to leave it all—for what? Well, for an inheritance, but then the inheritance was all in the clouds. What did they get? As far as they could see, they were only to go into a wilderness, into a land that was not sown. Carnal reason would have met them and said, “Now, you are never going to do it! What? Going into the wilderness of Zin? It is full of fiery serpents! It is said to be a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man ever passed through and where no man dwells! Are you going after God there? Why, the experience of God’s people is full of troubles and trials and conflicts. You do not mean to say you are going after God there?”  
Old Atheist, too, perhaps came and met you when you started and said that there was no Heaven, that there was no brave country such as you had read of. And those twin brothers, Timorous and Mistrust, said that there were lions and giants on the way and that you had better go back. Then came another and he said that it was a rough road and there were dragons to be encountered, and Apollyon, the arch-enemy, to be fought. Nobody knew what of evil there was not—everything that was dreadful was there! “If you want to save your skin, you had better go back. Do not go forward,” they said. “Why, you ought to hear some of those who have been pilgrims, talk—they tell dreadful tales. There are some of them with very long faces and they know, you know. And if they have to confess such things, well, you had better mind what you are doing.” But the children of Israel, every one of them, followed the Lord into the wilderness wherein there was no water and plunged right in—a land of which they knew nothing. They went out boldly because of their faith in Jehovah that led the way.  
Was not that what we did, too, in the days of our espousals? Yes, blessed be God! We counted the cost and then we said that we would follow our Lord whatever it might mean. We would watch with Him one hour, or all hours, and would drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, or do anything and everything if but He would let us be numbered with His disciples and partake of His Glory at the last! Yes, we said it deliberately, some of us. We looked over all our prospects and it did seem like ruin if we followed Him. We saw that many of our comforts must go and they have gone. We knew that there would be conflicts and we find that there have been. We knew all that, but we loved Christ so much that we were something of the mind of holy Mr. Rutherford who says, in one of his loving letters to his Lord, “If there were seven Hells to go through to get to You, my Lord, give me but the word and I will wade through them.” That was just how you felt in those days, was it not? It is how some of us feel now. There are those who do not feel quite so earnest as they did, but the Lord remembers the love of their espousals when they went after Him into the wilderness.  
And then He remembers the bloom of our early holiness. “Israel was holiness to the Lord,” and we, too, sought to give to the Lord the first fruits of our increase. We strove to live near to God and forsake every false way. Even some professors thought we were too nice and too precise, but we have learned since that it is not very probable that any of us shall err in that direction! We made a conscience of our thoughts, a conscience of our words—and we were always asking this man and the other, who, we thought, knew better than we did, whether such a thing might be right or not, for fear we should be mistaken. We desired in everything to reflect the image of Christ and to be obedient to His will. Well, now, this is how it was and this is what God remembers with pleasure and would have us remember, too!  
God delights in the thought of the fervent love we gave Him when we knew first Him, our thoughtful and practical kindness towards His name, our steadfast resolve to follow Him at all lengths, our faith which took His least word as a warrant for action and our holiness which shrank even from the approach of sin. Happy are we if these things still abide with us. But if we have lost them, the Lord, like some fond mother recalling the infant days of her children, remembers them and beckons us back to our first love and our first works.  
II. Now, WHY SHOULD WE ALSO REMEMBER OUR EARLY DAYS? That shall make our second point upon which, however, we will not prolong our discourse.

Let us hope that to some of us the text may be a word of rebuke. The Lord remembers what you were. He contrasts it with what you are and He asks you the reason for this falling off. I hope you noticed the words while I was reading the chapter. He says, “What iniquity have you found in Me that you have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity and have become vain?” Remember how He rebukes you and says, “My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water.” Now, if you have declined like this, Brothers and Sisters, though you have not given up religion, blessed be God—though you still dare make a profession and can do it honestly—yet if you are not as earnest, nor as holy, nor as loving, nor as prayerful as you used to be, God would chide you! Have you good reason for this? I am sure you have not and it has a very ugly look, for other people who do not know, will say, “Ah, you see, the thing is very fine when there is a novelty about it, and it is very pretty when you do not know much about it. But these old Christians have gone farther and they have fared worse! They have got more into the heart of the thing and they have found that it was not what they thought it was.”

Oh, you are like the bad spies—you bring up an evil report of the land! Your gradual cooling down says to the outside world that Christ is not what we say He is and so we, poor ministers, suffer very much because of you! For we may preach hardest, but they do not believe our exhortations as they believe your lies! I tell you that one backsliding Christian does more harm to the Church of God than one minister can ever undo! And the dear children who are living near to God are often exposed to scorn through those of you that are settled upon your lees. You are never seen at Prayer Meetings anymore. You do not care much about an extra service in the week. You are so busy now, although you are not busier than you used to be—you never speak of Jesus Christ to others as you once used to do. Is Christ worse than He was? Does He deserve less at your hands? Do you owe Him less? Are you not, indeed, more in debt than you ever were to His rich mercy and free Grace? The more He does for you, are you going to do the less for Him? Because you are getting older, or have received more mercies, are you going to be less grateful? Is it to be true that the young people are to outshine you? The more you know and the more you grow, are you to love the less? Oh, I beseech you by the love of Jesus Christ and by His heart of mercy, do not allow it to be so, my Beloved, but pray that, by the Holy Spirit, you may be brought back to where you were—no, that you may be carried forward to something far beyond what you used to be when first you knew the Lord! So our text should come home as a word of rebuke.

Then, this Word of God should be used as a word of warning. Dear young Christian people, you who have just joined the Church, I think I hear you say, “Oh, it is dreadful that anybody should have less love to Christ than they used to have.” It is dreadful and I mourn over it. But I stand in doubt when I hear you say, “It shall never be so with me. If I forget my Lord and love Him less than I do now, let my right hand forget its cunning. It cannot be! Why, I shall go from strength to strength, and I shall love Him more and more! I know I shall, and I shall do more as my circumstances improve, as my opportunities increase and as my gifts are multiplied.” That is what you say and it is what you ought to say—but unless you are very careful, it is not what you will do! Oh, how deceived I have been in some members of this Church. Not that they have gone into sin. Not that they are any discredit to the Christian name as far as outward acts are concerned. But there is not that bottom of deep spiritual life and there is not that growth of fruitfulness, and there is not that zeal for God that I really thought I would see in them, especially in those that were great sinners and in those that have had marvelous joy and deep experience. They ought to be—ah, well I will not say, “they”—we all ought to be very different from what we are—so do not let us depend upon the strength of resolution, or on our present emotion, but let us commit ourselves unto the Lord who alone is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy!

Rejoice not, O young man, in your spiritual youth. Exult not, O new convert, in the strength of your love. Ask the Lord to keep these as strong as they are and to make them infinitely stronger—that you may really go from strength to strength! But if you at any time trust your own heart, you will be a fool! I would to God that we might realize what Christian experience always ought to be, namely, ascending and yet ascending, and yet still ascending—loving, and then loving so much that the first love seems to be eclipsed and then loving more till that better love seems but second-rate! And then loving yet more till all that went before, when heaped together, seems as nothing compared to what we have reached! Doing and daring—yielding up and resigning—exactly as God may call us, each time with greater joy and greater zest. Having life and having it yet more abundantly. I wish that Darwin’s theory might be carried out in us as Christians until, as he talks of an oyster developing into an Archbishop of Canterbury, we who at our conversion were little better than the oyster, should go on developing, developing and developing in spiritual things until we should know what John meant, who said, “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” God grant you such development as that and preserve you from backsliding, and to His name shall be the praise!

I only hope that some of the words I have spoken, if not directly uttered to the unconverted, may glance in their hearts and lead them to seek a Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 2:1-19.**

Verses 1-3. Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus says the LORD, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first fruits of His increase: all that devour him shall offend; all shall come upon them, says the LORD. God remembered what Israel used to be in those good days when the Lord alone did lead them and there was no strange god among them. Now He bids them remember from whence they had fallen and repent and do their first works lest He come unto them in wrath. Oh, Beloved, if you ever lived near to God—if you ever rested your head on Christ’s bosom and have now wandered away from Him and are spiritually cold and dead, begin to chide yourself, for the Lord Himself, in the word before us, does chide you. He calls you to a sorrowful remembrance of the position from which you have descended—the heights of Grace from which you have come down! Breathe the prayer that He would restore you again. “Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?”

4, 5. Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain? He asks them whether there was any fault in Him—any failure in keeping His promise—whether He had dealt unjustly or unmercifully with them that they had thus gone away from Him and walked after vanity.

6. Neither said they; Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? Ought they not always to have remembered the wonderful wilderness journey where God seemed to multiply His miracles in the midst of their great necessities? Some of you have passed through a wilderness, too, yet you have been richly supplied. You have had to admire the constancy of the Divine Goodness. God has not ever failed you, even in your worst circumstances. Do not let it be said of you that you never say, “Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt.” On the contrary, always fly to Him when you are in time of trouble. Remember that this is the way to glorify God. “He shall call upon Me and I will answer him” is one of God’s own promises. And then He adds—“and he shall glorify Me.”

7, 8. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof but when you entered, you defiled the land, and made My heritage an abomination. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? And they that handle the law knew Me not: the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Was not this very shameful that in Canaan, which God had chosen beyond all countries for its fertility that He might give it to His own people forever, there they began to set up idols and altars to other gods? And the priests, whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, and the prophets who above all men were bound to have spoken in the name of the Lord joined the people in their sin. They even urged them to worship Baal—that dummy deity, unworthy of a moment’s respect who should not have been so much as thought of by God’s people. They ought not even to have taken the name of Baal into their lips. Do you not see yourselves here, O backsliders? If you ever knew the Lord and have gone back to the world. If you have submitted yourselves again to the powers thereof and sinned with a high hand, have you not acted most shamefully towards your God? And ought you not, with a blushing countenance and weeping eyes to return to Him and ask mercy at His hands?

9-11. But I will yet plead with you, says the LORD, and with your children’s children will I plead. For pass over the Isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. How powerfully this is put! No other nation gave up its gods. Though they were not gods, but mere images of clay or gold, they would not change them. They stuck to their idolatries with wonderful pertinacity—but God’s people gave up the true God to worship the demons of the nations round about! And is it not an unhappy thing that there are now some who at least call themselves God’s people who go back to the world and seem to be more in love with it than ever they were? It is a horrible thing that is done! I have heard of a chieftain of an Indian tribe whose nephew was converted to the faith but who, after a short time, fell into sin and renounced his profession—the old chief used to always answer all the teaching of the missionary with this argument—“My nephew tried it and gave it up. He ought to know.” Well, when this was told to the young man, it broke his heart and happily brought him back to the God he had forsaken! Perhaps there are some in the world who are gathering excuses for continuing in sin from the unhappy conduct of such as backslide. “Look at him,” they say, “how hot and zealous he was—and look what he is now.” Can you bear the thought, backslider? If there remains a spark of love to Christ in your soul, you will feel bitterly the sorrow that others should make an excuse for blasphemy and for rebellion against Christ out of your evil conduct. Oh, pray tonight—“Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit.”

12, 13. Be astonished O you Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils—they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. If a man should change for the better, his selfishness might be a little excuse for leaving his old love. But when he changes for the worse—leaves a fountain for a cistern—a flowing fountain for a broken cistern that holds nothing—why, there is madness in his sin! “Be astonished, O you Heavens and be horribly afraid.”

14-17. Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitants. Also the children of Noah and Tahapanes have broken the crown of your head. Have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when He led you by the way? The people of Israel had got into a dreadful state of poverty and famine and oppression. Their enemies had so destroyed the land that it was full of lions that even roared in the very streets where once men and women and children abounded. And God says to them, “Is not this the result of your own sin? Was it so when you lived near to Me? Have you not brought this upon yourself by your sin?” So, child of God, if you are unhappy tonight—if you are mourning—if you cannot find comfort in the world—no comfort in God, either, “have you not procured this unto yourself? When you did live near to God, when prayer was continual, when you did watch your conduct, when you did go softly asking God to guide you from day to day, was it not better with you then than now? Then your peace was like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. If it is not so now, have you not procured this unto yourself in that you have forsaken the Lord your God when He led you by the way?

18. And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? For instead of going to the fountain of living waters, they were hoping to be helped by the Egyptians or helped by the Assyrians. Just as there are some Christians who try to drink the muddy waters of sinful pleasure and of carnal lust, they are beginning to think the muddy river very sweet and to like the taste of it. It is a deadly evil when professing Christians begin to do as others do and to mix with the world and feel pleasure in it. There will be a blight upon you if you turn from God! Misery will dog your steps before long if you are, indeed, a child of God.

19. Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backsliding shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and that My fear is not in you, says the Lord GOD of Hosts. A very solemn passage. May we lay it to heart. Not only is there guilt in our sin for which we shall have to answer at God’s Judgment Seat, but there is evil in it which will come swiftly upon our own heads even here, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” The thing you think will be your strength will be your scourge. What you dream of as pleasure will prove to be your plague. If you have ever known the joy of God’s service, all this shall be doubly true of you—you shall never again be able to find satisfaction in the world and God, the God whom you did once delight in—will let your own wickedness correct you and your backslidings reprove you because He wishes you to come back to His side, and to drink again of the living waters which you have so foolishly forsaken.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #356 New Park Street Pulpit 1

WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION  
NO. 356

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the restore of Sihor? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?”  
Jeremiah 2:18.**

THE Jews had been chosen by God to be a special people separated to Himself forever. By sundry miracles, by many mercies, by strange deliverances, He had proved Himself to be to them a God worthy of their trust. Yet, strange to say—and yet not strange when we know that they were fallen men like ourselves—the Jews were constantly desirous to mix with the nations. They broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden. They desired to be laid like common lands and to be joined with other peoples.

No, more than this—they forsook their one and true and loving God who had never deserted them and they adopted sometimes the deities of Egypt and at other times the false gods of Assyria. They seemed never to be content with even the gorgeous ceremonials of their own temple. They must build altars after the fashion of Damascus. They must have Sitars on every high place, according to the custom of the accursed nations whom the Lord their God had driven out before them. And they seemed as if they had never reached the full desire of their hearts till they had mingled with the rites of God all the filth and the abominations with which heathens adored their gods.

Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this—for this infatuation of theirs which made them turn aside from Him, the Living Water, to hew out to themselves broken cisterns which could hold no water. They were “often reproved,” but they often “hardened their necks.” Often were they chastened and they were smitten so often that “the whole head was sick and the whole heart was faint.” They had been chastened so sorely that from the sole of their foot even to their head they were full of wounds and bruises and petrifying sores.

Yet they still went after evil. Still they turned aside from the righteous and true God. Our text contains one instance of God’s expostulating with His people. He says to them, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river!”—for so it may be translated—and of course that term is applied to the Nile by way of contempt. “Why need you go to drink of that muddy river? What have you to do with Assyria to drink the water of Euphrates? Why do you turn aside and leave your own

cool streams of Lebanon? Why do you forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why are you so strangely set on mischief that you cannot be content with the good and healthful, but would even follow after that which is evil and deceitful?”

Taking the text just as it stands, I intend, by God’s help, to make a question of it to you. To myself and to you may God the Holy Spirit apply it and may this be a time for all God’s people, to every convinced soul, yes, and to the careless, too—a time of searching of heart. May God question us and may we be prepared honestly to answer. May the Holy Spirit push home the solemn enquiries and may we with truthful hearts search and look and give earnest heed.

I shall apply the text to three characters. First to the Christian. Secondly, to the awakened conscience. Thirdly, to the careless sinner. My sermon is not intended to instruct your minds, but to stir up your hearts.

I. Addressing myself to the CHRISTIAN, I shall use the text in three senses while I expostulate with you in regard to sin, to worldly pleasure and to carnal trust.

1. And first, O true Believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Christ, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” What have you to do with the sins which once delighted you and which now find happy pastime for the world? What have you to do with your deceitful lusts, with the indulgence of your old passions? What have you to do to follow the multitude which do evil?

Believer, answer these questions especially if you have lately fallen into sin, if you have backslidden in heart and if you have been led to backslide in your ways. Answer me, what have you to do—what excuse have you for what you have done? Do you see yonder a gang of men, dragging, like so many beasts of burden, a tremendous load? Hark to the cracking of the whip of the overseer! Do you see how they pull and strain till it seems as if their every sinew would snap? Do you observe them as the hot sweat stands upon their brow?

Look at them! Let the gang stay awhile, while we examine. I can understand why all these are oppressed with sore labor, for I can see the brand of the slave owner upon their backs. Their flesh is scarred. But what does this mean? There is one among them who is not a slave—a man who is free! What does this mean? How is it that he does the slaves’ work—that he bends his back to the task master’s yoke, when he is a free man? Can you answer the question? Let me ask it in your own case. I see the sinner burdened in the ways of evil. I see him pulling iniquity as though it were with a cart rope, laying hold with both his hands on everything that is full of iniquity.

But what have you to do there? The slaves of Satan are but acting out their condition. But what have you to do to be his slave since you have been redeemed with blood and set free by power? Why, Man, you are no slave now. You are a son of God. You are an heir of all things. You are joint-heir with Christ. What have you to do, then, in the service of sin and of Satan? Why do you follow these menial tasks? You will become a man who is to wear a crown in Heaven and who, even now, can read his title to it. Answer, Christian and be ashamed and be confounded, because you are demeaning yourself in thus sinning against your own soul.

A vision flits before my eye. The Lord God has made a great feast. Armies have met together. Terrible slaughter has been the consequence. Men’s arms have been red up to the very elbow in blood. They have fought with each other and there they lay strewn upon the plain—thousands of carcasses bleeding. The vultures sniff the prey from far-off desert wilds— they fly, keen of scent. God has made a great feast for the fowls of Heaven and for the ravenous beasts of the earth. Hark to the whirring of their wings as they come in multitudes, for where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

But what is that I see? I see a dove flying with the same speed as the vulture towards the carrion. O dove, what has brought you there in dangerous connection with your fierce enemies? Where are you going? Is there anything in that bloody feast that can content you? Shall your meek eyes glare with the fires of anger? Shall your fair white plumage be stained with gore and will you go back to your dove-cot with your pinions bloody red? I appeal to you, my Hearers. Can you answer the question? Can you explain the strange vision? How is it, then, that I see you, Christian, going with sinners after evil? Is it your food? If you are a child of God, sin is no more food for you than blood is for doves.

If you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” your peaceful soul will be as much out of element as a dove upon a battlefield. And the sight—the sight of sin will be as horrible to you as the sight of slaughter to that timid dove which even now tries itself with rapid wings to the cleft of the rock. Christian, I say, if you do as the worldling does, you go against your nature—against your newborn nature. To him it is not strange—should not the swine eat husks? Is it not his proper food? Should not the sinner love to sin? Is it not his very element? But what have you to do? What have you to do, quickened of the Spirit and renewed in the image of Christ—what have you to do?

You have seen in Scripture a dreadful picture of a madman, where Nebuchadnezzar the king runs with oxen and eats grass till his hair has grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. Is he not the pitiful picture of a backslider? For what is a Christian when he plunges into sin but as one who makes himself like the beasts that perish and who herds with the common—yes—and the unclean beasts of the earth? O Believer! If it is a pitiful thing to see a man make himself a beast, how much

more lamentable to see a Christian make himself a worldling! “Come you out from among them; touch not the unclean thing.” Why  
should the soul of my turtle dove be given up to its enemies? Why should  
the lamb flock with the wolves? Come out, I pray you—leave this stygian  
filth and be clean you vessel-bearer of the Lord. Come forth from the  
midst of that plague land, where you can get nothing but the ashy hue of  
leprosy and be clean! Today the Lord invites you. Refuse not His invitation, but return, you backsliding children of men.  
The question, then, cannot be answered—because when a Christian  
goes into sin he commits an inconsistent act—inconsistent with the freedom which Christ has bought for him and inconsistent with the nature  
which the Holy Spirit has implanted in him.  
Let us press forward. Christian, what have you to do with sin? Has it  
not cost you enough already? What? Man, have you forgotten the times of  
your conviction? If you have, my Brother, I have not. At the very mention  
of that word I think I hear my chains rattling anew. Was there ever a  
bond-slave who had more bitterness of soul than I? Five years a captive in  
the dungeons of the Law, till my youth seemed as if it would turn into  
premature old age and all the buoyancy of my spirit had been removed! O  
God of the spirits of all men! Most of all ought I to hate sin, for surely  
most of all have I smarted beneath the lash of Your Law.  
And as I look round, knowing the experience of some of you, I can recall  
to my mind the stories you have told me. How when you had first felt your  
need of a Savior you could not endure yourselves. Ah, there are those  
among you who when you were under strong convictions of sin were ready  
to commit self-destruction. You prayed, but found no answer. You sought,  
but obtained no mercy. There were not creatures out of Hell more  
wretched than you were then. What? And will you go back to the old  
curse? Burnt child, will you play with the fire?  
What? Man, when you have already been rent in pieces by the lion, will  
you step a second time into his den? Have you not had enough of the old  
serpent? Did he not poison all your veins once and will you play upon the  
hole of the asp and put your hand upon the cockatrice den? Have you not  
seen enough of the leopards and of the dragons and will you step a second  
time into their dens? Oh, be not so mad! Be not so foolish! Did sin ever  
give you pleasure? Did you ever find any solid satisfaction in it? If so, go  
back to your old drudgery. Go back, I say and wear the chain again if it  
delights you.  
But inasmuch as I know and you know that sin did never give you what  
it promised to bestow—inasmuch as it did delude you with lies and flatter  
you with promises which were all to be broken—I pray you be not beguiled  
a second time. Be not a second time led into captivity—be free and let the  
remembrance of your ancient bondage forbid you to wear the chain again! There is yet another light in which to put the sin of the Believer. Let  
me repeat the question once again—“What have you to do in the way of  
Egypt to drink the waters of the muddy river?” There is a crowd yonder.  
They have evidently assembled for some riotous purpose. They are attacking one man. There are very many of them. Oh, how they howl!—oh, how  
they scream! They give Him no space to take His breath, no time to rest.  
Let me press through the throng and look at the Man. I know Him at  
once. He has a visage more marred than that of any other man. ‘Tis He. It  
is the Crucified One, it is none other than Jesus, the Son of Man, the Savior of the world.  
Hark to the blasphemies which are poured into His ears! See how they  
spit in His face and put Him to an open shame. Onward they bring Him  
and you hear them cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him! “They are  
doing it—they have nailed Him to the tree—yonder is a man with the  
hammer in his hand who has just now driven in the nail. Look round  
upon the mob. I can well comprehend why yonder drunkard, why yonder  
swearer, why the whoremonger and the like of infamous notoriety should  
have joined in this treacherous murder.  
But there is one man there—methinks I know his face. Yes, I have seen  
him at the sacramental table, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of  
Christ. I have seen him in the pulpit saying, “God forbid that I should  
glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have seen him on his  
knees in prayer, pleading what he called, “The precious blood.” What have  
you to do in this counsel of the ungodly, this scene of sin without a parallel? “What are you doing here, Elijah?” In the name of love’s own self and  
of every holy thing that can ever pertain to a human heart—what are you  
doing here?  
Are you sickened at heart at such a spectacle—a Christian crucifying  
Christ? That spectacle is one in which you have had a share. You, too,  
when you have backslidden and have sinned—you have “Crucified the  
Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame.” Is there any other picture  
needed to set my text in the very strongest light? “What have you to do, O  
Christian, in the way of Egypt to drink the water of the muddy river?” Cry  
revenge against yourself, because you have murdered your Lord and  
opened His wounds anew!  
Have patience with me a moment while I turn my question over and revolve it yet again. Believer, you have rebelled against your God. You have  
done despite unto His Spirit. How will you answer for this? What will you  
say to a scoffing world when the quick eye of the sinner shall detect you?  
What will you say when he hisses out, “There’s your religion?” How will  
you answer him? You may pretend to do so, but do you not feel that he  
will get the best of the argument?  
If he goes his way and says the religion of Christ is a lie and an hypocrisy, what will you have to say? Surely you will have to hide your face in confusion and bemoan yourself because by this act you have given the enemy cause to blaspheme. And what will you say to Christ’s Church when the Church shall say to you, “What are you doing here?” How will you excuse yourself for dishonest acts in business, or for any lust into which you have fallen? Will you tell the Church it was your old nature? But how will you answer when the Church shall say, “They that are in  
Christ have crucified the flesh and its affections and lusts”?  
More than this, how will you answer your own conscience? Will you use  
some Antinomian quibble and apply that as a plaster to your wounds? No.  
If you are a child of God you will have to smart for it. The waters of the  
muddy river may be sweet to the Egyptians but they will be bitter to you.  
You shall have, as it were, a cauldron in your heart, if you do drink thereof. Christians can never sin cheaply—they pay a heavy price for all the  
pleasures that they ever find in evil. And what will you say to your Lord  
and Master next time you are at the sacramental table? How will you dare  
to eat that bread and drink that wine? And when you are alone on your  
knees and seeking fellowship with Him, how will you dare to seek it when  
you have just now been following His enemies and imitating them? Ah, well may He say to you, “I have withdrawn Myself. I have gone, for  
you have grieved My Spirit and vexed My soul.” Believer, if Jesus Christ  
were here, what would you say to make an excuse for your sin? Surely  
you would be speechless as the dumb and silent as the grave. Your tears  
might make confession. Your shudders should deepen your guilt. But  
your lips could not make an apology. What have you to do, O Christian, in  
the way of evil? What are you doing here, O God’s Elijah?  
I do not know whether there are any Christians here who have fallen  
into any special sin during this last week. If there is, Brother, open your  
heart to this question. It may be, my Master has sent me to you to nip  
your sin in its bud—to bring you back before you have backslidden very  
much. Turn, my Brother. He has not forgotten His love to you. Turn. His  
grace is still the same. With weeping and with bitter lamentation come to  
His footstool and you shall be once more received into His heart and you  
shall be set upon a rock again and your goings shall be established. 2. To take a different view of the subject. The pleasures of this world  
sometimes entice the people of God and they find some degree of mirth  
therein. To those Christians who can find pleasure in the common  
amusements of men, this question may be very pertinently put—“What  
have you to do to drink the water of that muddy river?”  
I may be speaking to some Believers who try if they can to keep their  
conscience quiet while they frequent places of amusement—they lend  
their sanction to things which are not spiritual and sometimes even not  
moral. Now, I put this question to them. Christian, you have tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world’s plenums can give you. If  
your profession is not a lie, you have had fellowship with Christ. You have had that joy which only the blessed spirits above and the chosen ones on earth can know—the joy of seeing Christ and leaning your head upon His  
bosom.  
And do the trifles, the songs, the music, the merriment of this earth  
content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels and can you  
live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, “I have tasted of Christ’s own  
manna and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this  
world’s joys.” Methinks it should be so with you. Again, Believer, have you  
not already learned the hollowness of all earth’s mirth? Turn to your  
neighbor and ask him. Does he frequent the play-house? Does he go from  
one party of pleasure to another? Does he indulge in the common pleasures of the world? Ask him whether they have ever satisfied him. If he is  
a worldling and is honest, he will say, “No.”  
He will tell you that his soul pants after something better than fashion  
and dissipation can afford him. He will tell you, too, that he has drained  
that cup and it is not the wine which he thought it was. That it excites for  
the moment, but leaves him weak and miserable afterwards. What? Shall  
the parings and offal of this world’s joys, suit the heir of Heaven?—You  
who profess to be of nobler birth and to be brother to the angels—no—  
next akin to the eternal Son of God Himself—are you to wallow in this  
mire and think it a soft and downy couch fit for a royal resting place? Get  
up, Believer, you are not lost to every sense of shame. Betray not yourself  
in seeking satisfaction wherein worldlings confess they have never found  
it.  
But let me ask you—will these pleasures yield to you any helps in your  
growth in grace? You say the world is crucified unto you—will these pleasures help to crucify it? You have prayed that you may be made like Christ—will these things help to conform you to His image? Often do you cry,  
“Oh Spirit of God, purge out the old leaven from me.” Will these help to  
purge out the old leaven? Unless you will fling the lie into the face of all  
your prayers, I pray you, shun these things.  
Fly at higher game than this. Let the mere hawk fly at the sparrow. But  
the eagle needs something nobler to be the object of its chase. If you were  
of the world it would be right for you to love her. If she were your mother  
you might nurse—but even then should not be satisfied with the breasts  
of her consolation. But you confess that not this world, but the next is the  
mother of your soul. I pray you then, be not content with what this earth  
yields. Lift up your eyes and expect your manna to spring not from the  
earth but from Heaven and may it drop into your hands.  
I can never understand that Christianity which alternately goes out to  
find joy in worldly amusements and returns home to have fellowship with  
Christ. In the life of Madame Guyon, who, though professedly a Papist,  
one must ever receive as being a true child of God, I have read an anecdote something to this effect. She had been invited by some friends to spend a few days at the palace of St. Cloud. She knew it was a place full of pomp and fashion and, I must add, of vice also. But being over persuaded by her friend and being especially tempted with the idea that per  
haps her example might do good, she accepted the invitation. Her experience afterwards should be a warning to all Christians. For  
some years that holy woman had walked in constant fellowship with Christ—perhaps none ever saw the Savior’s face and kissed His wounds more  
truly than she had done. But when she came home from St. Cloud she  
found her usual joy was departed—she had lost her power in prayer. She  
could not draw near to Christ as she should have done. She felt in going  
to the lover of her soul as if she had played the harlot against Him. She  
was afraid to hope that she could be received again to His pure

and perfect love and it took some months before the equilibrium of her peace  
could be restored and her heart could yet again be wholly set upon her  
Lord.  
He that wears a white garment must mind where he walks when the  
world’s streets are so filthy as they are. He that has a thousand enemies  
must take care how he exposes himself. He who has nothing on earth to  
assist him towards Heaven should take care that he goes not where the  
earth can help towards Hell. O Believer, shun, I pray you, fellowship with  
this world for the love of this world is enmity against God.  
Now some will say that I am an ascetic and wish you to become Puritans. I wish we were Puritans most certainly, but I am no ascetic. I believe  
the Christian man ought to be the happiest man in the world and I believe  
he is, too. But I know that this world does not make him happy—it is the  
next world. I say that the Believer has a more sure and certain right to be  
a happy and a cheerful man than any other man, but if in this world only  
are had hope, we should be of all men the most miserable because this  
world yields no joy to us.  
3. For one minute I shall now take my text with regard to the Christian  
in a third sense. We are all tried with the temptation to put our trust in  
things which are seen, instead of things which are not seen. The Lord has  
said it—“Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm,” but  
“blessed is he that trusts in the Lord.” Yet Christians often do trust in  
man and then our text comes home—“What have you to do in the way of  
Egypt, to drink the water of that muddy river?” “Some trust in horses and  
some in chariots, but we will stay ourselves upon the Lord God of Israel.” Look at yonder Believer. He trusts in Christ and only in Christ for his  
salvation and yet he is fretted and worried even though this is the day of  
rest, about something in his business. Why are you troubled, Christian?  
“Because of this great care,” he says. Care? Have you care? I thought it  
was written, “Cast your burden upon the Lord.” “Be careful for nothing,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God.” Can you not trust God for temporals? “Ah,” says the Believer, “I  
wish I could.”  
Believer, if you cannot trust God for temporals, how dare you trust Him  
for spirituals? Surely if He is worthy to be trusted with eternity, He must  
be fit to be relied upon in time. Can you trust Him for your soul’s redemption and yet not rely upon Him for a few paltry pounds? Then what are  
you trusting in? “Oh, I wish I had a good friend,” says one. “I wish I had  
someone at my book to help me.” Indeed, Sir, what have you to do to go in  
the way of Egypt, to want to drink of that water? Is not God enough? Do  
you want another eye beside that of Him who sees all things? Do you want  
another arm to help besides Him who—  
*“Bears the earth’s huge pillars up,  
And spreads the heavens abroad?”*  
Is His heart faint? Is His arm weary? Is His eye grown dim? If so, seek  
another God. But if He be infinite, omnipotent, faithful, true and all-wise,  
why do you go abroad so muck to seek another confidence? Why do you  
rake the earth to find another foundation when this is strong enough and  
broad enough and deep enough to bear all the weight which you can ever  
build thereon? Christian, be single in your faith. Have not two trusts, but  
one. Believer, rest only on your God and let your expectation be from Him.  
God bless you, Believer. Let this question ring in your ears this week and  
if you are tempted to sin, or to worldly pleasure, or to casual trust, think  
you see your minister and that you hear him saying in your ears—“What  
have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of  
Euphrates?”  
II. I now come to the second part of my subject. Let not our friends  
grow dreary. I shall be brief on the matter that remains—that the Word  
may be felt.  
CONVINCED SINNER, I hope I have some such here. Some of those  
precious ones of God, whose eyes are bejeweled with the tears of penitence and whose hearts are like the fragrant spices, which when broken,  
send out a sweet perfume. And so, my Friend, you feel your lost estate.  
God’s Holy Spirit has kindly looked upon you and begun a good work in  
your soul. And yet during the past week you have fallen into your old sin.  
Ah, ah, smarting and yet sinning! Wounded and yet rebelling! Pricked  
with the ox-goad and yet kicking against the pricks! It is hard for you! It is  
hard for you!  
To sin with a steeled conscience is easy, but to sin when conscience is  
raw is hard, indeed. You have a hard task. You have to go on in sin and  
tread its thorny path, when your feet are tender, having just been burned  
in the fire. And what was the cause of your sin, after all? Was it worth  
sinning for—to grieve your conscience and vex the Holy Spirit? I have heard of a man who had just begun the Christian life and he had some months of sorrow, owing to a hasty temper. His neighbor had let some of his cattle stray into the field. He asked him to fetch them out again and mend the fence. His neighbor would not and he flew into such a passion with him, that afterwards he sat down and cried. Said he, “Why, if all the cows in the field were sold and I had lost the money, they were not worth the bother I made about them, nor worth one moment of the grief  
which I have to suffer.”  
Oh, What fools we all are! Let us, however, write ourselves fools in capital letters if when conscience is tender we yet go and do the very thing  
which we hate and choose the very cup which was so bitter to our taste,  
so nauseous to us just now.  
And then, convinced Sinner, another question. You are under conviction of sin and you have been lately—as it is a festive season—you have  
been frequenting the dance hall, or the theater. Now these are amusements for worldlings. Let them have them. I would not prevent them for a  
moment. Let every man have his own amusement and his own joy. But  
what is this to you? What have you to do with it? Why you know you  
thought the place would fall down while you were sitting there. What  
business had you there? Suppose the devil had come in to take one of his  
own away and had taken you?  
He might have been forgiven for his mistake—for he found you on his  
grounds. You were trespassing and therefore if the old Giant Grim had  
taken you away to Despair’s Castle, who could have blamed him? Were  
you not for the time in his territory? Had he not therefore a right to do as  
he would with you? But you who have a tender conscience, how could you  
be merry there—listening to light music while you had a heavy heart? I  
never like to see a newly-made widow at a wedding and I do not like to see  
a convinced sinner where others are making merry.  
When you have joy in your heart, you may join with the kindred sympathy of other men’s joys. But while your soul is bleeding, what a mockery,  
what a farce it is for you to be pretending to find joy in the very thing  
which has given you the pain! You have heard the old and oft-repeated  
story of the celebrated clown who was under conviction of sin. He went to  
a certain doctor and told him he was exceeding melancholy and he wished  
that he could advise him something that would cheer his spirits. The doctor prescribed for him some remedies, but they failed.  
He went at last to a celebrated popular preacher—who ought not to  
have been a preacher, for he did not understand the Gospel at all—and  
he, fool that he was, said to the poor man, “Well, I do not know what will  
cheer you up, but I should say if you were to go and see the tricks and antics of such-and-such a person, the clown at such-and-such a theater, if  
anything would make you merry that would.” “Alas, Sir,” said he, “I am  
that man myself!” So strange must have been his position, making others roar with laughter while he himself was roaring with terror! And yet this is just your position, convinced Sinner, if you can find merriment in the world. Let other men have it. It is not the place for you—stand aloof from  
it and go not there.  
And then, again, take care, convinced Sinner, that you do not trust in  
yourself in any degree. What have you to do to go to Egypt to drink the  
waters of the muddy river? Your works have ruined you. How can they  
save you? Your works have damned you. How can they wipe out the sentence of damnation? Fly to Christ, fly to the flowing wounds and to the  
open heart. There is hope for you there. But at the foot of Sinai there is  
thunder and fire and smoke. And if Moses did exceeding fear and quake,  
how much more should you when the mountain seems as though it would  
roll upon you and crush you and bury your spirit in eternal destruction?  
God help you, convinced Sinner, never to go in that way of Egypt, to drink  
the Waters of Sihon—for these things are not for you.  
III. Lastly, to any here present who are CARELESS. I have a hard task  
and but a few moments for the attempt to bring a reasonable question to  
unreasonable men. You tell me, Sirs, that you love the vanities of this  
world and that they content you. I look you in the face and remind you  
that there have been many madmen in this world besides yourselves. Yet  
as there is some spark of reason left, let me see if I can kindle a flame of  
thought therewith.  
Sinner, God is angry with the wicked every day. What have you to do  
with joy? You are condemned already because you believe not on the Son  
of God. What have you to do with peace—a condemned man dancing in  
his cell at Newgate with chains about his wrists? You’re a dying man, you  
may drop down dead in this hall. What have you to do with merriment?  
You! If you were sure you should live a week you might spend six days if  
you would, in sin. But you are not sure you will live an hour. What have  
you to do with sin and its pleasures? God is furbishing His sword today. It  
is sharp and strong as the arm which shall wield it. That sword is meant  
for you except you repent.  
What have you to do with taking your ease and eating and drinking and  
being happy? That man yonder, with his neck in the noose and his feet  
upon the treacherous drop—is it fitting that he should sing songs and call  
himself a happy man? This is your position, Sir! Sinner, you are standing  
over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! Your  
hope is as the spider’s web—your confidence is as a dream. Death follows  
you, not as the slow-paced footman, but on horseback, the skeleton rider  
on his pale horse is rattling after you with tremendous speed! And ah, Hell  
follows him! Hell follows Death—the sure and certain consequence of sin! And what have you to do with making merry? Have you made appointments for the next week? Keep them if you dare, if in the name of God you  
can make it consistent. If you can make it consistent with reason to be busy about the body and neglect the soul, to fritter away that time on which eternity depends, then go and do it. If it is a wise thing for you to leap before you look, if it is a prudent thing to damn your soul eternally for the sake of a few hours of mirth—say so—go and do it like an honest  
man.  
But if it is unwise to forget forever and only think of today, if it is the  
strongest madness to lose your life to gain the mere apparel with which  
the body is to be covered. If it is madness to fling away jewels and hoard  
up dust as you are doing, then I pray you, I beseech you, answer the  
question, “What have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of  
Sihor?” Turn, turn! “For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no  
pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: wherefore turn  
yourselves and I will love you.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the  
unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He  
will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”  
Lo, the Cross is lifted up before you! Jesus bleeds. His wounds are  
streaming with His life-blood. Yes and with yours, too. Believe, Sinner.  
Trust Him—with your whole heart trust Him. Come to Him, come to Him.  
With weeping and supplication I pray you come. Knowing the terrors of  
the Lord, I beseech you. As one that pleads for his own life, I plead with  
you. By Heaven. By Hell. By time flying so swiftly. By eternity approaching  
so silently. By death. By judgment. By the awful soul-reading eye. By the  
rooks whose stony bowels shall refuse your prayer to fall upon you. By the  
trumpet and the thunders of the resurrection morning. By the pit and by  
the flame—I pray you think and believe in Him who is the Lamb of God  
which takes away the sins of the world.  
God bless my words to you through His Spirit’s energy and He shall  
have the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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THE BRIDE AND HER ORNAMENTS— THE SIN OF FORGETTING GOD  
NO. 1634-A

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 4, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.” Jeremiah 2:32.**

IT is a clear proof of the great love of God to His people that He will not lose their love without earnest expostulation. When you do not care at all for a person, he may love you or hate you, it is all the same to you. But when you have great love for him, then you earnestly desire to possess his heart in return. This, then, is clear proof that God greatly loves His people, since, whenever their hearts wander from Him, He is greatly grieved. And He rebukes them and earnestly pleads with them, setting the coldness of their hearts in a true light and striving to bring them back to warm affection towards Himself. Not only are God’s rebukes proofs of His love, but when He goes farther and deals out blows as well as words, there is love in every stroke of His hand. Most truly does He say, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten,” since rebukes and chastening are proofs that He will not lose our hearts without a struggle for them.

Do not look, therefore, upon a sermon that rebukes as something to be avoided. Far from it! Hear it and accept it as a token of love from God to your souls. That man is very foolish who will not hear the warning of a friend. Few prize a friend’s rebukes and yet a wise man knows that there is no greater token of the affection of a friend than when he will undertake the unpleasant duty of pointing out our faults. Many parents are like Eli— they cannot endure the task of chastening their children—and so, when their sons grow up to be their plague, they must not wonder, for they have procured this evil to themselves by their unworthy love of ease.

Our heavenly Father is never an Eli! He will not “spare the rod and spoil the child.” He loves us too well to suffer us to go on in our iniquity. He will not stay His hand and leave us to perish. He will scourge rather than abandon. He will chide rather than lose. Today He speaks in tones of severity that He may not be compelled to utter, tomorrow, words of doom. Accept, then, at this time, dear Friend, whatever shall come to you out of this text. If it should be bitter in your mouth, yet receive it thankfully from God as good medicine to your spirit, and so may His Spirit cause it to be.

Coming to the text, in which God proves His love to His people because He will not let their love readily go away from Himself, notice, first, a grievous sin. “My people have forgotten Me.” Secondly, a chiding question about that sin. “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” And then, thirdly, let us observe the call to repentance which lies within the text, like perfume in a flower. If we have forgotten God, let us grieve over such forgetfulness and turn to Him at once with full purpose of heart—even unto God our exceeding joy!

I. First, then, here is A VERY GRIEVOUS SIN. “My people have forgotten Me days without number.” Observe whom they had forgotten—it will help us to see the sin of it. The Lord says, “My people have forgotten Me.” It would not have mattered half as much if they had forgotten their dearest friends—if the husband had forgotten his wife, or the mother her child—but here are favored men and women who have forgotten their God, their Father, their life, their All! “My people have forgotten Me, their God. Other nations, having set up their false gods, did not forget them, but, with blind pertinacity of devotion, they bowed before them. But My people have forgotten their God, the only God, the living and true God. My people have forgotten Me—the good God, whom it is pleasure to remember.”

“You are good and do good,” said the Psalmist, and it is true. Yet too often we forget the Source of all goodness. If we could forget the evil, it were well, but to forget the only and essential Good is sad, indeed. “My people have forgotten Me,” whom they were bound in duty to remember. God is our Creator—shall we not remember Him that made us? God is our Preserver. Shall we not remember Him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being”? God is our Father—shall children forget the Father at whose table they feed and from whose lips they are comforted! God is our All in All and shall we yet forget Him? Surely, it were better to lose memory than for memory to lose its hold upon God! My people have forgotten Me! God, the good, the best, who has a chief right to be remembered!

Brethren, there is great evil in our hearts, or it would be so difficult to forget God as to be impossible. A friend has gone away from us and we do not see him, but he has left so many tokens of his goodness that we are reminded of him every day. Is it not so with God? Has He not left us innumerable tokens of His affection for us? Ought we to forget when so many forget-me-nots are round about us? But, supposing that friend has not gone away at all, but is living with us in the house and enters, even, into our chamber—what shall we say if we forget one who is constantly with us? No man is so present with his friend as God is with His people! He is in us and round about us! Never can we depart from Him, for we are not only in Him, but He is in us and He sees all our ways.

Oh, strange sin that we should forget One who is everywhere present and manifests that Presence in deeds of love! O forgetful creature, what do you think of your Lord? What? Do you owe the breath in your nostrils to God and yet can you forget? Is the bread upon your table put there by the hand of a God whom you do not remember? Are the very clothes upon your back the gift of His Divine charity and do you forget Him? You would be in the grave—no, you would be in Hell—but for His mercy—and yet is He not in all your thoughts? Oh, this wicked forgetfulness of ours! Let us forget all else besides, but let it not be charged to us that we have forgotten our God! Yet it is so written, “My people have forgotten Me.”

Who were they that forgot God? That casts a second light upon this sin. “My people have forgotten Me. Not strangers, not heathen, not those who have only heard of Me but have never known Me, but My people.” It signifies, “My chosen, My elect, a people whom I have taken out from the midst of the earth that they may be a people unto Me forever. My people have forgotten Me.” Chosen of God and yet forget electing love? “My people.” It is a redeemed people who have become the Lord’s because they are not their own, but are bought with a price. He has redeemed them unto Himself forever—redeemed them from among men by the matchless price of His only-begotten Son’s life! And shall it be that those on whom there is the eternal blood—mark—who are set apart by sacrifice to be God’s own, that they shall forget Him?

Oh, sad ingratitude! “My people.” That is to say, a people not only chosen and redeemed, but brought to know Him, brought into fellowship with Him, brought into relationship with Him, brought absolutely into union with Him—they have forgotten Him. You that sat at Jesus’ feet and drank in His loving words! You that sat at His table and to whom He was made known in the breaking of bread! You that have laid your head upon the bosom of the Lord—can it, shall it be said of you, “My people have forgotten Me”? Oh, but this is sad! “He that eats bread with Me has forgotten Me. He that said He would die for My sake has forgotten Me. He that sang just now—

*‘Have You a lamb in all Your flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Have You a foe before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead?’”*

“He has forgotten Me!” Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, that you and I should have been upon the mount with Jesus. That we should have been in the garden with Him. That we should have danced for very joy of heart in His Presence and should have felt ourselves next door to the gates of Heaven when He has laid bare His heart to us—and yet it should ever be said of us that we have forgotten Him! This will be sad, indeed, if ever it comes to this! And yet this is the crime that is laid at the door of His own people. “My people have forgotten Me.”

Observe sadly the space in which they had forgotten—in the case of Israel, it is added, “days without number.” Ah me! I hope it has not come to that with any of us here present! And yet it may. It may. I may be touching a chord, now, which shall awaken the saddest memories. “Days without number.” How long is it, Friend, since you were in the habit of walking with God? How long is it since you have seen the face of the Well-Beloved? I ventured to put that question once to a professor and, shaking his head, he replied, “Don’t ask me that. If you will ask me whether I have been a drunk; whether I have been dishonest in business; whether I have done any positive action by which I have degraded the Christian name, I can answer you without fear. But if you ask, How long since I have had fellowship with Christ, I cannot—I dare not—answer you.”

Yet I venture to press the question and I hope the answer will not be, “I have forgotten Him days without number.” I hope you will not sing, as Cowper did—

*“What peaceful hours I then enjoy’d!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*

On the contrary, may it be yours and mine to be kept from forgetting God at all! And if there ever should be a moment in which we wander, may it be a small moment, much lamented and never repeated! May our soul soon come back as the needle of the compass returns to its pole. Turn it awhile with your finger and you may move it east, west, south—but take your finger away and back it comes to its pole—so may it be with us! May we be like the birds of the air which at eventide seek their nests. As the stone may be thrown aloft by force, but naturally returns to the earth, so may we, if tossed about by Satan, fall back upon our firm resting place in Jesus! May our forgetfulness be for a small moment, but in life and death may we remember our Well-Beloved.

You see, the sin lies in this, that we should forget God, that we should do it and do it, “days without number.” How is God forgotten? What are the manifestations of this offense? Some professors evidently forget God by their worldliness. When they were in a humbler condition of society they were known to find great enjoyment at Prayer Meetings—the assembling of the saints together was very joyful to them. The reading and hearing of the Word of God were gracious refreshments to them, but they are now too rich to care for this light bread! They have prospered so much that if they prosper much more it will be a thousand times worse than adversity, as in the case of the celebrated captain who, when his soldiers said they had won a victory, said, “One more such victory as this and we shall be defeated forever.”

Such rising men, like the Israelites, have been filled with the quails, but while the meat is yet in their mouths the wrath of God has come upon them. They have been fattened with the treasures of the world, but their souls have been starved to very skeletons, for they have not fed upon the things of God! Some that were high professors now seem to have no religion whatever—they mix with worldly people—and seem quite happy with them. I have seen the hand of God go out against such followers of Demas. They prospered and, as they prospered, they became less and less attentive to Divine things. They turned aside from the Truth of God and their children have grown up to be utter worldlings—some of their sons to be debauched and depraved—till the name that stood high in the Church of God is struck out of the roll of Israel and their family is rather numbered among the sons of Belial than among the saints of the Most High!

Such have forgotten God, “days without number.” O my beloved comrades in the army of Christ, may you all be preserved from such a curse! Some have forgotten God by self-seeking. They live unto themselves. It is clear that though once they seemed to have a zeal for God, now their zeal is entirely to push their own way, to make their own fortunes to plant out their children—anything and everything except the Glory of God and the love of souls. And yet they profess to be God’s people even now! True is the lament, “My people have forgotten Me.” It is well to forget self to glorify God—but to make self our god is a thing accursed in the highest degree. Some, too, show that they forget God by the failure of their trust. They are in trouble and they are very anxious. Why? Because they have forgotten God, though He has promised to help them.

They are wondering what is to become of them, looking all about them with the greatest amount of carking care that even a worldling might feel. And if you say to them, “God will provide, God is your Helper,” they have forgotten God, they have left Him out of their calculations. They are fretting and worrying. They are troubled and cast down because they have forgotten God. You can do this in your daily concerns until you may act as if God, Himself, were dead! It is sad, indeed, when a Christian acts upon atheistic principles and despairs as if he had no God to succor him! Some people, when things run a little cross to them; some working men when they are out of work; some men when they cannot see God’s work prospering just as they would have it, leave out of their calculations the one great Worker, the one great Force—and soon get troubled, cast down and go crawling about the world full of distrust.

Ah me, what evils come to men when they have forgotten God! Alas, there are some who add to this a forgetfulness of God through neglect of private devotion. Prayers are slurred over. Drawing near to God becomes a form and a pretense. The Word is read, but it is not read with the view of finding God in the sacred Volume and having fellowship with Him through His Word. Oh, it is sad when it can be said that God’s people are forgetting Him in the closet! “It was such a busy day,” says one, “I could not find time to pray.” Remember how Martin Luther acted—he said that He must have three hours prayer one day because it was such a busy day that He should not have strength to get through it if he did not have extra time for devotion!

It is foolish to say, “I have more to do and so I will take less time in getting strength to do it.” As well might the mower say, “It is a bigger field to mow and so I will take less trouble in sharpening my scythe.” It is, depend upon it, a dead waste of time to be short in drawing near to God! The Lord might well complain—“My people have forgotten Me. They have not waited upon Me in wrestling prayer. They have not cried to Me during the day. They have not lifted up their hearts to Me in the moment of trouble. They have not consulted Me in difficulty. They have not rejoiced in Me in the time of their joy. They have forgotten Me.”

And you and I can do it in a very high sense by a breach of communion, by getting out of fellowship with God, by walking contrary to Him so that He walks contrary to us. It is very bad walking and very bad living when God and ourselves are at cross-purposes. It is a very sweet thing, when you are conscious of having done wrong, to go back to your heavenly Father at once and admit it and get right again. How willing He is to receive us! How glad He is to blot out the past and let bygones be bygones and to let us start anew with Him! He delights to forgive! Sometimes we let the stones accumulate till there is quite a heap and they are made into a wall which blocks our way. If every stone had been flung away, one by one, how much easier it would have been!

There would not be clouds of dust if we kept our ways well watered with daily repentance. There would not be a separation between God and our soul in great things if we would not allow it in little things. But, I fear too often it may be said of this high point of rapturous fellowship with God, “My people have forgotten Me days without number.” I scarcely need, I think, to talk longer about this sin, except to notice that if we ever do forget God, it leads to all sorts of mischief. We lose our joy and our comfort— and then we lose our strength and our watchfulness. And then we backslide by little and little and then, probably, we fall into one sin and then into another, if not into a third, more grievous still!

David had never sinned with Bathsheba if he had not forgotten his God. By degrees we get hardened about our state and soon it comes to this—that we have lost the Presence of God—and do not care whether we have it or not. Oh, this is a sad, sad state of heart! God save us from it! May it never be said of us, “My people have forgotten Me days without number.”

II. And now, dear Friends, I call your attention to THE CHIDING QUESTION which is the very marrow of the text—“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” And I suppose that question is put, first, because there are many trivial things which occupy minds so that they cannot forget them. How sad it is that the most grand things, the best things, should not equally engross our thoughts! Now, I will not say a word about you Western women that are here—of course, you do not care about ornaments or dress—at least, you should not! But Eastern women were very fond of ornaments and it was a question which every Oriental could understand, “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?”

Of course such forgetfulness was impossible. The young woman’s mind was full of her jewels! Isaiah gives you a long list that seems to have been cut out of the fashion-book of the day—a long list of various things that ladies used to wear in those days—and these they never forgot. Their minds doted upon them and when the marriage day came round, that was the main thought—how they should be dressed, how they should glitter before all onlookers! Forget her ornaments? The question is absurd! The maid’s mind was taken up with them. A bride forget her attire? It could not be! And yet I venture to say that these things are trifles—that the costliest jewels in the world are nothing but mere stones—that the richest dress that ever was made is excelled by birds and flies—and that the flowers of the field far surpass anything that can be manufactured by the needle.

When the attire is all fitted and the ornaments are all in their places, the whole matter is a trifle. We should have had no need of either ornament or attire if it had not been for sin. Strange that the insignia of our fall should become the ground of our boasting! Yet so it is. But here is the point—do, then, these Eastern women value their jewels and their dress so much that they cannot forget them? Are their heads filled with these things so that they never slip out of their memories? And do the people of God forget their God? I do not know a stronger way of putting it. Can these trifles secure their places so surely and shall the most supreme good so readily escape our thoughts? Shame on us!

Every time we see one who, in dressing, has evidently paid the daintiest attention to every pin, we ought to stand rebuked! When we see a woman curling, plaiting or bedecking her hair, or putting on jewels, let us think to ourselves, “Does she pay so much attention to such a thing as that and do I think so little of my God? Have I so much desire to be dressed in the rich things that the Divine Bridegroom has provided for me that I take little notice of the treasures of His Grace?” That is the first word of rebuke. It is a very powerful one to those who think it over. Shall trifles be remembered and God be forgotten?

The next is this—if a bride did forget her attire, or a maid did forget her ornaments, it would be very unreasonable behavior. The thing was so unreasonable that it was quite unknown! Suppose we found an Eastern woman having no regard whatever, on her marriage day, to her attire? She would be thought to be mad! They would say, “This is so contrary to all women’s ways in this part of the country that she must have lost her reason.” It is unreasonable that a bride should forget her ornaments and her attire—but how infinitely more unreasonable it is that you and I should forget God! He is our diadem of Glory—He is our beauty of holiness! In Christ we are arrayed in raiment of needlework and our garments are of worked gold! Can we, shall we forget Him?

There may be a reason for forgetting to eat bread. There may be a reason for forgetting to put on one’s garments. Such neglects have been reasonable in times of fire, or danger to life, but there never can be a reason for forgetting God! A child of God is in the most unreasonable condition in which a human being can be when he is living a single day without remembering his God, his life, his Heaven, his All-in-All! Next, it would have been a most unseasonable thing for a maid to forget her attire at her wedding. If she forgot her dress on other days, it might be well enough, but, when the marriage drew near, for the bride to forget her attire would be thought a most unseasonable neglect. Forget it tomorrow, if you will, but not when your marriage has come!

You may have forgotten it many days ago, but do not forget it, now, that the happy day has arrived. A bride who forgets her attire would be something like the foolish virgins who forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps. And, certainly, it is a most unseasonable thing for me and you to forget our God while we are here! Let the soldier, when the arrow is flying from every bush, forget his armor, but let us not forget our God! Let the hungry man, when famine rages through the land, forget his supply of bread, but let us not forget the Food of our souls, which is our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, when dangers assail you, temptations surround you, corruptions rage within you and Satan molests you, forget not, now, your God. And I will guarantee you, if you do not forget God on earth, you never will in Heaven, for there we shall be all taken up with Him and never, for a moment, shall our thoughts wander from our God, our Heaven, our All-inAll. However, now, at any rate, it would be unseasonable in the highest degree to forget your God. Notice the conduct of the maid or the conduct of the bride with regard to her ornaments. What does the maid do? Her conduct is the reverse of forgetfulness as to dress and ornaments. She labors hard to obtain her ornaments and to gain her attire.

Many women in the East give up every coin that they have and turn all into silver. They do not care about storing up coins—they prefer the precious metal in the form of rings for their ankles, arms, necks, noses and ears. It is their life’s work to provide themselves with ornaments for the marriage day. While they do this, let us do better—let us store up the thoughts of Christ, the Words of Christ and the things of Christ—and let us labor, let us wear ourselves out—to get more and more of Christ that we may be adorned with Him and made comely in His comeliness!

When the Eastern woman has, with great difficulty, obtained her ornaments and her attire, she then thinks a great deal of them. She preserves them with much care. She will, if possible, prevent a thief from taking away a ring or gem. She locks them up carefully. Oh, that we did store up every bit we get of our Lord’s love and put it by to keep it, never losing any pearl that we find, or any ring that we fashion by experience! I say that the Eastern woman thinks about her bridal attire. Why, we hear of them dreaming about it—dreaming about the next bracelet they will buy, the next jewel they will hang about their necks! Would to God we were as much taken up with the preciousness of Christ! I sometimes dream of Christ and when I do, I am glad, for this is proof that my thoughts have been with Him when I was awake, or they would not have been with Him when I was asleep. Oh, to have our whole soul occupied with thoughts of Christ and Divine things!

How joyfully the Eastern woman puts on her jewels, puts on her attire. She has these things to wear. I am ashamed of those Christians who are ashamed of Christ. They have jewels—I hope they have—but they are very wary of ever showing them. Perhaps they get some Christian friend into a corner and they say, “I have a jewel that I mean to wear, but not yet. I am afraid it should not be seen as yet, but I will show it if you will not tell anybody else.” If anybody comes round after a sermon and gently enquires, “Have you any of the precious things of Christ?” these timid ones blush and half deny their own joy! Some people—yes, some of Christ’s well-beloved ones—whisper, “I hardly know.” Is this after the right manner? The Eastern woman puts everything upon her on her marriage—and Eastern ladies at a banquet are all ablaze with diamonds and jewels—gold and silver.

I wish you Christian people would publicly put on your priceless jewels and never be ashamed of them! Do you know anything about Christ? Tell it! Tell it and you will soon know more! Do you know anything about Christ? Live it! Live it and you will soon have more! Put on your jewels! I do not see, while the Bridegroom is about, why you should put on your everyday rags. I have seen young folks smarten themselves up when their beloved has come to see them and, oh, since our Beloved is always coming to see us, we ought to keep ourselves in good trim, well decked in the Graces of His Spirit! “Shall a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?”

In the Presence of Christ let us glory in Him! Let us delight ourselves in Him! Let us tell the world we never can have enough of Jesus, our Lord! And when they ask, “What is your Beloved more than any other beloved?” let us show how He has enriched us and blessed us with His love and Grace—and let this be our happy answer to an unbelieving generation!

III. Now I close with a few words of CALL TO REPENTANCE if we have, in any measure or degree, forgotten our God. I am sure, first, that our God does not deserve to be treated so. “You use no other friend so ill.” Such love, such love, such wondrous love, infinite, unending, everlasting love to you! And can you forget? Can you forget? So undeserving and yet so favored! Can you forget your Friend? Loved by God as He loves His own Son! Can you forget? Have you forgotten? Will not the time past suffice for that? A half a minute’s forgetfulness of God is half a minute too long! Let it not come to be “days without number.” But, if the number is ever so small, let us weep to think we should have forgotten Him at all! Let our sorrows flow at the recollection that He has never forgotten us—no, never for a moment—and yet we have forgotten Him. Our names have been on Jesus’ breastplate and on His shoulders days without number—shall His name be always out of our minds? “I have engraved you on the palms of My hands,” He says.

Let us engrave His name upon the tablets of our hearts! Think for a minute, if He had forgotten you—forgotten you in your merriest moment, yes, in your holiest moment—what would have been your portion? If God had suspended the outflow of His Grace and left you to yourselves, what had been your fate? Oh, my God, my God, if You had once forgotten me, where had I been? But He never has forgotten us! He is not forgetting us at this moment. He says to each one, however wandering, “I do earnestly remember you.” He will never forget us. The dying thief said, “Lord, remember me,” and Jesus did remember him!

He cries, “I remember you, the love of your betrothal.” Lord, do you remember me? Then would I smite my heart to think I ever should have forgotten You! Oh, how can we forget when God is our diadem of Glory? It is our highest privilege that He is ours and we are His. God is our beauty, the honor and excellence of all His saints. It is this that makes us illustrious in the eyes of cherubim and seraphim—that God is ours and we are His! God is our joy, our only joy, our overflowing joy! He that knows God has Heaven within His spirit even now. Come, let us not forget again, but let us bind the glorious name of our Lord about our heart. May the sweet Spirit do it now, for Jesus Christ’s sweet love’s sake. Amen.

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GADDING ABOUT  
NO. 3007

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1906. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “Why do you gad about so much to change your way? Jeremiah 2:36.

GOD’S ancient people were very prone to forget Him and to worship the false deities of the neighboring heathen. Other nations were faithful to their blocks of wood and stone, and adhered as closely to their graven images as though they really had helped them, or could in future deliver them. Only the nation which avowed its belief in the true God forsook its God and left the fountain of Living Water, to hew out for itself broken cisterns which could hold no water!

There seems to have been speaking after the manner of men, astonishment in the Divine Mind concerning this, for the Lord says, in verses 10 and 11 of this Chapter, “Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate.” In the 32nd verse of this same Chapter, the Lord addresses His people thus, “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.” And here, in our text, the same astonishment appears, “Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” It certainly was a most unreasonable thing that a people with such a God, who had dealt out to them so graciously the riches of His love and had worked such wonders on their behalf, should turn from Him to the worship of Baal or Ashtaroth—mimic gods which had ears but heard not, eyes but saw not—and did but mock the worshippers who were deluded by them!

As in a mirror, I see myself in these people. The spiritual people of God are well imaged in the typical nation, for, alas, waywardness and wandering of heart are the diseases, not only of the Israelites of old, but also of the true Israel now. The same expostulations may be addressed to us as to that erring nation of old, for we as perpetually backslide and as constantly forget the Almighty One and put our trust in an arm of flesh. He says to us, also, “Why do you gad about so much?” For we are, alas, too often false to Him, forgetting Him and wandering here and there, rather than abiding in close and constant fellowship with God, our exceeding joy.

I desire to put this question first to Believers and then to the unconverted. May the Holy Spirit bless it to each class!

I. If you read this question, taking it in its context, you will see, in the first place, that there is A RELATIONSHIP MENTIONED. The question is asked, “Why do you gad about so much?”

The enquiry is not made of a traveler, nor of one whose business it is to journey from pole to pole and to investigate distant lands. It is not asked of a wayfarer lodging for a night, nor of a homeless vagrant who finds a poor shelter beneath every bush! It is asked by God of His people Israel, describing them under the character of a married wife. He represents the nation of Israel as being married to Him, Himself the Husband of Israel, and Israel His bride. To persons bearing that character, the question comes with great force, “Why do you gad about so much?” Let others wander who have no central object of attraction, who have no house and no “houseband” to bind them to the spot, but you, a married wife, how can you wander? What have you to do in traversing strange ways? How can you excuse yourself? If you were not false to your relationship, you could not do so! No, Beloved, we strain no metaphor when we say that there exists between the soul of every Believer and Jesus Christ, a relationship admirably imaged in the conjugal tie. We are married to Christ. He has betrothed our souls unto Himself. He paid our dowry on the Cross. He espoused Himself unto us in righteousness in the Covenant of Grace. We have accepted Him as our Lord and Husband. We have given ourselves up to Him and under the sweet Law of His Love we ought to dwell evermore in His house. He is the Bridegroom of our souls, and He has arrayed us in the wedding dress of His own righteousness. Now it is to us who acknowledge this marriage union and who are allied to the Lord Jesus by ties so tender that the Well-Beloved says, “Why do you gad about so much?”

Observe that the wife’s place may be described as a threefold one. In the first place, she should abide in dependence upon her husband’s care. It would be looked upon as a very strange thing if a wife should be overheard to speak to another man and say, “Come and assist in providing for me.” If she should cross the street to another’s house and say to a stranger, “I have a difficulty and a trouble—will you relieve me from it? I feel myself in great need but I shall not ask my husband to help me, though he is rich enough to give me anything I require and wise enough to direct me. I come to you, a stranger, in whom I have no right to confide and from whom I have no right to look for love—and I trust myself with you and confide in you rather than in my husband.” This would be a very wicked violation of the chastity of the wife’s heart! Her dependence, as a married woman with a worthy husband, must be solely fixed on him to whom she is bound in wedlock.

Transfer the figure, for it is even so with us and the Lord Jesus. It is a tender topic. Let it tenderly touch your heart and mine. What right have I, when I am in trouble, to seek an arm of flesh to lean upon, or to pour my grief into an earthborn ear in preference to casting my care on God and telling Jesus all my sorrows? If a human friend has the best intentions, yet he is not like my Lord—he never died for me, he never shed his blood for me and even if he loves me, he cannot love me as the Husband of my soul loves me. My Lord’s love is ancient as eternity, deeper than the sea, firmer than the hills, changeless as His own Deity! How can I seek another friend in preference to Him? What a slight I put upon the affection of my Savior! What a slur upon His condescending sympathy towards me! How I impugn His generosity and mistrust His power if, in my hour of need, I cry out, “Alas, I have no friend.” No friend while Jesus lives? Dare I say I have no helper? No helper while the Almighty One, upon whom God has laid help, still exists with strong arms and unchanged heart? Can I murmur and lament that there is no escape for me from my tribulations? No escape while my Almighty Savior lives and feels my every grief?

Do you see my point? Put it in that shape and the question, “Why do you gad about so much to look after creatures as grounds of dependence?” becomes a very deep and searching one. Why, O Believer, do you look after things which are seen, heard, handled and recognized by the senses, instead of trusting in your unseen but not unknown Redeemer? Oh, why, why, you spouse of the Lord Jesus, why do you gad about so much?

Have we not even fallen into this evil with regard to our own salvation? After a time of spiritual enjoyment it sometimes happens that our graces decline and we lose our joy. And as we are very apt to depend upon our own experience, our faith also droops. Is not this unfaithfulness to the finished work and perfect merit of our great Substitute? We knew, at the first, when we were under conviction of sin, that we could not rest on anything within ourselves, yet that Truth of God is always slipping away from our memories and we try to build upon past experiences, or to rely upon present enjoyments, or some form or other of personal attainment. Do we really wish to exchange the sure Rock of our salvation for the unstable sand of our own feelings? Can it be that having once walked by faith, we now choose to walk by sight? Are graces, frames, feelings and enjoyments to be preferred to the tried foundation of the Redeemer’s Atonement? Be it remembered that even the work of the Holy Spirit, if it is depended upon as a ground of acceptance with God, becomes as much an antichrist as though it were not the work of the Holy Spirit at all! Dare we so blaspheme the Holy Spirit as to make His work in us a rival to the Savior’s work for us? Shame on us that we should thus doubly sin! The best things are mischievous when put in the wrong place! Good works have “necessary uses,” but they must not be joined to the work of Christ as the groundwork of our hope! Even precious gold may be made into an idol calf and that which the Lord, Himself, bestows may be made to be a polluted thing, like that bronze serpent which once was used to heal, but when it was idolized, came to be styled by no better name than a piece of brass—and was broken and put away. Do not continually harp upon what you are, and what you are not—your salvation does not rest in these things, but in your Lord! Go and stand at the foot of the Cross— still an empty-handed sinner to be filled with the riches of Christ—a sinner black as the tents of Kedar in yourself and comely only through your Lord.

Again, the wife’s position is not only one of sole dependence upon her husband’s care, but it should be and is a position of sole delight on her husband’s love. To be suspected of desiring anything of man’s affection beyond that would be the most serious imputation that could be cast upon a wife’s character. We are again upon very tender ground and I beseech each of you who are now thinking of your Lord to consider yourselves to be on very tender ground, too, for you know what our God has said—“I the Lord your God am a jealous God.” That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—“a jealous God.” See that it is engraved on your hearts. Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love Him should divide our hearts between Him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy which is cruel as the grave, “the coals thereof are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame.” The royal word to the spouse is, “Forget also your own people, and your father’s house and so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord; and you must worship him.”

Of course, Beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give and which it is a part of our sanctification to give in its due and proper proportion to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is only for the Master. Inside the heart there must be a sanctum sanctorum, within the veil, where He, Himself, alone must shine like the Shekinah, and reign on the Mercy Seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits where the true Solomon alone must sit, the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must He, the King in His beauty, sit enthroned, sole Monarch of the heart’s affections. But, alas, alas, how often have we gone far to provoke His anger? We have set up the altars of strange gods hard by the Holy Place. Sometimes a favorite child has been idolized! Another time, perhaps, our own persons have been admired and pampered. We have been unwilling to suffer though we know it to be the Lord’s will—we were determined to make provision for the flesh. We have not been willing to hazard our substance for Christ, thus making our worldly comfort our chief delight instead of feeling that wealth to be well lost which is lost as the result of Jehovah’s will. Oh, how soon we make idols! Idol-making was not only the trade of Ephesus, but it is a trade all the world over! Making shrines for Diana, no, shrines for self, we are all master-craftsmen at this work in some form or another! We have set up images of jealousy which become abominations of desolation!

We may even exalt some good pursuit into an idol! Even work for the Master may sometimes take His place, as was the case with Martha. We are cumbered with much serving and often think more about the serving than of Him who is to be served. The problem being that we are too mindful of how we may look in the serving, and not enough considerate of Him and of how He may be honored by our service. It is so very easy for our busy spirits to gad about, and so very difficult to sit at the Master’s feet. Now, Christian, if you have been looking after this and after that secondary matter—if your mind has been set too much upon worldly business, or upon any form of earthly love, the Master says to you, “My spouse, My beloved, why do you gad about so much?” Let us confess our fault and return unto our rest. Let each one sing plaintively, in the chamber of his heart, some such song as this—

*“Why should my foolish passions rove?  
Where can such sweetness be  
As I have tasted in Your love,  
As I have found in Thee?  
Wretch that I am, to wander thus  
In chase of false delight—  
Let me be fastened to Your Cross,  
Rather than lose Your sight.”*

But a third position, which I think will be recognized by every wife as being correct, is not simply dependence upon her husband’s care and delight in her husband’s love, but also diligence in her husband’s house. The good housewife, as Solomon tells us, “looks well to the ways of her household and eats not the bread of idleness.” She is not a servant—her position is very different from that, but, for that very reason she uses the more diligence. A servant’s work may sometimes be finished, but a wife’s never is. “She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.” She rejoices willingly to labor as no servant could be expected to do. “She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands.” “She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night. She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.” All through the night she watches her sick child and then through the work day, as well, the child is still tended, and the household cares are still heavy upon her. She never relaxes. She counts that her house is her kingdom and she cares for it with incessant care. The making of her husband happy, and the training up of her children in the fear of God—that is her business. The good housewife is like Sarah, of whom it is written that when the angels asked Abraham, “Where is Sarah, your wife?” he answered, “Behold, in the tent.” It would have been well for some of her descendants had they been “in the tent, too, for Dinah’s going forth “to see the daughters of the land” cost her dearly!

Now this is the position, the exact position of the chaste lover of Jesus—he dwells at home with Jesus, among his own people. The Christian’s place with regard to Christ is to be diligently engaged in Christ’s house. Some of us can say, I trust, that we do naturally care for the souls of men. We were born, by God’s Grace, to care for them, and could not be happy—any more than some nurses can be happy without the care of children—unless we have converts to look after and weaklings to cherish. It is well for the Church when there are many of her members, beside her pastors and deacons, who care for the souls of those who are born in the Church. The Church is Christ’s family mansion. It should be the home of newborn souls, where they are fed with food convenient for them, flourished, comforted and educated for the better land. You have all something to do—you who are married to Christ have all a part assigned you in the household of God. He has given you each a happy task. It may be that you have to suffer in secret for Him, or you have to talk to two or three, or perhaps in a little village station, or at the corner of a street you have to preach, or possibly it is the distribution of a handful of tracts, or it is looking after the souls of a few women in your district, or teaching a class of children.

Whatever it is, if we have been growing at all negligent, if we have not thrown our full strength into our work and have been expending our vigor somewhere else, may not the question come very pertinently home to us, “Why do you gad about so much?” Why that party of pleasure, that political meeting, that late rising, that waste of time? Have you nothing better to do? You have enough to do for your Husband and His Church if you do it well. You have not a minute to spare—the King’s business requires haste. Our charge is too weighty and too dear to our hearts to admit of sloth. The Lord has given us as much to do as we shall have strength and time to accomplish, by His Grace, and we have no energies to spare, no talents to wrap up in napkins, no hours to idle away in the marketplace. One thing we have to do and that one thing should absorb all our powers. To neglect our holy life-work is to wrong our heavenly Bridegroom. Put this matter in a clear light, my Brothers and Sisters, and do not shut your eyes to it. Have you any right to mind earthly things? Can you serve two masters? What do you think would any kind husband here think if, when he came home, the children had been neglected all day, if there was no meal for him after his day’s work and no care whatever taken of his house? Might he not well give a gentle rebuke, or turn away with a tear in his eye? And if it were long continued, might he not almost be justified if he should say, “My house yields me no comfort. This woman acts not as a wife to me”?

And yet, Soul, is not this what you have done with your Lord? When He has come into His house, has He not found it in sad disorder, the morning prayer neglected, the evening supplication but poorly offered, those little children but badly taught and many other works of love forgotten? It is your business as well as His, for you are one with Him, and yet you have failed in it. Might He not justly say to you, “I have little comfort in your fellowship. I will leave until you treat Me better. And when you long for Me and are willing to treat Me as I should be treated, then I will return to you. But you shall see My face no more till you have a truer heart towards Me”?

Thus, in personal sadness, have I put this question. The Lord give us tender hearts while answering it!  
II. Painful as the enquiry is, let us turn to it again. A REASON IS REQUESTED—what shall we give? “Why do you gad about so much?”  
I am at a loss to give any answer. I can suppose that without beating about the bush, an honest heart, convinced of its ingratitude to Christ, would say, “My Lord, all I can say for myself is to make a confession of the wrong. And if I might make any excuse, which after all is no excuse, it is this—I find myself so fickle at heart, so frail, so changeable—I am like Reuben, unstable as water and, therefore, I do not excel.” But I can well conceive that the Master, without being severe, would not allow such an extenuation even as that because there are many of us who could not fairly urge it. We are not fickle in other things! We are not unstable in minor matters. Where we love, we love most firmly, and a resolve once taken by us is determinedly carried out. Some of us know what it is to put our foot down and declare that, having taken a right step, we will not retrace it and, then, no mortal power can move us. Now, if we possess this resolute character in other things, it can never be allowable for us to use the excuse of instability! Resolved elsewhere, how can you be fickle here? Firm everywhere else, and yet frail here? O Soul, what are you doing? This is gratuitous sin, wanton fickleness! Surely you have worked folly in Israel if you give the world your best, and Christ your worst! The world your decision, and Christ your wavering? This is but to make your sin worse! The excuse becomes an aggravation. It is not true that you are thus unavoidably fickle. You are not a feather blown with every wind, but a man of purpose and will! Ah, why, then, are you so soon removed from your Best-Beloved One?  
I will ask you a few questions, not so much by way of answering the enquiry, as to show how difficult it is to answer it. “Why do you gad about so much?” Has your Lord given you any cause of offense? Has He been unkind to you? Has the Lord Jesus spoken to you like a tyrant and played the despot over you? Must you not confess that in all His dealings with you in the past—love, unmingled love has been His rule? He has borne patiently with your ill-manners when you have been foolish. He has given you wisdom and He has not upbraided you, though He might have availed Himself of the opportunity of that gift, as men so often do, to give a word of upbraiding at the same time. He has not turned against you, or been your enemy. Why, then, are you so cold to Him? Is this the way to deal with One so tender and so good? Let me ask you, has your Savior changed? Will you dare to think He is untrue to you? Is He not, “the same yesterday, and today, and forever?” That cannot, then, be an excuse for your unfaithfulness! Has He been unmindful of His promise? He has told you to call upon Him in the day of trouble and He will deliver you—has He failed to do so? It is written, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Has He withheld a really good thing from you when you have walked uprightly? If, indeed, He had played you falsely, your excuse for deserting Him might claim a hearing, but you dare not say this! You know that He is faithful and true.  
“Why do you gad about so much?” Have you found any happiness in gadding about? I confess, sorrowfully, to wandering often and wandering much, but I am ready enough to acknowledge that I get no peace, no comfort by my wanderings, but, like a forlorn spirit, I traverse dry places, seeking rest and finding none. If, for a day, or a part of a day, my thoughts are not upon my Lord, the hour is dreary and my time hangs heavily. And if my thought is spent upon other topics even connected with my work in the Church of God, if I do not soon come back to Him— if I have no dealings with Him in prayer and praise—I find the wheels of my chariot taken off and it drags along heavily, while I cry to my Lord— *“The day is dark, the night is long,  
Unblessed with thoughts of You  
And dull to me the sweetest song,  
Unless its theme is You.”*  
The soul that has once learned to swim in the river of Christ, will, when His Presence is withdrawn, be like a fish laid by the fisherman on the sandy shore—it begins to palpitate in dire distress and, before long, it will die, if not again restored to its vital element. You cannot get the flavor of the Bread of Heaven in your mouth and afterwards contentedly feed on ashes! He who has never tasted anything but the brown, gritty cakes of this world may be very well satisfied with them, but he who has once tasted the pure white Bread of Heaven can never be content with the old diet. It spoils a man for satisfaction with this world to have had heart-ravishing dealings with the world to come. I mean not that it spoils him for practical activity in it, for the heavenly life is the truest life even for earth, but it spoils him for the sinful pleasures of this world—it prevents his feeding his soul upon anything but the Lord Jesus Christ’s sweet love. Jesus is the chief ingredient of all his joy and he finds that no other enjoyment beneath the sky is worth a moment’s comparison with the King’s wines on the lees, well refined!  
“Why then do you gad about so much?” For what? Oh, for what reason do you wander? When a child runs away from its home because it has a brutal parent, it is excused. But when the child leaves a tender mother and an affectionate father, what shall we say? If the sheep quits a barren field to seek after needed pasturage, who shall blame it? But if it leaves the green pastures and forsakes the still waters to roam over the arid sand, or to go bleating in the forest among the wolves, in the midst of danger, how foolish a creature it proves itself! Such has been our folly. We have left gold for dross! We have forsaken a throne for a dunghill! We have quitted scarlet and fine linen for rags and beggary! We have left a palace for a hovel! We have turned from sunlight into darkness! We have forsaken the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, the sweet summer weather of communion, the singing of the birds of promise, the turtle voice of the Divine Spirit and the blossoming of the roses and the fair lilies of Divine Love to shiver in frozen regions among the ice caves and snow of absence from the Lord’s Presence. God forgive us, for we have no excuse for this folly!  
“Why do you gad about so much?” Have you not always had to pay for your gadding? O Pilgrim, it is hard getting back again to the right road! Every Believer knows how wise John Bunyan was when he depicted Christian as bemoaning himself bitterly when he had to go back to the arbor where he had slept and lost his roll. He had to do a triple journey— first to go on, and then to go back, and then to go on again! The back step is weary marching. Remember, also, Bypath Meadow, and Doubting Castle and Giant Despair. ‘Twas an ill day when the pilgrims left the narrow way. No gain, but untold loss comes of forsaking the way of holiness and fellowship. What is there in such a prospect to attract you from the happy way of communion with Christ? Perhaps the last time you wandered, you fell into sin, or you met with a grief which overwhelmed you—ought not these mishaps to teach you? Having been already burned, will you not dread the fire? Having before been assaulted when in forbidden paths, will you not now keep to the King’s Highway, wherein no lion or any other ravenous beast shall be found?  
“Why do you gad about so much?” Do you not even now feel the drawings of His love attracting you to Himself? This heavenly impulse should make the question altogether unanswerable. You sometimes feel a holy impulse to pray, and yet do not pray. You feel, even now, as if you wished to behold the face of your Beloved and yet you will go forth into the world without Him—is this as it should be? The Holy Spirit is saying in your soul, “Arise from the bed of your sloth and seek Him whom your soul loves.” If your sloth prevents your rising, how will you excuse yourself? Even now, I hear the Beloved knocking at your door. Will you not hasten to admit Him? Are you too idle? Dare you say to Him, “I have taken off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” If you keep Him outside in the cold and darkness, while His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, what cruelty is this? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Can you hear Him say, “Open to Me, My Love, My Dove, My Undefiled,” and yet be deaf to His appeals? Oh, that He may gently make for Himself an entrance! May He put in His hand by the hole of the door and may your heart be moved towards Him! May you rise up and open to Him and then your hands will drop with myrrh, and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. But remember, if you neglect Him now, it will cost you much to find Him when you do arise, for He will make you traverse the streets after Him and the watchmen will smite you, and take away your veil. So rise, and admit Him now—  
*“Behold! Your Bridegroom’s at the door!  
He gently knocks, has knocked before.  
Has waited long; is waiting still—  
You treat no other friend so ill!  
Oh lovely attitude! He stands  
With melting heart and laden hands!  
Delay no more, lest He depart.  
Admit Him to your inmost heart.”*  
He calls you yet again, even now! Run after Him, for He draws you. Approach Him, for He invites you. God grant that it may be so!  
I wish I had the power to handle a topic like this as Rutherford, or Herbert, or Hawker would have done, so as to touch all your hearts if you are at this hour without enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. But, indeed, I am so much one of yourselves, so much one who has to seek the Master’s face, myself, that I can scarcely press the question upon you, but must rather press it upon myself—“Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” Blessed shall be the time when our wanderings shall cease—when we shall see Him face to face and rest in His bosom! Till then, if we are to know anything of Heaven here below, it must be by living close to Jesus, abiding at the foot of the Cross, depending on His Atonement, looking for His coming—that glorious hope—preparing to meet Him with lamps well trimmed, watching for the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes”—standing always in His Presence, looking up to Him as we see Him pleading before the Throne of God and believing that He is always with us, even unto the end of the world. May we be, in future, so fixed in heart that the question need not again be asked of us, “Why do you gad about so much?”  
And now I have to use the text, for a few minutes, in addressing those who are not converted.  
I trust that some of you who are not yet saved, nevertheless have a degree of desire towards Christ. It is well when, like the climbing plant, the heart throws out tendrils, trying to grasp something by the help of which it may mount higher. I hope that desire of yours after better things and after Jesus, is something more than Nature could have imparted. Divine Grace is the source of gracious desires. But that is not the point. Your desires may be right and yet your method of action mistaken. You have been trying after peace, but you have been gadding about to find it. The context says that the Israelites would soon be as weary of Egypt as they had been of Assyria. Read the whole passage, “Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You also shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria. Yes, you shall go forth from him and your hands upon your head: for the Lord has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them” (Jer 2:36, 37). Their gadding about would end in their being confounded at last as they were at first. Once they trusted in Assyria and the Assyrians carried them away captive, that was the end of their former false confidence. Then they trusted in Egypt—and met with equal disappointment.  
When a man is first alarmed about his soul, he will do anything rather than come to Christ. Christ is a harbor that no ship ever enters except under stress of weather. Mariners on the sea of life steer for any port except the fair haven of Free Grace. When a man first finds comfort in his own good works, he thinks he has done well. “Why,” he says, “this must be the way of salvation! I am no longer a drunkard. I have taken the pledge. I am no longer a Sabbath-breaker. I have taken a seat at a place of worship. Go in and look at my house, Sir, you will see that it is as different as possible from what it was before! There is a moral change in me of a most wonderful kind and surely this will suffice!” Now, if God is dealing with that man in a way of Grace, he will soon be ashamed of his false confidence. He will be thankful, of course, that he has been led to morality, but he will find that bed too short to stretch himself upon. He will discover that the past still lives—that his old sins are buried only in imagination—the ghosts of them will haunt him, they will alarm his conscience. He will be compelled to feel that sin is a scarlet stain, not to be so readily washed out as he fondly dreamed. His self-righteous refuge will prove to be a bowing wall and a tottering fence! Driven to extremities by the fall of his tower of Babel, the top of which was to reach to Heaven, he grows weary of his former hopes. He finds that all the outward religion he can muster will not suffice, that even the purest morality is not enough, for, over and above the thundering of conscience, there comes clear and shrill as the voice of a trumpet, “You must be born-again!” “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”  
Well, then, what does he do? He resolves to find another shelter to exchange Assyria for Egypt. That is to say, as works will not do, he will try feelings! And the poor soul will labor to pump up repentance out of a rocky heart and, failing to do so, will mistake despair for contrition! He will try as much as possible to feel legal convictions. He will sit down and read the books of Job and Jeremiah till he half hopes that, by becoming a companion of dragons and an associate of owls, he may find rest. He seeks the living among the dead, comfort from the Law, healing from a sword. He conceives that if he can feel up to a certain point, he can be saved! If he can repent to a certain degree—if he can be alarmed with fears of Hell up to fever heat then he may be saved. But, before long, if God is dealing with him, he gets to be as much ashamed of his feelings as of his works. He is thankful for them as far as they are good, but he feels that he could not depend upon them and he remembers that if feelings were the way of salvation, he deserves to feel Hell, itself, and that to feel anything short of eternal wrath would not meet the Law’s demands! The question may fitly be put to one who thus goes the round of works, feelings and, perhaps, of ceremonies and mortifications, “Why do you gad about so much?” It will all end in nothing.  
You may gad about as long as you will, but you will never gain peace except by simple faith in Jesus! All the while you are roaming so far, the Gospel is near you, where you now are, in your present state, available to you in your present condition, now, for, “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” O Sinner, you are thinking to bring something to the Most High God and yet He bids you come “without money and without price.” Your Father says to you, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He declares to you the way of salvation, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” He calls to you in His gracious Word and says, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” He bids you trust in His Son, who is the appointed Savior, for He has laid help upon One that is mighty! He thus addresses you, “Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” You want pardon and Jesus cries from the Cross, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” You want justification and the Father points you to His Son, and says, “By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” You want salvation and He directs you to Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. The God of Heaven bids you look to His dear Son and trust Him!  
Though I preach this Gospel almost every day of the week—and scarcely a day passes without my telling the old, old story—yet it is always new. If you who hear me so often, grow weary of it, it is the fault of my style of putting it, for, to myself, it seems fresher every day! To think that the tender Father should say to the prodigal son, “I ask nothing of you. I am willing to receive you, sinful, guilty, vile as you are— though you have injured Me and spent My substance with harlots. Though you have fed swine and though you are fit to be nothing but a swine-feeder all your days, yet come, just as you are, to My loving bosom—I will rejoice over you and kiss you, and say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet!’” Sinner, God grant you Grace to end all your roamings in your Father’s bosom! “Why do you gad about so much?” Renounce all other hopes and fly away to the wounds of Jesus. “Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” Listen and obey these closing lines— *“Weary souls who wander wide  
From the central point of bliss  
Turn to Jesus crucified,  
Fly to those dear wounds of His!  
Sink into the purple flood  
Rise into the life of God.  
Find in Christ the way of peace,  
Peace unspeakable, unknown!  
By His pain He gives you ease,  
Life by His expiring groan.  
Rise, exalted by His fall—  
Find in Christ your All in All.”*

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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A PROCLAMATION FROM THE KING OF KINGS  
NO. 1833

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 5, 1885, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON OCTOBER 16, 1884.

**“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not remain angry forever.**

**Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God,  
and have scattered your ways to the  
strangers under every green tree,  
and you have not obeyed  
My voice, says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 3:12, 13.**

BACKSLIDERS are very many. Departing from the living God is no strange thing. Every Church has to lament many that turn aside. In fact, it has become so common in many Churches, that they have not faith enough to hold to the Scriptural doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints—as if the lack of perseverance in mere professors could alter the Truth of God that where the life and power of God are really in the soul, there it will abide and remain. Bitter are the disappointments which result from the apostasy of avowed disciples and the declension of true followers of the Lamb. We sow, but when we expect to reap, we fill not our bosoms with sheaves, for many of those who sprung up hastily from the stony ground are withered as soon as the sun has risen! The morning cloud charms us with the hope of rain, but it soon vanishes—the early dew gives us promise of moisture, but it is exhaled—and the earth is hot beneath our feet. Our hearts ache because of blighted hopes where we looked for blessed results.

And not only is it a common thing for men who profess godliness and, for a while, run well, suddenly to turn aside, but even God’s own people do not keep up the pace as they should! Many Christians are one while hot, another lukewarm and even cold. They are diligent and fervent today, but idle and indifferent tomorrow. There are still Galatians among us who seem, one way or another, to be bewitched with error. Even the best of Believers are not always at their best. Who among us has not had cause to make confession that he has not kept up to his first love at all times? Neither has his lamp been always clearly burning, nor has he, himself, been all through the night equally wakeful and watchful for the coming of the Lord. The wise virgins sleep as well as the foolish ones!

Alas, that it should be so! Had it not been for the interposition of God’s Grace, in many an instance, backslidings that have been healed might have been backslidings unhealed—and the gaping wound might have bled to the dreadful weakness of those who suffered from it. May God, in infinite mercy, help those of us who have been kept by His power until now, to rest in faith in Him—and may we be very careful that we slip not with our feet and decline not with our hearts! Nor let our earnestness end with self, but let us pray with all our might for those who have wandered upon the dark mountains, that they may not wander for another hour, but that at once, before this service is ended, they may be restored to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls—and may find rest as once they used to find it— at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Pray for me, that I may speak in the power of the Holy Spirit, so as to lead back benighted ones who are now stumbling upon the dark mountains. I feel deeply my need of such help and would breathe my own desire to God in the language of our sweet poetess—

*“O strengthen me, that while I stand  
Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,  
I may stretch out a loving hand  
To wrestlers within the troubled sea.”*

I. I shall keep to the passage before us and we will commence with it at once and notice, first, in the text—THE PROCLAMATION. The Prophet receives this message—“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord.”

It was to be a proclamation, for God is Kin g, and if His subjects rebel, He does not lose the rights of His sovereignty. He sends them, therefore, a royal message with all the power which belongs to the word of a king. “Go and proclaim.” It is meant to be a loud summons, such as a proclamation should be when the herald, in the name of his royal master, publishes a decree. “Go and proclaim.” It is to be done in state, with order and regularity, with a purpose and with authority. And so do I wish to speak at this time. Hear me, O my Brothers and Sisters, while I plead with you in Christ’s name! In the name of the Ever-Blessed, who has not lost His right to you, O Backslider, you are called upon to return! In His name, who is your Creator and your Lord, is the message sent to you, “Return unto Me.” It is not delivered as a mere piece of advice from myself, personally, which you may treat as you like, because it comes from your friend and your equal—it comes from your God and your King, to whom you must give an account, by-and-by! It is not even sent as a simple word of advice from Him, but the majesty of God is at the back of it! At your peril it will be if you trifle with it! I pray you act not so presumptuously. It is a proclamation which demands that every ear should hear it and that every heart should bow before it. Only traitors will despise our message when the Lord says to us, “Go and proclaim these words, and say, Return.”

This proclamation is sent to the worst of sinners— to the very basest of backsliders! The proclamation is to be given publicly, but it was intended for a certain people and meant for their hearts as well as their ears. It was meant for those who have backslidden—and the house of Israel contained many jet-black backsliders! They were people who had gone aside after beholding the most glorious manifestations of God, for unto what people did the God of the whole earth ever reveal Himself as He did unto Israel, a people that had been delivered by the plagues of Egypt, that had drunk of water from the Rock and had been fed upon angels’ food—a people in the midst of whom the peculiar Presence of God had been revealed? He had ransomed them, fed them, led them and taught them—and they had been singularly indulged—and yet, for all that, they had turned aside from the living God!

They were a provoking nation of backsliders because they turned aside to the basest idols. After knowing something of Him who is invisible, they made a golden calf and said, “These are your gods, O Israel”—and in later years they bowed themselves before the lowest and most degrading shapes of idols. They went after the wickedness and the bestialities of the nations among whom they dwelt—and they defiled themselves so that God, who never speaks too harshly, said—“They went a whoring after the gods of the heathen.” They broke their marriage bonds to the one living and true God and made themselves loathsome in His sight by the most detestable idolatries! It is sad that there should have been such a race of backsliders, but it is glorious to think that to such as these the message of God’s mercy was sent! They were the lowest grade of backsliders—and if there are any here, tonight, who must be put in the same list, it is to them that the message of God’s Grace and mercy is to be proclaimed! And I proclaim it in the name of Him that sent me!

These backsliders were old offenders who had long been false to their vows and covenants. They went aside once and they were chastened—and they repented. But their hearts were not true and so, when the scourge was taken away, they went aside again and proved that deceit was bound up in their souls! Many a time did He forgive them and put back His wrath, but as often did they return to their provocations. Many and many a time did He smile upon them, again, in favor and forgive their transgressions, but they provoked Him unto jealousy yet more and more until He declared that they were bent to backslide from Him. It seemed to be the way of them. It was ingrained in their nature. “Israel is a backsliding heifer,” says the Lord. They would not go aright—they would turn aside.

Do I address any such in this discourse? O my Hearers, may the Lord deal graciously with you by my means, and my heart shall sing for joy! I am not going to enlarge upon any of these points of character, for if the Spirit of God is dealing with you, He will enlarge upon them. I have lately met with a considerable number over whom I have both sorrowed and rejoiced—I think of them, now, with mingled feelings because God is bringing them very low under a sense of their backsliding and I am hoping that this will be a blessing to them. The Lord is chastening them and I trust they will turn at His rebuke. Their sin, which was written with an iron pen upon the very horns of their altars, they did not see and would not see, but now He says they shall see and He is making them weep as they see! I know that some of you bleed with an inward wound at the heart, a wound which man cannot reach, which only God can heal. I am glad that it is so, for this will convince you that you shall not be at ease away from God— but that in wandering from Him into the far country there shall come a mighty famine for you and you shall begin to be in need. Oh, may your need drive you home to the great Father’s House where the best of welcomes awaits you!

The Israelite people were not only the worst kind of backsliders, but they had already reaped, in a very large measure, the result of their backsliding, for they had been carried away captive. They were taken away to the north country by the king of Assyria, far off from the land of promise which flowed with milk and honey! They were bond slaves under the most cruel of oppressors. They had suffered the loss of all things because they had departed from their God and yet they had not learned the lesson which affliction was meant to teach them. It was still necessary to call them to repentance and God bade them return to Him—His proclamation was to them!

I have known men to come down from wealth to poverty through their sin. I have known them fall from health and happiness to disease and misery. I have seen them brought down from honorable associations to degradation and shame wholly as the result of their departing from the living God! While they walked with Him, all went well with them. But when they walked contrary to Him, He began to walk contrary to them. There are some who hear me, at this moment, who know the meaning of that text, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” They have sinned and they have smarted—and in the smart this thought has come to their mind, “He will never forgive me. He has beaten me with the blows of a cruel one. He has set me for the target of all His arrows; His arrows drink up the blood of my soul. I am sorely wounded and broken in the place of dragons.”

Yes, so was Israel carried away by Shalmaneser and yet they were bid to return unto God with a promise of mercy! Captives and povertystricken, they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion—and then came this royal proclamation of reconciliation upon repentance. From the Throne of God, where they might have expected condemnation and the sentence of death, there came this mission, this word, this message, “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord.”

I see some mercy, and that of no little kind, in the messenger who was sent to deliver this message, for it was Jeremiah, that man of a broken spirit, who could say of himself, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” Somehow, your bright-eyed joyous spirit astonishes the backslider into greater grief. “Alas,” he cries, “such joy I might have known, but I put it all aside!” Such reflections deepen the poor sinner’s woe. Moreover, the man that has never been emptied from vessel to vessel and has had no experience of the bitterness of sin is too apt to speak proudly, or, at least, harshly and severely, to a wandering brother. He does not sufficiently remember himself, lest he, also, is tempted. But as for Jeremiah, his eyes were red with weeping and his cheeks were guttered by his burning tears! And when he spoke, there was a depth of pathos about every word—thus he was qualified to meet mourning souls upon their own ground.

How he longed for men to come back to God who had chosen them! How pathetically he exclaimed, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” And God selected this man that he might go after the smitten ones and proclaim in stately manner, blended with womanly tenderness, this message, “Return.” I do not feel so fitted as Jeremiah and yet I have an intense desire that any of you who have gone away from God would come back while I speak with you. The Lord knows how this has burdened me of late, for I cannot bear it that you who have sunned yourselves in His smile should choose darkness! That you who once rejoiced in Christ and gloried in His Cross, should now be crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame!

Here is a huge world that “lies in the Wicked One” and we need all our time to try and enlighten it and, meanwhile, you that are our camp followers and, as we thought, our fellow soldiers, have put away your swords and gone over to the enemy! At least you act as if you had, and it pains us! It pains us at the heart! Hear, then, at this hour, the proclamation which we will give forth as best we can, looking in your direction if you have gone up to the north, and proclaiming these words towards your place, your cold and shivering place, your place of darkness and of misery, your place in the far-off country. I say, we look anxiously and yet hopefully in your direction and proclaim these words to you, “Thus says the Lord, Return!”

So far concerning the proclamation.  
II. But now, secondly, in our text we find A PRECEPT. It is a very simple one and as short as it is clear. It is given in the proclamation—“Return, you backsliding Israel.” Return—be as you were. Come back—repent and do your first works. O Wanderer, return to your God! You have forgotten Him. You have transgressed against Him and you have grieved Him exceedingly. For these months you have not sought Him, nor called upon Him. You have not trusted Him nor confided in Him. You have not loved Him, nor sought His honor. Return! You can never be right if you stay where you are! All ills attend the man who forsakes His God. Come back— back to the old place of humiliation in His Presence, of confession, of childlike faith, of holy consecration—come back to the happy place which was yours when you were in your best estate! Yes, further back than that—back nearer to God than ever you were before! Return unto your God!  
Listen! This is the precept—return to your Savior! Just as you are, come back to Him. Come back as you came at first, with your sin acknowledged, looking to His Cross for pardon! Did you grow too great and think you could live without your Savior? Return! Did you dream of being so perfect that you did not need His righteousness, for your own would suffice? Away with that glittering bauble, that idle notion of your perfection, and come back and beat upon your breast, and say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Repent of your pride and return, again, to your Lord Jesus Christ. He will as gladly receive you as a mother presses to her bosom a lost child. The road is paved for your return, the stumbling blocks have been removed, the door of the Father’s House is open wide!  
Come yet again and receive pardon and cleansing from the precious blood of Jesus. It has not lost its power! The fountain of cleansing is open, not only for the common sinner, but for you, the backslider, for remember how the Scripture has it, “A fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” It is open for those who are already in the Church of God, as well as for those who are newly brought into it! Come at once and tarry not! If your feet are foul with your wandering through the mire and through the slough, your Savior takes the towel, yet again, and fills the basin from the ewer and stoops to wash your feet! Will you not have them washed at this moment till He can say to you, again, “You are clean every whit”? You have once been washed in the atoning blood and you need not now except to wash your feet—and when this is done, all is well! Go and wash your brethren’s feet in gratitude. “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”  
You see, then, dear Friends, how the Lord puts it to you. “Return,” for where you lost your roll there you will find it. Mr. Bunyan pictures his pilgrim dropping his passport under the seat in that arbor at the bottom of the Hill Difficulty, or half way up it, where he sat down to rest—but where he did not only rest, but fell into a sinful slumber. Under that very settle, whereon you sat and went to sleep, you will find the roll which you must carry in your bosom to secure you a welcome at the Palace Beautiful! You must go back and look for your spiritual enjoyment where you lost it. Did you lose it by neglect of prayer? Then search the closet through. Did you lose it by a dusty Bible? Dust that Bible and search its pages till you find it. Did you lose it by neglect of the means of Grace? Were your Sabbaths wasted and week-night services neglected? Then go back, I say again, to the place where, by your sin, you allowed your holy confidence to slip from you—and there you will find it again. The point at which you diverged from the right road is the point that you must find and come back to. “Repent, and do your first works,” is the Master’s call to you tonight! It is His royal proclamation, “Return, you backsliding Israel.”  
But listen while I make this proclamation, again, in God’s name. Return at once. Delays are always dangerous, but never so dangerous as when they are proposed by backsliders. Return without another day’s indulgence in sin! The message tolerates no further backsliding. Come back at once! Wait not for second thoughts—your prompt, immediate thoughts are best. And come you back with all your heart. Let there be no mimic repentance; no pretended returning. You shall find the Lord if you seek Him with all your heart and all your soul. God help you to do it now!  
And mind that you return practically. That is, that your life shall be changed, your idols broken, your omitted duties fulfilled with eagerness, neglected means of Grace pursued with fervor—that done which you have left undone and that evil forsaken into which you have gone with such headlong folly. When the Lord says, “Return,” He does not mean, “Think about returning; promise to return; talk about your wandering” and all that—He means that you should practically come back to Him with weeping and with supplication, with a true heart believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and beginning again.  
“Alas,” says one, “I do not know whether I am a backslider, or whether I have been a hypocrite up till now!” Do not argue that question at all. I am constantly asked to decide for people whether they ever were true Christians or were in error about their condition. It is a difficult enquiry and of small practical value. I say to myself, sometimes, “Well if I never was a child of God, I know that I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—and so I will at once trust in Him.” Thus I recover confidence. If ever I was a child of God, then I am a child of God and He will bring me back. But if I never was a child of God and my profession was all a mistake, yet still the free salvation sounds out its silver trumpet—  
*“Come, and welcome, Sinner, come,”*  
and I hasten to accept the invitation! You can discuss the question of your previous character after you get back into the fold. But while you are out of it, it does not matter much to you. You had better leave such discussions till you are out of the reach of the wolf. In all probability it would be impossible for you to discover your precise condition—but, O poor Soul, this is clear enough, that the Lord cries to you, “Return, you backsliding Israel!”  
This precept is clear as noon-day, and it is sent to you. Come back with the whole of your nature, in all ways and respects, back to your God and back to your Savior—and back to prayer, and back to holy living, and back to the people of God—back to the very Church from which you have wandered! It will be wise to do that before another sun has risen. Come back to the Lord’s Supper, back to feeding spiritually upon His flesh and upon His blood and living only in Him, and by Him, and to Him, and with Him! God help you to hear this precept and to turn it into practical effect!  
III. Now, listen, in the third place, to THE PROMISE—“Return, you backsliding Israel, says Jehovah, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” “I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” See that anger, like a black cloud, charged not with refreshing rain, but with fire flakes that shall burn as they fall—yes, burn their way into the very core of your being as with the fires of Hell! A sense of wrath is Hell setting the soul on fire till conscience flames with its own peculiar fierceness and seems to anticipate the fire that never can be quenched. You see that gathering storm around you, do you not?  
But here is the fair promise, “Return, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” Not a flake of it shall burn you if you return unto your God. There is forgiveness, there is full, free and immediate forgiveness to be had! “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins. Return unto Me.” This is a grand motive for coming back—the sin that separates is put away! He will wash you thoroughly from your iniquity and cleanse you from your sin and whatever you need, He will give to you—and He will not upbraid you. When the father received the prodigal, did he remind him of his ingratitude, or of his wasting of his substance? Not a word of it—he kissed away the memory of his wrongdoing! He covered him with a robe of righteousness and he put a new song into his mouth. The Lord is prepared to do that with you at this moment!  
I know that your doubts and fears ask the question again and again, “Can it be possible?” All things are possible with God and especially all deeds of mercy! His mercy endures forever and He delights in it! I know that you say, “Oh, but does the promise mean me, even me?” It means you, even you! You are a backslider! You plead guilty to the charge and, therefore, it is to you that the promise is given. Accept the mercy! The man that is condemned by that description—the “backslider”—is the man who is commanded to return and he is the man to whom the promise is made, “I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” In all this you can see yourself as in a mirror!  
I find that the passage might be read, “I will not cause My face to fall upon you,” meaning this—that if the child of God comes back, God will not look angry at him any more. This is a very great blessing, for when the Lord does not lay chastisement upon His people by way of judgment and wrath, yet He does often hide His face from them, or frowns upon them like a cruel one. If you have sinned, God cannot smile upon you! He must chasten you. His own words are, “you only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” You are a child and, therefore, you must be whipped if you do wrong—love ensures you the chastisement. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”  
But the great Father, here, shows that He will not continue to frown on you—He will not make His face to fall at the mention of you. He has said, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them.” He might justly say, “you are My child, but I cannot speak comfortably to you, for you are so disobedient that I must send you to a distance and make you feel the evil of disobedience.” But, instead of that, He says, “I will not cause My anger to fall upon you. I will not even cause my face to fall at the sight of you; but I will receive you graciously; I will, in tender mercy, put away your transgressions and reveal My love to you.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Will you not come to Him, when He speaks thus?—  
*“Return! O erring, yet beloved!  
I wait to bind your bleeding feet, for keen And rankling are the thorns where you have been. I wait to give you pardon, love, and rest.  
Is not My joy to see you safe and blest?  
Return! I wait to hear once*

*more your voice To welcome you anew, and bid your heart rejoice.”*A woman has a husband who has loved her as his own, but she has lent her ear to a serpent—to one who with words of flattery has beguiled her, and she has sinned against her fidelity. She has defiled herself with another and she has gone away, far away—and the man who has deceived her has forsaken her. She is now a woman of a sorrowful spirit, broken down and cast off. A friend whispers to her, “Return to your husband, for it was better with you then, than now.” But this is her stumbling block— “Will he receive me? Can he receive me? I have dishonored him. Will he take me back? Can I expect the love that gladdened my girlish days to be lavished upon me again? Will he not call me an outcast and say that I have darkened his house and shall never enter it again?”  
But if the message comes to her, “He will receive you graciously and love you freely,” will she not hasten home? When she learns that the anger which he felt is gone and that his heart yearns towards her, will she not fly home as on the wings of the wind? Unless she has become a monster of wantonness, she will seek the man whom she has grieved and, at his feet she will fall in gratitude for his forgiveness! The parable is concerning ourselves who have backslidden from the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall we not, also, return, now that we hear Him thus inviting us to come back—yes, making a royal proclamation of His Grace? “Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” The Lord grant that this word may go home to those whom He has ordained to bless.  
IV. I pass on, in the next place, fourthly, to notice THE ARGUMENT. The argument here used is twofold and you will recollect the two arguments all the more readily because they begin with the same letter—Mercy and Marriage. We have, in the 12th verse, “For I am merciful, says the Lord.” And in the 14th verse, “For I am married unto you.”  
Here is, first, God’s mercy. Nothing delights God more than to forgive sin—He is at home in this blessed work! To some men it is a hard task to forgive an injury. They do it with a squeeze, a twist and a wrench—and even then it is questionable if it is done at all, for forced forgiveness is no forgiveness. Some are not unlike the dying man who said to the priest, “If I die, you will remember that I forgive Pat Maloney, but if I live, I’ll pay him back as soon as I can.” Many forgive because they cannot revenge— their virtue is the result of their inability to be vicious. But, with God, it is His nature to forgive—He is Love—and mercy is a drop from the honeycomb of love. God must be just, but to punish is His left-handed labor, while to forgive is His right-handed work. He is happy at it! He finds pleasure in man’s turning to Him and finding life.  
Mercy was His last-born attribute. Until sin came there was no room for mercy—the mercy that forgives and, therefore, mercy is God’s Benjamin, the son of His right hand and He delights to give to it 10 times as much as to His other attributes when they feast together. It is written, “He delights in mercy,” but I never read that He delights in justice, or delights in wisdom, or delights in power—He delights in mercy! God is charmed when He can wash a scarlet sinner white. It is the Heaven of His Heaven to receive a Hell-black sinner to His heart and put away his sin. “I am merciful,” says the Lord.  
Did I hear a trembling voice exclaim, “Oh, but you do not know what I have done, Sir”? No, and, “Sir,” does not want to know! But then I do know that the Lord delights in mercy! Perhaps you had better not tell those midnight deeds, those sins that have defiled you through and through—the confessional is by no means a healthy place—the smell of it is putrid! Confess to God—not to me! You have lain in the dye till you are soaked and saturated in sin. You are ingrained with the scarlet of iniquity, but the Lord delights to take out these glaring stains! Things which are impossible with man are the joy of God. Therefore come to Him and believe in His mercy! Doubt no longer, but lovingly receive what He lovingly gives.  
As for you who once knew Him, loved Him and rejoiced in Him, I want you just to dwell on that second argument, namely, marriage. “For I am married unto you, says the Lord.” Oh, those were blessed days when you used to sing—  
*“‘Tis done, the great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.  
He drew me, and I followed on  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”*  
And then you used to join with all of us in singing—  
**“Happy day! Happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away**!**”**  
Ah, poor Soul, where have you been since then? You have been where you ought not to have been and now your Bridegroom says, “Return, for I am married unto you. You may have put off the ring, but you are Mine for all that, and I will have you come back to Me. Return.” The bonds that Christ makes are not to be broken. The favor that Christ has shown is not to be removed. Stronger than death and Hell is the love of Christ and who shall separate us from it? Notwithstanding all your sins and iniquities, He says, “Return, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” It is done and though you do not stand to it, He does! The great transaction still stands on His part—though you believe not, He abides faithful!  
He has bought you with His blood and the price will never return into His veins. He has loved you with an everlasting love and, therefore, it cannot cease! In that love He will always rest, nor from His oath return. Come back to Him!—  
**“Return! O fallen, yet not lost!  
Can you forget the life for you laid down, The taunts, the scourging, and the crown of thorns? When over you first My spotless robe I spread And poured the oil of joy upon your head, How did your wakening heart within you burn! Can you remember all, and will you not return? Return! O chosen of My love!  
Fear not to meet your beckoning Savior’s view; Long before I called you by your name, I knew That very treacherously you would deal;  
Now I have seen your ways, yet I will heal. Return! Will you yet linger far from Me?  
My wrath is turned away, I have redeemed thee.”**V. And I finish (for time has failed me) by noticing THE ADVICE that He here gives as to how we are to return. He says, “Only acknowledge your iniquity.” “Oh,” you have said, “I cannot get back to God—it is such a long way back to Him. I feel that I have to set myself right and in that process to pass through a world of sorrow.” Yet the Lord says, “Only acknowledge.” I rejoice in those blessed, “onlys” of the Bible! “Only acknowledge your iniquity.” “Alas, I have so wandered!” Acknowledge it! “But I have done it so many times!” Acknowledge it! “But I have wandered against light and knowledge!” Acknowledge it! It is not a hard thing to do, to get to your chamber and, before God, confess your fault. You have, first of all, to have a knowledge of it and then to acknowledge it. Feel your sin and then confess it. Be convinced of it and then plead guilty at the Judgment Seat. Do not attempt to excuse it, or to make apologies for it. As long as you do so, you will never get peace—but let this perilous stuff be purged from your soul by a clear, plain acknowledgment, such as David made when he said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness.” He had tried to call his crime by other names, but his forgiveness came when he admitted that it was murder! When we know our sin, God will make us to know His Grace—but if we are self-righteous, our pride will be our ruin.  
“What am I to acknowledge?” Acknowledge chiefly three things. Your breach of covenant—that you have transgressed against Jehovah your God. You professed to be a child of God, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit and you have been false to all these avowals. You have broken your vows, you have been false to your Baptism, false to your communion at the Lord’s Supper, false to your Church membership, false to your prayers. Go and tell the Lord all this and acknowledge that you have transgressed against Jehovah your God.  
Next acknowledge your greedy sin—that you “have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree.” Israel had sinned wherever she had an opportunity—sinned openly. You would not have thought that she would have dared to do it—sinned again and again till as many as there were trees in the grove were her adulteries with idol gods! Confess this crime if it is, indeed, true—“Lord, I have sinned with both hands since I have departed from You. I have committed sins of the eyes, sins of the feet, sins of the hands, sins of the head and sins of the heart—sins against Your holy Law, sins against Your love and blood, sins immense and innumerable. I might as well hope to count the drops that make the ocean as to tell the number of my sins.” Make this confession heartily and explicitly. Do not stutter over it and try to lessen it, but bring it straight out in deep humility. As a backslider you have done far more evil than you know and there is no fear of your exaggerating your guilt!  
And I finish with this—“You have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord.” That is to say, you have been guilty of sins of omission. This is sufficient to swamp any one of us! Our sins of commission may be few, but as for our omissions, these would sink me, I know, past all hope, were it not for the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Dear Friend, hasten to acknowledge your omissions.  
Confess also your hardness of heart. God has spoken and you would not hear. He has entreated and you would not regard Him. He has come very near to you and you have turned your back on Him. Thus He complains of you, “I have spoken and you would not hear. You have not obeyed My voice.”  
Confess, also, your ingratitude. His voice, which is your Father’s voice, you have not heard or obeyed. What unnaturalness! Shall a wife not know her husband’s voice? Shall a brother forget his brother’s? Yet it is so with some of you who once used to be with us—you were our joy and we were your joy—and God the joy of us both but you have gone aside. You have left your first love. You have departed from the ways of the Lord. Yet remember at this moment there is no judgment for you—no threats, no scolding words—simply this, “Only return.” The heart of love has room in it for you! Hasten home to Him who is your only resting place. You can never be happy where you are and as you are. You have tried it! Oh, how long you have tried it, but you are going downward and waxing worse and worse!  
Oh, that you would say, “I will end it! I will end it! Never more will I depart from Him who has redeemed me with His blood. I will yield myself to Him at once.” Happy is the preacher if this has been effected by the Spirit of God. Happy shall you be, also, and happy are these Christian folk to know that such a thing has been done in their midst. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 3:12-25.** HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—373, 476, 521.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
MR. SPURGEON has not been very well for the last few days, but he is now much better and feels assured of returning to his work with renewed energy. He begs his friends to pray for this desirable blessing and also for the blessing of God upon the Conference of the Pastors’ College which will take place in the beginning of May. It is of the utmost importance that the pastors then assembled should be filled with the Spirit of God. The times are evil. The Gospel is needed. The Spirit of God, alone, can make it effectual! Let all the saints pray mightily for a Divine visitation. Mr. SPURGEON’S College work also needs to be aided by the liberality of his friends at this time and he would remind them of it very hopefully. MENTONE, MARCH 27, 1885.

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RETURN! RETURN!  
NO. 2931

**A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1905, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 17, 1876.

**“Return, you backsliding Israel. Turn, O backsliding children. Return, you backsliding children.”  
Jeremiah 3:12, 14, 22.**

IT is, indeed, a horrible thing that a saved soul should ever wander from its Savior. After having had so much of past sin fully and freely forgiven and, after having then made to rejoice in perfect pardon, can it ever turn away from those dear pierced hands which lifted its heavy burden from its shoulders? Can it ever wander from the Fountain in which it was washed whiter than snow? If so, it will, indeed, have committed a shameful sin! After so many spiritual benefits have been enjoyed and the soul has not only been washed, but also robed, fed, adopted into the family of God and been taught many wonderful lessons—can such a child as that leave such a home and such a Father—and go back to “the beggarly elements” from which it has been delivered? Ah, if it even thinks of doing so, it has, by that very thought, committed treason against the Sovereign Love of God!

No, Beloved, with so much sin forgiven and so much favor bestowed, we ought to feel ourselves bound with cords to the horns of the altar! And with such bright prospects before us, such a Heaven prepared by such a Savior—with the assurance that we shall forever be with Him where He is, beholding His Glory—and with such exceedingly great and precious promises as He has made to him that overcomes, why, Brothers and Sisters, if we think of turning our backs in the day of battle, or of forsaking the King’s Highway for a meadow path, the very thought must be most grievous to God as well as most shameful on our part! It ought to be intolerable to us to even think of such a thing! For any Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to actually go astray; to actually sin against the Light of God and knowledge; to sin against Infinite Love and mercy; to sin against Your wounds, Emmanuel, and against Your crown of thorns—to offend against Your matchless love—oh, this is dreadful, indeed!

Well did the Lord say, concerning Israel’s backsliding, “Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid.” Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let me remind you that there is nothing for us to gain and everything for us to lose by forsaking the ways of God, even for a moment! We are not like those who have never known His ways, for we know them to be to paths of pleasantness and peace. We are not like those who are still deceived by the world, for we have proven how false she is. Her painted charms once bewitched our hearts and we were enamored of her, but we have been undeceived, and now we cry with Solomon, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!” This empty world does but mock and deceive all who seek for true treasure in it—are we going back to it after all that we have received from Christ, forsaking the real for the imaginary, the substantial for the shadowy?

Can it be that we are going to commit these two evils—to forsake the fountain of Living Waters and to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water? If any of us have done so in the past, let us be ashamed of ourselves! And if some of us have done so almost without knowing what we were doing, let us prostrate ourselves in the very dust before the Most High, for this is no common sin. It is a sin that has a high degree of heinousness and aggravation, when any of us who have known the way of righteousness—and who have enjoyed sweet and hallowed fellowship with God and the liberty with which Christ has made us free—go back to wear, again, the chains of sin’s slavery and even, for a while, or in part, have a guilty complicity with that vain world which we professed to have forsaken once and for all.

Every man, however great his experience may be, is in danger! I have heard that more horses fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else because the drivers fancy they have no need to hold them back when they have reached the bottom of the hill. And I have noticed that some of the saddest falls I have ever witnessed among Christian men and women have been among elderly Christians—among they who said of the young people, “Ah, they ought to be very watchful, for they have strong passions, and they may very easily be led astray. But as for us, we have had such a long experience that we have passed out of the range of temptation.” The most dangerous place in the world is that which is supposed to be beyond the reach of temptation! The power of the devil is most often to be feared when he has left you alone for a while, for he has then probably left you to something or someone who will be more dangerous to you than he, himself, would be. That is to, say, when a man says, “I shall never be tempted again,” he has already fallen into one of the devil’s most dangerous snares, for the pride of his heart has deceived him and made him an easy prey to the great adversary.

Satan delights to pluck gray beards and to prove their owners to be fools! He has great joy in tripping up young men, in the fullness of their strength, to show that he is more than a match for the very strongest of them! But he is even more glad to waylay a man in middle life and to teach him that, even when he thinks he has all his wits about him, he is not so shrewd as the old tempter is! But I think it is his chief delight to waylay those who imagine that their long experience will preserve them from the his snares. Therefore I say that we are all of us, from the little child to the man who is on the very brink of Heaven—from the most timid up to the bravest of us all—in danger from our great adversary. Remember the dreadful conflict with Satan which John Knox had just as he was about to enter Heaven—and remember Martin Luther’s desperate fight with the arch-fiend even in the midst of the waters of Jordan—and learn from the experience of these mighty men of God that we are all, always, from the first to the last, in danger! And, therefore, all of us have need to cry unto the Lord unceasingly—

*“Keep us, Lord, oh keep us forever!  
Vain our hope if left by Thee.  
We are Yours! Oh leave us never,  
Till Your face in Heaven we see,  
There to praise Thee  
Through a bright eternity!  
All our strength at once would fail us,  
If deserted, Lord, by Thee—  
Nothing then could aught avail us,  
Certain our defeat would be.  
Those who hate us  
Thenceforth their desire would see.”*

Now, supposing that I am addressing any persons who have unhappily fallen into this sin, what is the message that I am to give to them from my Lord? After this morning’s service, I was talking with a Brother in Christ who was in this sad condition. If he is here now, I would very affectionately commend to him the message which the Holy Spirit sends to him and to all who are like he—the Word of God which comes over and over again in the three texts upon which I am about to speak to you— “Return! Return!”

I. In trying to press that one simple message home to the backsliding heart, I shall, first of all, speak of THE SURPRISE WHICH THIS MESSAGE OUGHT TO AWAKEN—“Return!” Does God really mean that? After I have wandered so far from Him, does He invite me to come back to Him? Yes, Beloved, He does, and He does so fully realizing all that the word, “Return,” involves. There is a holy jealousy in the heart of God which causes Him to feel a righteous anger when any of His children wander away from Him. Yet this word, “Return,” proves that He has put aside that jealousy in a marvelously gracious manner!

Let me read to you what the Lord says in the first verse of the chapter from which my texts are taken, for I want to keep you to God’s own Word which will do you far more good, and give you far more solid comfort than any word of mine. “They say”—that is, everybody says it—“If a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to Me, says the Lord.” I cannot say much about the illustration which the Lord here uses—it is a thing to be thought of rather than to be talked about— but do you not see that the delicacy which makes a man feel that he cannot take back his erring spouse is far more developed in the mind of God? Yet, over the head of that delicacy, there rides this Omnipotent Love which makes Him say, even to you who have wandered the furthest from Him, “Return unto Me, notwithstanding all that has happened.”

Are you not surprised at the Lord’s message when it is set before you in such a light as this? Yet, surprising as it is, I pray you to believe it and promptly to obey it! The wonder is increased when we remember that the sin of going away from God has, in some cases, been so grossly committed as to involve a terrible mass of guilt. If you read the whole of this chapter—which is more suitable for your own private reading than for the general congregation—you will see that Israel had wandered from the Lord in the most shameless manner. And yet He said to her, “Return, you backsliding Israel.” Now, if you are, indeed, a child of God, although you may have become neglectful of the Sabbath. Though it may have been a long time since you bowed your knee in prayer. Though your Bible has become covered with dust through your neglect and though you have so acted that even mere worldlings might have been ashamed to act as you have done—yet, still, Almighty Mercy, with the tears of pity standing in its eyes, says to you, “Return, return, return!” It condemns your sin and you, also, must condemn it, for it is an exceedingly loathsome and horrible thing—but you, yourself, that same Mercy would gladly save—and it still says to you, “Return, return, return!”

To add to the wonder that this message excites, remember the obstinate adherence to evil which some of you have evinced even when you have been suffering for your wrongdoing. Turn to the third verse— “Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you had a whore’s forehead, you refused to be ashamed.” God had kept back the rain and thus had prevented the ripening and ingathering of the harvest! Famine and need had stalked through the land and smitten multitudes of the guilty people with death. Those who were spared knew why this judgment had come, yet they did not return to the Lord. They had a forehead of brass and they would not acknowledge their guilt, but obstinately clung to their sin.

Brother, Sister, have you had this painful experience? Have you been Divinely afflicted again and again, and yet have you not repented and turned to the Lord? And notwithstanding that the blows of His rod appear to have been lost upon you, and though He has scourged you again and again, apparently to no purpose, still does His blessed Spirit yearn over you! And the message He sends to you is not one of condemnation or threat, but simply this, “Return, return, return!” Oh, this is indeed amazing love that puts up with your ill manners and will not take, “no,” for an answer from you, but still sweetly invites you to return to the Lord from whom you have wandered so far—and against whom you have sinned so grossly!

Notice, also, that these sinful people had refused repeated invitations to return to the Lord. How tenderly He says, in the fourth verse, “Will you not, from this time, cry unto Me, My father, You are the guide of my youth?” As if the Lord meant to say to the sinning one, “Have you not had sufficient suffering as the result of your sin? The showers have been withheld, poverty has come upon you, your barns are empty and there is no corn in the fields to fill them. Will you not, at least from this time, begin to call Me, ‘Father,’ and ask Me to be your Friend?” Yet the guilty nation put all this pleading aside! But, even then, the Lord still cried, “Return, return, return!” And if, dear Friends, you have heard a great many earnest, faithful sermons and had many loving entreaties from Christian men and women—and yet have put them all aside—it is unutterably grievous that it should have been so, yet still there is only this message for you, even now, “Return, return, return!”

Worse still, these people had even turned the Grace of God into licentiousness, and had made mischief out of God’s goodness. Read in the fifth verse, what they said—“Will He reserve His anger forever? Will He keep it to the end? Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could.” Because God is so merciful, they were the more sinful—and because He does not keep His anger forever, therefore they dared to provoke it again and again! This is one of the worst ways in which sinners prove how exceedingly sinful they are. A man is very far gone in guilt when he reads Divine Grace the wrong way upwards and infers, from the long-suffering of the Lord, that he may continue in sin! Still, if you have done this, my Brother or my Sister, the Lord’s message to you is, “Return, return, return.”

Give me your hand and come back with melting heart and streaming eyes—and seek your Heavenly Father’s face, again, for the great bell still rings out from the hospice of mercy and its message to you is this, “Though you have lost your way in the blinding snows of despondency and doubt, mercy is still proclaimed to you; therefore, Return, return, return.” Can you not hear that great bell swinging in the tower of God’s love and compassion? Turn your head that way and ask the Lord to lead you where that bell’s message summons you—“Return, return, return.”

II. Now, in the second place, we will change the run of our thought a little by noting that THIS VOICE MUST AWAKEN MANY MEMORIES IN THE BACKSLIDER’S MIND. He has long been going away from God, but even while he has been sitting in this place, he has been obliged to think of former and happier times in his history. And now that word, “Return,” causes him to recollect the time when he first came to the Lord. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, with what a broken heart, and with what terrors and alarms, and with what weeping eyes you loved up to Jesus on the accursed tree! And, as you looked to Him, you found, as you thought, and as I hope you really did, peace, pardon and everlasting life! Where have you been, my Brother, my Sister, since that memorable day? Where have you been?

Wandering from that dear Cross, always going further and further away from that Divine Love Incarnate which hung bleeding there for you! Peter, your Lord’s loving, pitying eyes are still fixed upon you though you have denied Him and have falsely said, “I know not the Man.” Still do the glances of His eyes say, “Peter, return to Me. Return, My poor, foolish, sinful disciple. You have sadly fallen by your iniquity, but, although you have so greatly changed, I have not. My heart still yearns for you. Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.”

That word, “Return,” must also awaken in your memories recollections of the happy days you used to have when you were living near to God. Some of you have had times of great joy and gladness in this very Tabernacle. You used to sing as sweetly and as joyfully as any, especially when we sang the song of songs—

*“Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain.”*

Ah, you loved Him then, did you not? You were not a hypocrite, were you? You meant what you sang and you felt it, did you not? You have often had, since then, to question yourselves to know whether you really were sincere at that time, or not. I hope you can truthfully say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I did love You then.” Why, the time was when the very mention of that dear name used to fire your blood as the sound of martial music stirs the soldier’s spirit in the day of battle! You know how you would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel preached in those days—and you would cheerfully have put up with the discomfort of standing in the aisle of the overcrowded building— you were not so dainty and thin-skinned, then, as you are now!

How you relished the Gospel then! What sweetness, what marrow and fatness it was to your spirit at these communion times when you sat among the people of God and remembered the dying love of Christ! Many and many a time you have joined with your fellow members in singing—

*“My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss.”*

Yet now, alas, you have but to sing, or to sigh—  
*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!”*

Well, let the recollection of them come up in your mind, for it will do you good. While you hear your Lord saying to you, “Return, return,” it will help you to return if you recall what it is to which you have to return— those halcyon days, those happy Sabbaths when your heart seemed to have a whole peal of bells within it and every one of them gave forth the richest melody to the praise and glory of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior!

Do you not also recollect how you used to talk to others about the Savior? Ah, my Brothers, if I ever wander from my Lord, my sermons will be a sufficient rebuke to me even if no one says a word! Lord, reprove me for my backsliding! What are you doing, you who once preached so earnestly to others? What are you doing, you who used to conduct a Bible class where you warned young people against going into the world, yet you have gone there, yourself? You used to tell them that if all others in the world should be ashamed of Christ, you would never be ashamed of Him, yet you are! You used to pray very fervently at the Prayer Meetings. You visited the sick and cheered them. And God made you useful to souls that are now in Heaven—yet you have begun to doubt whether you will ever get there yourself! O Soul, remember from where you have fallen and repent and do your first works! If you are, indeed, a child of God, let the recollection of your own sermons, addresses, warnings and prayers rise up before your spirit, to stir your conscience and to make you feel ashamed of your backsliding!

The Lord’s call to you to return to Him will probably also awaken other memories. It will help you to remember how it was you first went astray. You went on swimmingly at first, did you not? But where did you begin to go astray? Nine times out of 10, declension from God begins in the neglect of private prayer. Possibly, it was so in your case. And it may be that everything seemed to go about as well with you when you did not pray as when you did. Indeed, everything went far too smoothly with you—it would have been much better for you if your way had been hedged up with thorns and briers. Then you know that you began to get lax in your mode of life. You would not admit that you were doing anything that was sinful—and you were very angry with those who told you that you were in danger. You said that you did not believe in such Puritanical prissiness as they advocated—you were a man who could think and decide for himself! And you did so, did you not, and have you not thought yourself and brought yourself into a sad plight? And you were going to sail a little closer to the wind than others could do because you felt that you had a stronger will than they had—and could turn your vessel whenever you pleased. There were certain amusements that might be harmful to young people, but not to you, for you felt that you had greater strength of mind than they had.

That is how you began to wander from God. The declension came on by degrees. You did not jump down all at once, but you went down just as surely, step by step. As to your first little slip, as you called it, you said there was nothing wrong in it. And nothing wrong in the second slip. And not much wrong in the third slip by itself—but putting them all together, with all the subsequent slips—where have they landed you? Yet, notwithstanding all this, I want you to hear the Master still saying to you, “Return, return, return.” Remember how far you have to go back, for you have to traverse again all that road along which you came with your face turned the wrong way.

III. Now we will pass on to notice, in the third place, THE REASONS WHICH ARE URGED IN THE CONTEXT WHY WE SHOULD RETURN. Look at the 12th verse. I think I will not explain these reasons, but just read them to you. “Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not remain angry forever.” Can you hear that verse without tears coming into your eyes? There is still in your Lord’s heart, forgiveness, mercy, pardon—will not that biased fact lead you to come back to Him?

Now read the 14th verse, for it contains a second reason why you should return to the Lord. “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you.” Can you believe that? If you can, you cannot continue to be a backslider! After all that you have done against Him, the Lord still acknowledges the marriage bond that exists between your poor polluted souls and His own holy and gracious Self, and He says to you, “Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married to you.” Who can hold back when the Lord uses such an expression as that—“married to you”— you black, foul wanderer—“I am married to you”?

In the East, a man could very easily divorce his wife—he just gave her a letter and sent her away. But the Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away—that is to say, He hates divorce—and He will never have a divorce from the soul that has once been married to Him! Come back to Him, then! If He is faithful despite your sin, let your heart yearn towards Him. Return to your first Husband, for it was better with you then than now! Now read the 22nd verse—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” Is not that another blessed reason why you should return to the Lord? He promises that He will remove all the evil that sin has done to you and that into whatever sin you may have fallen through your wanderings, He will rescue you from it! He will treat your backsliding as a disease and heal it! I need scarcely stay to tell you what is the remedy that He will apply to you, for you all know that it is by the stripes of Jesus that we are healed.

So, come again to that Cross to which you came at first and there you shall again find that His dear pierced hands shall be laid upon your wounds, taking the venom out of them, and so perfectly restoring you that your flesh shall be, again, unto you like the flesh of a little child! And then you will be able to gratefully sing, “He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

IV. I am speaking briefly upon each point, but I trust that each one of them will abide in your memories without a multitude of words to press the Truth of God home to your hearts. And I want you, in the fourth place, to notice SOME GRACIOUS DIRECTIONS WHICH ARE GIVEN TO ASSIST YOU TO RETURN TO THE LORD. Read the 13th verse if you wish to learn the way by which you are to return—and give heed to every syllable of it—“Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord.”

That is the first thing you have to do— make a full confession of your wrongdoing. Go at once to God and make it! Do not delay another minute. You have sinned against the Lord—go to Him and acknowledge from your very heart that you have done so. Then turn to the 20th and 21st verses—“Surely as a wife treacherously departed from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the Lord. A voice was heard upon the high places—weeping and supplications of the children of Israel—for they have perverted their ways and they have forgotten the Lord their God.” So, let the acknowledgment of your wrongdoing be attended with deep contrition of heart. Be grieved that you have grieved your God! Ask the Holy Spirit to melt your spirit so that you may mourn before the Most High and lament that you have wandered so far from Him.

Once again, the way to come back to God is plainly set before you at the end of the 22nd verse—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” “Behold, we come unto You; for You are the Lord our God.” Take the Lord to be your God all over again, Go back and begin again where you began before with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. May the Sacred Trinity graciously enable you to do so! And, further, come back to the Lord by confessing the result of your sin, the mischief that it has brought upon you, even as these ancient backsliders did when they sorrowfully said, “For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.”

So, dear Friends, you see that the way to get back to God is to confess the wrong that you have done by wandering away from Him—to lament that wrong and again to take the Lord to be your God by an act of simple faith—and to begin once more even as you began your spiritual life. It is possible that you are anxious to know whether you ever were a child of God or not. Well, that is a knot which you cannot untie, so you had better cut it! Do you ask, “How can I cut it?” You can do it in this way. Say to yourself, “If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And Christ Jesus come into the world to save sinners, so I will trust Him to save me.” I have begun again, in this fashion, a great many times. Often, when doubts and fears have arisen within my spirit, and my evidences have grown dim, I have found that the best thing I could do was to pray the Publican’s Prayer, and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

I am only asking you, poor wandering Soul, to do that which it is the delight of God’s people to be doing every day. Come, repenting and humbled, and take the Lord Jesus Christ again to be your All in All, your living, loving Savior!

V. Now, lastly, I want to encourage you to return to the Lord by very briefly mentioning SOME OF THE MERCIES WHICH GOD PROMISES IN ORDER TO KEEP YOU FROM ANY FUTURE WANDERING. Our blessed Master knows that many of His children wander because they are not well fed. There were many supposed converts during the recent revival, of whom we have not heard anything simply because there was nobody to look after them, in many cases, when the evangelists, whom God so greatly blessed, had gone to other places. Their converts were left to starve spiritually. Listen to the 15th verse of this chapter, those of you who have been thus starved, whose backsliding was, in the first instance, the result of your not hearing good Gospel teaching—“I will give you pastors according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Plead that promise with the God who gave it and you will find that He will fulfill it in your experience!

The next thing that you need, in order to keep you from further wandering from God, is that you should seek to become more spiritual in your worship. Some poor souls, who are, we trust, truly converted, never seem to get beyond mere external, formal worship. They do not get into the heart of it. Let all such persons note what the Lord says in the 16th verse—“And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” That is to say, mere formal worship shall come to an end—“At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

To be enabled to render true, spiritual worship unto the Lord, and to learn the inner meaning of His Word, will cause you to be established in the faith so that you will not likely be carried about with every wind of doctrine and be caused to backslide. Bear with me just a minute while I give you another sweet promise which will help to keep you from again wandering from the Lord. You shall have the Spirit of adoption in your heart, as the Lord says, in the 19th verse—“But I said, How shall I put you among the children, and give these a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.” O Beloved, get a firm grip of that precious promise, for it assures you that final perseverance which is the heritage of the saints! “You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.” As the Lord promises that great blessing, there need be no fear of your backsliding to destruction, whatever your temptations may be in the days and years that are yet to come.

Last of all, if you wish to be kept from wandering away from the Lord, come back to the simplicity of your first dependence upon him. Read the 23rd verse—“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.” So that, what you need is to get back, again, to the place where you first began to worship God in spirit and in truth, to know yourself to be His child and to be clean cut off from every trust except in the Lord Himself. You must see that salvation is all of Grace from first to last— that it is the work of the Holy Spirit and that it is freely given to you, an undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinner! When you get back to that blessed position, you will learn more of the love of God which will hold you with a grip that nothing can loosen, and from which you shall never escape from this time forth and forever!

Therefore, poor Backslider, come here and breathe the prayer to your Heavenly Father, not merely to receive you, but also to keep you, so that from now on you shall never again go astray from Him who keeps the feet of His saints. “And now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 2:20-37.**

Verses 20-26. For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bands, and you said, I will not transgress, when upon every high hill and under every green tree you lay down, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest nobility. How, then, have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord GOD. How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals? See your way in the valley, know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that sniffs the wind in her desire; in her time of mating who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her month they will find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers and after them will I go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found out. And there are many people whose repentance is of no more value than the shame of a thief when he is found out. Oh, for something better and deeper than this!

26, 27. So is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a tree, You are my father; and to a stone, You have brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto Me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us. Some men never pray except in stormy weather. Their religion is wholly dependent upon their condition and circumstances. If all is going well with them, they bend not their knees before the Lord. But when they are in sore distress and especially if they think they are likely soon to die, then they cry unto God, “Arise and save us,” with no more true faith than these idolaters had when they cried to their powerless idols.

28-30. But where are your gods that you have made? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your troubles: for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah. Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me, says the LORD. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword has devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. So far from accepting God’s rebukes in the right spirit and forsaking their idol gods, they even turned upon the Lord’s messengers and put His Prophets to death.

31. O generation, see you the Word of the LORD. “If you will not hear it, see it.”  
31. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? Or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, We are lords. We will come no more to You? “Do you not see,” says the Lord to these rebellious people, “how much I have done for you? Have you forgotten the numberless mercies I have lavished upon you? I have kept from you nothing that was really good for you. When you worshipped Me in sincerity and in truth, you prospered exceedingly. But when you turned away from Me, you made a sad mistake. See, then, the sermons which Providence itself preached to you if you will not hear what My Prophets say to you in My name.”  
32. Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me, days without number. The very beauty of a Believer—his glorious dress—is his God. Then can we ever forget Him, or all the precious things of the Covenant of Grace which He so freely bestows upon us? Can we—can we—have fallen so low as to forget the God to whom we owe so much? Alas, He can still say, “My people have forgotten Me, days without number.”  
33, 34. Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught the wicked ones your ways. Also in your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but plainly on all these things. God’s ancient people had so completely turned away from Him and wandered so far from Him, that they had practiced all manner of evil in order to prove their love for other gods. They even went among the heathen and taught them to sin yet worse than they had sinned before! This was most shameful backsliding, a horrible evil in the sight of God.  
35. Yet you say, Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me. The most guilty people are often the most self-righteous. The sinful nation, which ought to have pleaded guilty, here, says, “Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.”  
35. Behold, I will plead My case against you, because you say, I have not sinned. That is the great abuse of quarrel between God and men. Many a man still says, “I have not sinned,” although God’s Law condemns him, and the very office of the Savior proves that the guilty one needed to be saved by One who was almighty. Self-righteousness is a thing which God utterly abhors.  
36. Why do you gad about so much to change your way? You shall also be ashamed of Egypt, as you are ashamed of Assyria. First they trusted to Assyria to save them. And when that broken reed failed them, then they trusted to Egypt. And in a similar fashion, we go from one false hope to another—from one carnal confidence to another, gadding about to change our way—yet, all the while, refusing to turn to the Lord.  
37. Indeed, you will go forth from him with your hands on your head— You shall go forth as a captive, with your hands bound above your head, or, like one in great pain or sorrow, you shall hold your hands to your head.  
37. For the LORD has rejected your confidences, and you shall not prosper in them. May God, in His mercy, save all of us from false confidences, both now and throughout our whole lives!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #762 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARRIAGE

NO. 762

BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Jeremiah 3:14.

THESE are dainty words—a grateful sedative for a troubled conscience. Such singular comfort is fitted to cheer the soul and put the brightest hue on all her prospects. The person to whom it is addressed has an eminently happy position. Satan will be very busy with you, Believer in Christ, tonight! He will say, “What right have you to believe that God is married to you?” He will remind you of your imperfections and of the coldness of your love, and perhaps of the backsliding state of your heart. He will say, “What? With all this about you can you be presumptuous enough to claim union with the Son of God? Can you venture to hope that there will be any marriage between you and the Holy One?”

He will tell you as though he were an advocate for holiness that it is not possible that such a one as you can feel yourself to be, can really be a partaker of so choice and special a privilege as being married unto the Lord! Let this suffice for an answer to all such suggestions—the text is found addressed not to Christians in a flourishing state of heart. It is not said to Believers upon Mount Tabor, transfigured with Christ. It is not addressed to a spouse all chaste and fair, sitting under the banner of love, feasting with her lord! It is addressed to those who are called “backsliding children.”

God speaks to His Church in her lowest and most abject estate and though He does not fail to rebuke her sin, to lament it, and to make her lament it, too, yet still in such an estate He says to her, “I am married unto you.” Oh, it is Divine Grace that He should be married to any of us! But it is Grace at its highest pitch—it is the ocean of Grace at its floodtide that He should speak thus of “backsliding children!”

That He should speak in notes of love of any of the fallen race of Adam is “passing strange—‘tis wonderful.” But that He should select those who have behaved treacherously toward Him, who have turned their backs on Him and not their faces—who have played Him false, although, nevertheless, His own—and say unto them, “I am married unto You”—this is loving kindness beyond anything we could desire or think!

Hear, O Heaven, and admire, O earth! Let every understanding heart break forth into singing, yes, let every humble mind bless and praise the condescension of the Most High! Cheer up, poor drooping hearts! Here is sweet encouragement for some of you who are depressed, and disconsolate, and sit alone to draw living waters out of this well. Do not let the noise of the archers keep you back from the place of the drawing of water. Be not afraid lest you should be cursed while you are anticipating the blessing! If you do but trust in Jesus, if you have but a vital interest in the once humbled, now exalted Lord, come with holy boldness to the text and whatever comfort there is here, receive it and rejoice in it!

To this end let us attentively consider the relationship which is here spoken of and diligently enquire how far we are experimentally acquainted with it.

I. IN CONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF, you will observe that the affinity of marriage, though exceedingly near kin, is not one of birth. Marriage is not a relationship of original relationship. It is contracted between two persons who may, during the early part of their lives, have been entire strangers to one another. They may scarcely have looked each other in the face except during the few months that preceded their nuptials. The families may have had no previous acquaintance. They may have lived afar off as the very antipodes.

One may have been opulent and in possession of vast domains, and the other may have been indigent, and reduced to straitened circumstances. Genealogies do not regulate it. Disparities do not hinder it. The connection is not of natural birth but of voluntary contract or covenant. Such is the relationship which exists between the Believer and his God. Whatever relation there was originally between God and man, it was stamped out and extinguished by the Fall. We were aliens, strangers, and foreigners far off from God by wicked works. We had, before, no relation to the Most High. We were banished from His Presence as traitors to His Throne, as condemned criminals who had revolted against His power.

Between our souls and God there could be no communion. He is light and we are dark. He is holiness and we are sin. He is Heaven and we are far more akin to Hell. In Him there is consummate greatness and we are puny insignificance. He fills all worlds with His strength, and as for us— we are the creatures of a day who know nothing—and who are crushed before the moth. The gulf between God and a sinner is something terrible to contemplate. There is a vast difference between God and the creature even when the creature is pure, but between God and the fallen creature—oh, where is he that shall measure the infinite leagues of distance?

Where was there a means of ever bridging so terrible a chasm except the Lord Jesus had found it in His own Person and in His own passion? How could we have ever perceived the infinite design unless it had been revealed to us as an accomplished fact by which He has reconciled us and brought us into communion with Himself that we should be married unto Him?

Now, Christian, just contemplate what you were, and the degraded family to which you belonged that you may magnify the riches of His Grace who espoused you in your low estate and has so bound Himself with all the pledges of a husband that He says, “I am married unto you.” What were you? That is a black catalog of foul transgressors which the Apostle gives in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (6:9, 11). I forbear a recital of the filthy vices—at the end of which he says, “But you are washed, but you are sanctified.”

In those crimes he enumerates, many of us had a share, no, all of us! What was our father and our father’s house? What was our aim? What was our practice? What were our desires? What were our tendencies? They were earthly, downward, Hell-ward! We were at a distance from God and we loved that distance well. But the Lord Jesus took upon Himself our nature—upon Him the Lord did lay the iniquity of all His people. And why? Not merely to save us from the wrath to come, but that we, being lifted up out of our degradation by virtue of His Atonement, and being sanctified and made meet by the power of the Spirit, should have a relationship established between us and God which was not formed by nature, but which has been achieved and consummated by astounding Grace!

Unto the Lord let us give thanks this night as we remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug and call to mind the fact that now we are united to Him in ties of blood and bonds of love! Marriage union the result of choice! Any exceptions to this rule that might be pleaded are void in reason because they arise from folly and transgression—there ought to be no exception. It is scarcely a true marriage at all where there has not been a choice on each side. But certainly if the Lord our God is married unto us, and we are married unto God, the choice is mutual.

The first choice is with God. That choice was made, we believe, before the foundation of the world—  
*“Long before the sun’s refulgent ray  
Primeval shades of darkness drove,  
They on His sacred bosom lay,  
Loved with an everlasting love.”*

God never began to love His people. It were impossible for the spiritual mind to entertain so unworthy a thought. He saw them in the glass of His decrees. He foresaw them, with His eyes of Prescience, in the mass of creatureship all fallen and ruined. But yet He beheld them and pitied and loved them, elected them and set them apart. “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord.

Here we are all agreed. And we ought to be all agreed upon the second point, namely, that we also have chosen our God. Brethren, no man is saved against his will! If any man should say that he was saved against his will it would be a proof that he was not saved at all! Reluctance or indifference betrays an entire alienation of all the affections of the heart. If the will is still set against God then the whole man is proven to be at enmity with Him. By our nature we did not choose God—by our nature we kicked against His Law and turned aside from His dominion.

But is it not written, “My people shall be willing in the day of My power”? Do you understand how, without any violation of your free agency, God has used proper arguments and motives so as to influence your understanding? Through our understanding our will is convinced and our souls are spontaneously drawn. Then we throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and humble ourselves at the footstool of the Most High. And then we do freely choose that which we once wickedly abhorred! Do you, Christian, at this very hour, choose Christ with all your heart to be your Lord and Savior?

If it could be put to you over again, to make an election whether you should love the world or love Christ, would you not say, “Oh, my Beloved is better to me than 10,000 worlds! He fixes all my love, engrosses all my passion. I give myself up to Him most freely. He bought me with a great price. He won me with His great love. He enraptured me with His unspeakable charms so I give myself up to Him”? Here is a mutual choice!

I wish that some of our friends would forbear to make such a stand against the doctrine of God’s choosing us. If they will but read Scripture with an unprejudiced mind I am quite sure they will find it there. It always seems inexplicable to me that those who claim free will so very boldly for man, should not also allow some free will to God! I suppose my Brethren would not like to have to be married to somebody whom they had not chosen, and why should Jesus Christ not have the right to choose His own bride? Why should He not set His love where He wills, and have the right to exercise, according to His own Sovereign mind, that bestowment of His heart and hands which none could by any means deserve? This know, that He will have His own choice whether we impugn the doctrine or not! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

At the same time I wish that those friends who believe this Truth of God would receive the other, which is quite as true. We do choose Christ in return and that without any violation of our free agency. Some people cannot see two truths at one time. They cannot understand that God has made all the Truths of God to be double. Truth is many sided. While Divine Predestination is true, Human Responsibility is also true! While it is true that Christ chooses us, it is also true that the unrenewed mind will not choose Him—“You will not come unto Me, that you might have life.”

This is the sin and the condemnation of man, that “light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Settle it, however, in your minds that when God says, “I am married unto you,” it implies that there is a blessed choice on both sides— and so it is a true marriage.

Our third reflection is that marriage is cemented by mutual love. Where there is not this mutual affection it deserves not the name of marriage. The dark shadow of a blessing they cannot realize must be a heavy load for either heart to bear—but where there is true and genuine love, it is the sweetest and happiest mode of living. It is one of the blessings of Paradise which has been preserved to us after the Fall. Without love wedded life must be a very “purgatory” above ground. In the solemn contract, which has brought our souls this night to God, the marriage is sustained, cemented, strengthened, and made delightful by mutual love.

Need I talk to you of the love of God? It is a theme we are scarcely competent to talk of. You need to sit down and weep about it for very joy— joy which fills the heart and makes the eyes overflow—but well near chains the tongue, for it is a deep, profound, and inexpressible. “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us.” “As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you.” Oh, the love of God—it would surpass the powers of an angel to set it forth.

Sure, sure, it shall be the blest employment of eternity’s long ages for us to comprehend it. And perhaps, when myriad’s of ages have rolled over our happy souls, we shall still be as much struck with wonder with it as we were at first! The marvel does not diminish on inspection—familiarity cannot make it common. The nearer we approach, the deeper our awe. It will be as great a surprise that God should love such cold, such faithless, such unworthy beings as ourselves, at the end of 10,000 years as it was at first—perhaps more so! The more thoroughly we shall know ourselves, the more fully we shall understand the good of the Lord, and thus will our wonder grow and swell.

Even in Heaven we shall be lost in surprise and admiration at the love of God to us! The rapture will augment the reverence we feel. Well, but, beloved Brothers and Sisters, I trust we also love Him in return! Do you never feel one soft affection rising after another as you muse on the Christ of God? When you sometimes listen to a sermon in which the Savior’s dear affection to you is set forth, do you not feel the tears wet your cheeks? Does not your heart swell sometimes as if it were unable to hold your emotions? Is there not a “joy unspeakable and full of glory” that comes over you? Can you not say?*—*

*“Jesus, I love Your charming name,  
‘Tis music to my ears.  
Gladly would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and Heaven should hear.”*

I hope you do not need to sing tonight *—  
“‘Tis a point I long to know,”*  
but, I trust, that in the solemn silence of your souls you can say, “You know that I love You,” grieved that the question should be asked, but still ready to answer, with Peter, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.”

Now, it is impossible for you to love God without the strong conclusive evidence that God loves you. I once knew a good woman who was the subject of many doubts and when I got to the bottom of her doubt, it was this—she knew she loved Christ, but she was afraid He did not love her! “Oh,” I said, “that is a doubt that will never trouble me! Never, by any possibility, because I am sure of this—that the heart is so corrupt, naturally, that love to God never did get there without God’s putting it there.”

You may rest quite certain that if you love God, it is a fruit and not a root. It is the fruit of God’s love to you and did not get there by the force of any goodness in you. You may conclude, with absolute certainty that God loves you if you love God. There never was any difficulty on His part. It always was on your part, and now that the difficulty is gone from you, none whatever remains. O let our hearts rejoice and be filled with great delight because the Savior has loved us and given Himself for us. So let us realize the truth of the text, “I am married unto you.”

My fourth observation is that this marriage necessitates certain mutual relations. I cannot say “duties,” for the word seems out of place on either side. How can I speak of the great God making pledges of faithfulness? And yet with reverence, let me word it so, for in any vocabulary I have hardly words to set it forth. When God becomes a Husband, He undertakes to do a husband’s part. When He says, “Your Maker is your Husband,” you may rest assured that He does not take the relationship without assuming (well, I must say it) all the responsibilities which belong to that condition! It is the part of God to nourish, to cherish, to shield, to protect, to bless those with whom He condescends, in infinite mercy, to enter into union.

When the Lord Jesus Christ became the Husband of His Church, He felt that He was under an engagement to us, and inasmuch as there were debts incurred, He paid them—

*“Yes, said the Son, with her I’ll go,  
Through all the depths of sin and woe.  
And on the Cross will even dare  
The bitter pains of death to bear.”*

He never shrunk from the doing of any of those loving works which belong to the husband of his chosen spouse. He exalted the word “husband,” and made it to be more full of meaning than it had ever been before, so that the Apostle could see it glittering in a new light and could say, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.”

Oh yes, dear Friends, there is a responsibility arising out of this relationship, and He of whom we speak has not departed from it! You know He has not. And now, what upon our side? The wife has to reverence her husband, and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards Him who has married us. Let His will be our will. Let His wish be our Law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say*—*

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

O Christian, if the Master condescends to say, “I am married unto you,” you will not any longer ask, “What is my duty?” but you will say, “What can I do for You?” The loving wife does not say, “What is my duty?” and stand coldly questioning how far she should go, and how little she may do—but all that she can do for him who is her husband she will do— and everything that she can think of, everything she can devote herself to in striving to please him in all things she will most certainly do and perform. And you and I will do the same if we have realized our union with Christ!

O Beloved, do not grow sentimental and waste your energies in driveling fancies as some have done. Speak you of a wife?—where the family is large, the work is heavy and the responsibility great. I could gladly remind you here, did time permit, of the words of King Lemuel and the prophecy that his mother taught him. Bear with me, at least, while I admonish you to such a one, that the heart of your husband may safely trust in you. Let it be your care to give meat to your household. Lay your hands to the spindle. Suffer not your industry to fail. Eat not the bread of idleness.

Stretch out your hand to the poor and reach forth both your hands to the needy. Open your mouth with wisdom and in your tongue be the law of kindness. Yes, and consider this with yourself, that in your regard for all the duties of your station, you are fulfilling your bounden obligations to your Lord. Short words, but mighty, matchless deeds have told how Jesus loved us! Be it ours to carve our song of love to Him on the hearts of some tender nurslings who are cast in our way and committed to our care.

O that the life I now live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, might become a poem and a grateful response to Him that loved me, and gave Himself for me. I hope we do know, then, that when God says, “I am married unto you,” it necessitates mutual relations.

Fifthly, it also involves mutual confidences. How shall we call that a marriage where the husband and wife are still two persons, maintaining individuality as if it were a scrupulous condition of the contract? That is utterly foreign to the Divine idea! In a true marriage the husband and wife become one. Therefore their joys and their cares, their hopes and their labors, their sorrows and their pleasures rise and blend together in one stream. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord our God has said it, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant.”

“Judas says unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?” There was the secret because there is a union between Christ and His people which there is not between Christ and the world! How joyously do the words sound—they have a silvery ring in them—“Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” Christ keeps nothing back from you!

Remember another word of His—“If it were not so, I would have told you.” Oh, how delightful! He says, “I go to prepare a place for you.” He tells them that He is going to prepare a place for them, and then He says, “If it were not so, I would have told you—I keep no secrets back from you—you are near Me, My flesh and My bones. I left My Father’s house in glory that I might become one with you, and manifest Myself to you. And I keep back nothing from you, but reveal My very heart and My very soul to you.”

Now, Christian, just look—you stand in the relation of a spouse, and you must tell your very heart out to Christ. No, do not go and tell it to your neighbors, nor your friends, for, somehow or other, the most sympathizing heart cannot enter into all our griefs. There is a grief which the stranger cannot intermeddle with—but there never was a pang into which Christ could not enter. Make a Confidant of the Lord Jesus—tell Him all! You are married unto Him! Play the part of a wife who keeps no secrets back, no trials back, no joys back—tell them all to Him!

I was in a house yesterday where there was a little child, and it was said to me, “He is such a funny child.” I asked in what way, and the mother said, “Well, if he tumbles down and hurts himself in the kitchen, he will always go upstairs crying and tell somebody, and then he comes down and says, “I told somebody.” And if he is upstairs he goes down and tells somebody, and when he comes back it is always, “I told somebody,” and he does not cry any more.” Ah, well, I thought, we must tell somebody! It is human nature to want to have sympathy. But if we would always go to Jesus and tell Him all and there leave it, we might often dismiss the burden and be refreshed with a grateful song. Let us do so, and go with all our joys and all our troubles unto Him who says, “I am married unto you.”

I know the devil will say, “Why, you must not tell the Lord your present trouble—it is too insignificant—and besides, you know you did wrong and brought it upon yourself.” Well, but you would tell your husband, would you not? And will you not tell your Lord? You could not tell a master, but you can tell a husband. Oh, do not go back into the old legal state of calling Christ Baali, but call Him Ishi—“My man, my husband”—and put that confidence in Him which is expected that the wife should place in a husband who dearly loves her.

We must go on to a sixth point. This marriage implies fellowship in all its relations. Whatever a husband possesses becomes his wife’s. She cannot be poor if he is rich, and what little she has, whatever it may be, comes to him. If she is in debt, her debts become his. When Jesus Christ took His people, He gave them all He had. There is nothing which Christ has which He has not given to us. It is noteworthy that He has given His Church His own name! “Where?” you ask. Well, there are two passages in Jeremiah that most remarkably illustrate this (23:6 and 33:16). In the one it says, “This is the name whereby He shall be called,” and in the other, “This is the name wherewith she shall be called.” In both, the name is identical. “Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness.”

What? “ She shall be called”? Yes, as though He said, “She shall take My name,” and with the name, of course, the entire open acknowledgment of His interest in her and her interest in Him. As such she is partaker of all His glory—if He is a king, she is a queen—if He is in Heaven, “He has raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places with Him.” If He is heavenly, she also shall bear the image of the heavenly. If He is immortal, so shall she be. And if He is at the right hand of the Father, so shall she be also highly exalted with Him.

Now, it is saying but very little when I add, that, therefore, whatever we have, belongs to Him—oh, it is so little, so very little, but one wishes it were more. “O that Christ were not so glorious as He is,” I have sometimes thought! It was half a wicked wish, but I meant it well, that I might help to glorify Him. O that He were still poor that one might ask Him to a feast! O that He were still in this world that one could break the alabaster box of ointment and pour it on His head! But You are so great, most blessed Master, that we can do nothing to increase You! You are so high, we cannot exalt You! You are so happy, that we cannot bless You!

Yet, what am I saying? It is all a mistake! He is still here! He calls every one of His people “Members of His body.” And if you wish to enrich Him, help the poor! If you want to feed Him, feed the hungry. They that bind garments about the naked put vestures upon the Lord Himself. “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” I hope we can sing without falsehood that verse of Dr. Watts’—

*“And if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I could give Him all.”*

A seventh observation and then I shall refrain from dwelling longer on this point. The very crown of marriage is mutual delight and complacency. The wife of a Persian nobleman, having gone to a feast which was given by the great Darius, was asked by her husband whether she did not think that Darius was the finest man in the world. No, she said, she did not think so. She never saw anyone in the world who was comparable to her husband.

And doubtless that is just the opinion which a husband forms of his wife and a wife of her husband where the marriage is such as it should be. Now, certainly Christ sets a very high store upon us. I remember turning over that passage in Solomon’s Song, looking at it and wondering how it could be true—believing it, and yet not being able to comprehend it—where Christ says, “You are all fair, My Love. There is no spot in you!” Oh, what eyes He must have! We say that love is blind—but that cannot be true in Christ’s case—for He sees all things!

Why, this is how it is—He sees Himself in us! He does not see us as we are, but in His infinite Grace He sees us as we are to be, as Kent sings— *“Not as she stood in Adam’s Fall,  
When sin and ruin covered all.  
But as she’ll stand another day,  
Brighter than sun’s meridian ray.”*

The sculptor says he can see a bust in a block of marble and that all he has to do is to chip away the extra marble and let the bust appear. So Christ can see a perfect being in every one of us if we are His people! And what He is doing with us day by day is taking off the warts, making us to be like Himself. He can see us as we shall one day be before the Throne of God in Heaven, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Ah, Beloved, He sets great store by us! His delights are with the sons of men! He loves to hear our praise and to listen to our prayer. The songs of His people are His sweet perfume, and communion with His people is like the beds of spices, the beds of lilies where He feeds. And as for us who are His people, I am sure we can say that there is no delight which can equal communion with Christ! We have tried other delights—shame upon us! We have tried some of them, but after having done so, we find that there is nothing like our Lord, “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity,” says the preacher! But when we come to Christ, we find no vanity there! We can truly say—

*“Where can such sweetness be  
As I have tasted in Your love,  
As I have found in You?”*

The Christian’s heart is like Noah’s dove—it flies over the wide waste and cannot rest the sole of its feet until it comes back to Christ. He is the true Noah who puts out His hand and takes in the weary dove and gives it rest. There is no peace the whole world over but with Christ—

*“There’s no such thing as pleasure here,  
My Jesus is my All.  
As You do shine or disappear,  
My pleasures rise or fall.”*

Thus much, by way, as it were, of skimming the surface of this delightful word, “I am married unto you.”

II. Two or three sentences only upon the second point. How FAR DO YOU AND I EXPERIMENTALLY UNDERSTAND THIS? I am afraid some of you think me half crazy tonight. You are saying, “Well, I do not comprehend this. What is the man talking about? God married to us! Christ married to us! I do not understand it!” God have mercy upon you, my poor Hearer, and bring you to know it! But let me tell you, if you did but know it, there is a secret here that would make you a thousand times more happy than all the joys of the world can ever make you.

You remind me of the cock in the fable who found a diamond on the dunghill, and as he turned it over, he said, “I would rather have found a grain of barley.” That was according to his nature. And so with you. This precious pearl of union to God will seem to be nothing to you—a little worldly pleasure will be more to your taste. One could weep to think there should be such ignorance of true joy and true delight! Oh, blind eyes that cannot see beauty in the Savior! Oh, stone-cold hearts that can see no loveliness in Him!

Jesus! They are drunk! They are mad who cannot love You! It is a strange infatuation of the sons of men to think that they can do without You, that they can see any light apart from You, You Sun of Righteousness, or anything like beauty in all the gardens of the world apart from You, you Rose of Sharon, you Lily of the Valley! O that they knew You!—

*“A thousand sorrows pierce my soul,*

*To think that all are not Your own.”*  
Do I address any tonight, who, while they pretend to be religious people, hold loosely by their allegiance to the Lord? There are many such, and we occasionally meet with them here. They cannot appease their conscience without some show of profession, so they join with us as hearers and spectators in the solemn assembly!

But they never unite with the Church because they have not devotedly yielded up their hearts to Christ. Ask them the reason and their answer sounds modest, and yet the reserve it implies is anything but chaste. Do you tell us that you are afraid you should not walk consistently? Would it not be more true to admit that your relationship with the world, your service of mammon, your ordinary pastimes, and your occasional revelries, harmless as you try to persuade yourselves they are, if viewed in the light of marriage to Christ must be accounted as very shame? So far as the principles of Christianity are concerned you endorse them with your private creed, and you are “Protestant” enough to prefer the most evangelical doctrines. But the reserve in your conduct is a clear index to a most fatal reserve in your character.

You might admit God to be the supreme, but not the exclusive Lord of your heart. You would give the Lord’s altar more honor than any other altar, but still you would not remove the high places which desecrate the land. Your opinion is that there is no god in all the earth but the God of Israel, yet your practice is to bow down in the house of Rimmon. You wish to have all the promises of God vouchsafed to you, but you decidedly object to make any vows in His sanctuary. It is to such as you that these delicate appeals are most distasteful, “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Nothing in your experience responds to this. You stand aloof as if you were grieved. I must warn you, therefore, that God can be your God only in these bonds of Covenant Union.

But, Christian, I speak to you. Surely you know something about this, that God is married to you? If you do, can you not say with me, “Yes, and He has been a very faithful Husband to me”? Now, there is no one of you who can object to that! Thus far He has been very faithful to you and what have you been to Him? How kind and tender has He been! How faithful, how generous, how sympathizing! In your every affliction He has been afflicted, and the angel of His Presence has saved you. Just in your extremity He has come to your rescue.

He has carried you through every difficulty, even until now. Oh, you can speak well of Him, can you not? And as for His love—Christian, as for His love—what do you think of that? Is it not Heaven on earth to you? Do you not reckon it to be*—*

*“Heaven above  
To see His face,  
To taste His love”?*

Well, then, speak well of Him, speak well of Him! Make this world hear His praise! Ring that silver bell in the deaf ears of this generation! Make them know that your Beloved is the fairest of the fair and compel them to enquire, “O you fairest among women, what is your Beloved more than another beloved?”

As for you who do not know Him, I should like to ask you this question, and you answer it for yourselves. Do you want to be married to Christ? Do you wish to have Him? Oh, then there will be no difficulties in the way of the match! If your heart goes after Christ, He will have you. If, when you get home to your bedside, you say to Him, “Dear Savior, here is my heart. Take it, wash it, save me,” He will hear you! Whoever you may be He will not refuse you. Oh He seeks you, He seeks you! And when you seek Him, that is a sure sign that He has found you!

Though you may not have found Him, yet He has found you already. The wedding ring is ready. Faith is the golden ring which is the token of the marriage bond. Trust the Savior! Trust Him! Have done with trusting to your good works. Have done with depending upon your merits. Take His works, His merits, and rest alone upon Him, for now does He say unto you, “I will betroth you unto Me forever. Yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness—and you shall know the Lord.” So may He do unto every one of you, and may Christ’s name be glorified forever. Amen.

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THE ARK OF THE COVENANT  
NO. 1621

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.”  
Jeremiah 3:16.**

THIS text speaks concerning the material ark. I should like to append to that another which speaks of the ark spiritually and tells us where its antitype is to be found—

*“And the temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament (or covenant) ”Revelation 11:19.*

When inward piety is low, the externals of religion are frequently cried up. Those who know nothing of God are the very people to exclaim concerning themselves and their brethren, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The Pharisees, who were furthest from God, were the most bitter advocates of ritualism and formalism—they would not even have a man healed on the Sabbath, or allow the hungry to rub a few ears of corn out of the husks! It is not always so, but yet too often, “The nearer the Church the further from God.” The more grown, the less Grace. The more phylactery, the less sanctity. The more of ecclesiasticism, the less of true godliness.

On the other hand, whenever the Spirit of God is largely poured out, although the ordinances of God are carefully attended to, yet, as external things, they are sure to be put into their proper place and that proper place is a secondary one. The spiritual is put foremost and the ritualistic is placed hindmost when Grace is largely given. It was so with David in the 51st Psalm. When he had made a hearty confession of his sin and cried to God for mercy, he uttered those memorable words, “You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings.” He puts aside the symbol because he has a clear view of the substance! That is exactly the case with the people mentioned in my text—they had been sadly sinful, but God, in His mercy, promised to turn to them, to bless them and bring them back into their own land again.

He says—“And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when they are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the Covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.” The visible golden ark, which was so much their glory, would be quite forgotten because of the gracious visitation of God! That shall be our subject this morning.

First, I shall invite your attention to the symbol reverenced. Secondly, we shall see that reverence obliterated and, thirdly, we shall dwell upon that reverence transferred, for though we no longer revere the ancient ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, we do honor to that forever enduring ark of which we read in our second text—“The temple of God was opened in Heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant.”

I. First, then, let us think upon THE SYMBOL REVERENCED. The ark of the covenant was a small coffer not exceeding four and a-half feet in length by about two feet, eight inches in breadth. It was made of an enduring kind of wood and was covered with pure gold both inside and out. Upon the upper part of it was a golden crown into which fitted a solid slab of gold which formed the lid of the ark. That golden lid was called the propitiatory or Mercy Seat—in the Hebrew, Kapporeth, or a place of covering. Upon the two ends of this Mercy Seat and part and parcel of the same solid metal, were two cherubs, with outstretched wings.

The Lord said of them, “And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.” Between those wings, when God was favorable to His people, the bright light, called the Shekinah, was known to shine forth. And when, once in the year, the High Priest went into the innermost place, bearing with him a cloud of incense and sprinkling the blood, he saw the Glory of that Light of God. This ark was the object of great reverence and very fitly so, because it symbolized God’s Presence, the Presence of Jehovah, the living God, in the midst of His people. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of Him that fills all in all?

They knew that God’s excellent Glory shone above the Mercy Seat and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did, when he said, “You and the ark of Your strength.” It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be reverenced, for God was there. To no other people had God given such a token of His Presence. He walked in the midst of no other camp—but of Israel He had said, “My Spirit shall go with you.” It was the first article of the tabernacle concerning which Moses received instructions, for, indeed, it was the first in honor. Read the 25th chapter of Exodus and see how speedily the Lord, who gave the Law, provided a chest for its honorable preservation! Although Solomon made most of the furniture of the Holy Place anew, he retained the same ark which was too much esteemed to be changed.

When it was carried abroad in the marches of the Israelites it always went in front, and it was distinguished from all the other furniture by being covered externally with blue, as if to signify its heavenly character. Lifted high on men’s shoulders, upon golden staves, the blue colored wrapping of the ark was seen in the van of the Lord’s host occupying the place of honor. We do not wonder, therefore, that it was much spoken of and esteemed by the tribes of Israel. That Presence of God meant blessing, for God was with His people in love to them. The Lord abides not with His enemies, but with His chosen. So long as He gave the token of His Presence, it was a sign that He had not cast them off as hopeless. He still heard their prayers and granted them His favors, for He still remained in residence among them while His Mercy Seat was in the Holy Place.

When the ark went into the house of Obed-Edom for a time, the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom for the sake of the ark of the Lord. Therefore David was encouraged to bring up the ark into his own city and he did so with gladness which he expressed by dancing before the Lord with all his might. Well, then, might the people speak of it, think of it, visit it and magnify it because it brought blessings to them! The ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because it was their leader. When the time came to march through the wilderness, the ark went in the forefront. Often did Moses cry, “Rise up, Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered,” and on they went across the pathless desert rightly led by this ark of the covenant.

When they came to the brink of Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the waters, the river was parted and they went through dry shod! It was so trusted in that they bore the ark, on one occasion, into the battlefield when God was not with them and the golden coffer was carried into captivity to vindicate its own honor among the Philistines by smiting its captors with sore diseases and breaking in pieces Dagon, their God! A wonderful ark it was when God was with it! It was such a symbol of power that we wonder not that when David brought it up to Mount Zion all the people shouted—and with sound of trumpet celebrated its triumphal march. It was also so much a symbol of holiness that Solomon removed Pharaoh’s daughter out of the city of David, for he said, “My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord has come.”

In Solomon’s day the ark was finally installed in the Temple and the king placed over it two greater cherubim, ten cubits high, with outspread wings. These were made of olive wood overlaid with gold and probably covered the entire structure of the coffer and the smaller cherubim which were component parts of it. Then they drew out the staves of the ark, signifying that there the ark was to stay—but they left the ends of the staves visible to show that God might yet depart from them if they sinned against Him. In the Temple the ark rested until the time of the captivity and from that time it was no more heard of and possibly never appeared again in the Temple that was built by Zerubbabel or in that which was enlarged and beautified by Herod. The ark was to the Israelites, after their wanderings were over, the fixed center of their nationality, even as while they were in the wilderness it had always been placed in the center of the camp. In the desert it had been the central kernel of the whole army. Outside the ark was the tabernacle or Holy Place and, outside of that, in various rows and orders, were the tents of the tribes—but the core of it all was this honored ark.

Today we have a center to which we rally—a fixed center which faith perceives in Heaven where the true Ark of the Covenant has gone up. Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark, when, in so many ways it was a token of good to them. What they did to this ark is mentioned in the text. First, they recognized it as the ark of the Covenant of the Lord. They were known to say, “The ark of the Covenant of the Lord.” They spoke much of it and prided themselves upon the possession of it. No, they not only spoke of it, but they loved it, for we read, “Neither shall it come to mind,” or as the margin has it, “Neither shall it come upon the heart.” The ark of the Covenant was upon the hearts of God’s people— they had a deep affection for it. When it was carried away, captive, we read of a godly woman who was seized with sudden travail at the news, while the aged Eli fell backward with horror at the tidings. It was very dear to the people of God and if it was taken away, they reckoned that the Glory was departed from them.

Hence, in the next place, they remembered it, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated. Wherever they wandered, they thought of God and of the coffer which represented His Presence. Next, they visited it. On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the utmost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing from stage to stage and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim! When they came back they rejoiced because they had worshipped before the ark of the Covenant, even before the Presence of the Most High God.

Visiting it, they were accustomed, also, to speak highly of it, for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, “Neither shall they magnify it any more.” They used to tell one another what the ark had done—the Glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement—and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. They would tell how the ark divided the Jordan, how it laid the walls of Jericho level with the ground, how it slew the prying men of Bethshemesh. And they would tell of Uzzah who laid presumptuous hands upon it and how the Glory of the Lord came upon it and filled the Temple so that the priests could not stand to minister. Of their God and the ark of His strength they would not cease to sing, for the ark of the Covenant was honored in Israel.

II. Secondly, I would have you observe THAT REVERENCE DISAPPEARED. They were to say, no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a threat, but as a gracious promise. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark, for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of Divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfill the Prophet’s words, for if the ark were gone, they would still remember it and their hearts would hunger after it. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their minds and they would speak of it. It was, somehow, to be a gift to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise.

The fact is, they were to have done with the symbol because the Substance would come. They were no more to speak of the ark itself, because they would have that which the ark was intended to foreshadow. Bear with me with great patience this morning while I try to interest you in the points in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the Ark of the Covenant now in the Temple of God for us. Our Lord Jesus, by His coming, has put out of His people’s thoughts the material ark of the covenant because its meaning is fulfilled in Him! And this, first, in the sense of preservation. The ark was intended to be a sacred treasury in which God laid up the two tablets of stone upon which the Law was written, that they might be kept there as priceless things, not to be commonly handled or even seen, but shut up there as the most precious gifts of Heaven.

We know not where the tablets are, now, and we know not what has become of the golden chest. But where is the Law now? Once it lay broken at your feet and mine, even as the tablets were shattered at the feet of Moses. When Moses took the tablets of the Law into his hands, he soon grew angry with the sinful people and he broke them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. But where is the Law now? In Christ, for, “He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.” “How I love Your Law,” says David. David knew where the Law was and where it could become an object of love in the hands of the Mediator. The Law apart from Christ is a terror to our guilty souls because it is a Law broken and, therefore, condemning!

But the Law in Christ Jesus, honored and fulfilled by Him, is a delightful sight to true worshippers. In Him the Law is more honored than by any merely human obedience and it smiles upon us as if we had perfectly obeyed it. The Law fulfilled is our confidence as much as the Law violated was our dread. We think nothing of the ark, now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone—but we do think everything of Christ Jesus, “who is made of God unto us righteousness for He has completely kept the Law,” for He said, “Your Law is within My heart.” It was not within His heart, alone, but within all His life! His whole thoughts, words and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect Law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify His blessed name!

Next, the ark signified propitiation, for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tablets of the Law was the slab of gold called the Mercy Seat which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering, now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all! When God looks down upon His Law, He does not see it nakedly—He beholds it in the Person of His Son. He sees it, there, perfectly preserved without taint or flaw of any kind, and He rejoices therein. You and I magnify the Lord, that instead of having a naked Law to look at, which would flash devouring flames upon us, we see the Law in Christ covered with mercy, fulfilled by love on our behalf!

We often speak of the Mercy Seat, but do we, as often as we should, remember that Jesus Christ, Himself, is that Mercy Seat? There is no Mercy Seat to which we can draw near in prayer except the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, who is the Propitiation for our sins and through whom our supplications are accepted! “Ah,” said the Jew, “we have a Mercy Seat that covers all.” “Ah,” say we, “but we have One who does not do that typically and in outward pattern, alone, but He is the real covering upon which we lay our prayers and thanksgivings and find ourselves accepted.” We come not to God on the footing of the Law, but the interposing Propitiation! He covers all and comes between—and upon that Mercy Seat we offer our petitions and praises! That is a second blessed reason why we will say no more, “The ark of the covenant of the Lord,” neither shall it come to mind, for Jesus is the Propitiatory for us.

The next word is a very blessed one and that is covenant. The ark was called “the ark of the covenant.” It represented a Covenant of Works, as it was a part of a visible sanctuary and, ah, how soon was that covenant broken! There is no wonder that in the breaking of that covenant, the golden pot of manna was lost and that Aaron’s rod that budded was no more seen, for we are told in the Chronicles that when they opened the ark, in the days of Solomon, there was nothing found in it “save the two tablets which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.”

Paul tells us that they were there originally and so it is probable that they were taken away by the Philistines. Ah, how soon we should lose the sweet things of God if we were under the Covenant of Works—and how soon we should miss the gentle sovereignty of His shepherd rod! I thank and bless God that in Christ Jesus we have a Covenant of Grace which can never fail and never can be broken! In Him we have all that our souls desire—pot of manna and rod of Aaron—covenant provision and covenant rule we find in Him. Dear Hearer, have you ever seen Christ as your Covenant? It is not every Believer that has seen Him in that light. When we first come to Christ, we look to Him as our Savior and we are lightened—and a very blessed look it is!

It may not be till years after that we come to understand that God has entered into Covenant with us in Christ; that He will bless us, sanctify us and keep us to the end. But, mark you, while a knowledge of Christ as a Savior gives you the Bread of Life, yet the “wines on the lees well refined” and the “fat things full of marrow” are unknown to you till you can spell that word, “covenant.” Oh, how I wish some of the people of God understood it and realized that there is established between God and us, in the Person of Christ Jesus, a Covenant ordered in all things and sure! May the Holy Spirit teach you this! God has pledged His honor for the salvation of His people and He has sealed the Covenant with the precious blood of Jesus and, therefore, He will not turn away from it, but will keep it for His Son’s sake! Oh, blessed Jesus, we need no ark of the covenant, for You are the Covenant, itself, to us, and in You we rejoice!

Fourthly—because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God, it was from it that He was accustomed to reveal Himself—and so it is called the “ark of testimony.” Jehovah often spoke from the Mercy Seat to His waiting people. His priests and Prophets heard a voice coming forth from the thick darkness of the secret chamber wherein God dwelt—a voice from off the Mercy Seat giving them promises of succor in their times of need. It was a great thing to possess what they called, “the oracle.” No other people had a true oracle except these chosen ones of God, but now that its voice is silent, we need not regret it, for we have another Oracle. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.”

His Son is the Testimony of the Father’s mind. “He that has seen Me,” He says, “has seen the Father.” In all the world of Nature; in all the realm of Providence; in all the books of Revelation, God is seen, but nowhere as He is seen in the Person of Jesus Christ—Jesus, the Word, is the most plain Revelation of God! His Sacrifice is the heart of God written out in readable characters. Jesus Christ is “the Testimony!” Come, then, Beloved, let us rejoice in the faithful and true Witness. Some will say that they know God by study. Others declare that they have found God by reflection. And some dream that they perceive Him by imagination. But all their knowledge put together cannot equal the blessed testimony of God which He has given us concerning Himself in the manifestation of His Incarnate, holy, obedient, suffering, dying, risen Son! We say no more, “the ark of the testimony,” but we rejoice that God was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His Glory and saw the Father in the Son.

We have only reached the middle of the subject now—this ark also signified enthronement—for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the Throne of God. It was “the throne of the heavenly Grace.” There God reigned and dwelt, that is, typically. It was a throne to which petitioners came with their pleas to obtain favors at the hand of the great King. Where, now, is the visible Throne of God? Ah, Sirs, His holy place has been broken down and He dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. There is now no visible Throne of God upon the face of the earth. Whereunto shall you liken the Throne of the Most High? We have heard of thrones of mighty kings adorned with gold, ivory, pearls and gems till they have shone like rainbows—but what would these trifles be to the God of the whole earth?

If you would see the Throne of God, behold the Person of the Christ, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! The Lord reigns from the tree, from the Cross—here is the kingdom of God set up in the Person of Christ Jesus among the sons of men! Oh what a blessing to have such a Throne to come to—to Jesus, Himself, who is the Throne of the invisible God! We talk no longer of the ark and of its gold. Of its crown and of its golden lid. Of the winged cherubs, for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these! Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, You chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very Throne of God is You!

Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God’s enthronement, so it was the door of man’s approach. Men never came nearer to God on earth, typically, than when they stood in the Holy Place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God, symbolically, on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted—and her priest stood before the ark—awe-stricken in the Presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant, for we have a blessed way of approach. We do not come to Christ only once in the year, but every day in the year and every hour of the day! He who came but once in the year came tremblingly. The Jews had a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the High Priest so that if he should die before the ark, they might draw out his corpse— such was their servile fear of God!

That tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil—how different from the Apostle’s words, “Let us come boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace.” We are not afraid of being stricken with death there—we are full of reverence—but we have not received the spirit of bondage, again, to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ, but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. Come nearer, nearer still—it is your fault that you do not come near enough! There is nothing to tremble at, here—come right up to God and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend.

I would leave others to worship as they find they can, but to me, though the prayers of our national Church are very beautiful—they are so very cold! What a long way off is God in the Liturgy! What word is there in it of childlike delight in God? Therefore certain Brothers and Sisters who have been accustomed to that style of praying chide us for our boldness and familiarity in prayer. They think we are presumptuous in drawing so near to God! Brothers and Sisters, we do not marvel at your judgment, nor complain of it! We would not condemn you for your distant prayers, but we cannot yield to your censure of our bolder approach, for we have in our bosoms a sense of acceptance and a spirit of adoption which will not let us speak with God otherwise than as His favored children!

We come boldly because we come through Jesus! Who is afraid of Jesus? Who shudders when drawing near to Him? And if He is the Mercy Seat to which we come—and the place where the Father meets us—we feel that He permits the holy familiarity, the humble freedom which is suggested to our hearts by the spirit of adoption! I must go a step further— the ark was the place of gracious power. On the top of the Mercy Seat stood cherubic figures and, notwithstanding all that learned men may have said, I do not think that any idea is nearer the mark than that these cherubim were types of angelic power—and of all the powers of Providence which God is pleased to use in the behalf of His people.

Notice how frequently the Word associates angels with our Lord. For instance, when Jacob saw the ladder which reached to Heaven and God at the top of it, there were angels ascending and descending upon it. Cherubim were on all the curtains of the Most Holy Place which enclosed the ark and the ministry of angels is interwoven into the great covenant plan of salvation. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Consider, then, that the angels on the Mercy Seat typify the power of God by which He will defend His people. Right well did He defend them, for who could harm them when He was in the midst of them?

Yet we will not speak of the ark. Neither will we remember it. Neither will we visit it, for we see in Christ Jesus that all the power of God is on our side! He is, “God With Us,” and if God is with us, who can be against us? Every angel is the servant of our Covenant Head and so the guardian of every member of Christ. As He might have summoned 12 legions of angels by one uplifted glance to Heaven, so will He fill the mountain with horses of fire and chariots of fire whenever His people need such succor! The stars in their courses fight for the Savior and for the saved ones— nothing shall, by any means, harm them! In Heaven and earth and Hell, the warrant of the great King stands in full force, “Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm.” And this protection comes to us because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

An eighth explanation, however, I must close with, so far as this second head is concerned. The ark was much reverenced by the Jews because it was the center of their nationality. Around the ark in the wilderness gathered all the tribes. The pillar of fire and cloud above the ark of the Covenant was God’s flaming standard marking the pavilion where the Lord of Hosts abode. After they were settled in Canaan, it was the center of the nation. There the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of our God. Today we have no such sacred ark or chest. We have no palladium or central standard. There is a church which has a man they call, “infallible,” who is her center—and there are others who, in their cravings after uniformity in the churches would, I have no doubt, soon create a second hierarchy and bring forth by prodigious birth a second pope—but it is not so among us! God will not have it so! He will have no human center and our very divisions are overruled to prevent such a thing.

But there one Center to which all God’s people gather! There is one name above every name, “of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named.” Find me a dozen spiritual men and, to describe their different modes of thought, one of them may be called a Baptist, another an Episcopalian, a third a Presbyterian, a fourth a Methodist and so forth. Let them sit together and begin to talk of the things of God—of the Covenant of Grace; the work of the Spirit in the soul; the preciousness of the blood of Jesus—and you will see that they are one! Though they talk with various brogues, their language is one. Even as men from Somersetshire, or Essex, or Yorkshire all differ and yet all are Englishmen—so are Christians of various denominations one in the common language of the Cross of Christ.

They say that Christians ought to be one and so we ought. But I go further and assert that all who are in Christ are already one! When our Lord prayed, “That they all may be one,” was He unheard? Was His prayer unavailing? I believe it was answered and that to this day there is a vital union among all the people of God in every place. And though they sometimes try to conceal that unity, yet the love of Christ wills out and will fuse them into one. Put two mere theologians together and they will fight like Kilkenny cats! But bring two spiritual men together at the Cross and they will lie down like two lambs—they cannot help it—they must love each other in Christ.

There is, there must be, an essential unity among those who are quickened by the Spirit! And I rejoice and glory that the name, the Person and the work of Jesus are, at this hour, the center of Christendom! Talk not of the ark, neither visit it, neither let it come to mind, for the King, Himself, is in the midst of us, “the standard bearer among ten thousand.”

III. Thirdly, let us see THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED. Let us render to Jesus the honor which aforetime was offered to the ark. First, let us say that Jesus is our Covenant. We are told, “They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” People must talk, it is natural to them, they must say something—what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that He is the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. Come, let us each one say it for himself—“Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through You. Jesus, You are my Propitiation—by You I approach unto the Father.” Recognize this Truth of God for yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, and it will be a grand day for you.

When you have said it to yourself, say it to those about you. Say it to strangers, but especially say it to your own Brothers and Sisters. “They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another,” and what better subject could they have than to say one to another, “Brother, what fellowship we have with God in Christ! What a covenant there is between us and Him! Oh how sweetly does Christ cover our sins! How blessedly does He fulfill the Law! How sweetly does He bring us into fellowship with angels and how does He enable God to shine forth upon us!” Say this, say it often, nobody will rebuke you—it is a subject upon which you may be as fluent as you please. When you have said all you know, say it over again! And when you have said it again, say it a third time! This is a kind of note of which the human ear, when once it is cleansed, never grows weary!

The text takes you a step farther, for it says of the original ark, “neither shall it come to mind,” or, (I give the margin), “neither shall it come upon your heart.” Brethren, let Christ come upon your heart and dwell there! Beloved, let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart! Know all you can about Him, but love Him on account of everything you know, for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to Him. How I loved Him when I only knew myself a sinner and Christ a Savior! But oh, I love Him more as I begin to see my greater need and His greater fullness—as I see my greater sinfulness and His greater graciousness! Oh for a great Christ! Oh to see Him grow upon us! Oh to get more knowledge and then to have our hearts enlarged that we may love Him more and more!

Carry Christ in your heart, even as the Israelite bore the ark in his affections. Oh love the Lord, all you His saints! You can love other things too much, but not your Lord! Embrace Him! Cry in the language of the Song, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” Outsiders do not understand the Song—they say it is a mere love ditty. They never will understand it till the Lord Jesus is laid on their hearts. But when He is once there—their Joy, their All—they will need just such golden speech as Solomon’s Song! And every word of it will be dear to their souls. Let us, then, love our Lord with all our hearts.

And, next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text and let us remember the Lord—  
*“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still.”*

If I have not this enjoyment now, I will remember it and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember You. If I forget You, let my heart forget to beat—

*“Gethsemane, can I forget?  
Or there Your conflict see,  
Your agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember Thee!  
When to the Cross I turn m eyes,  
And rest on Calvary,  
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!  
I must remember Thee.  
Remember You and all Your pains,  
And all Your love to me.  
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,  
Will I remember Thee.”*

O memory, leave no other name than that of Jesus recorded upon your tablets! Let us sometimes set apart a little space for the exercise of our memory. It is good for children at school to have their memories trained. Should not we sometimes, especially we who speak so much, get alone and sanctify our memory by going over all the blessings of the Covenant which come to us by Christ—all the glory of His Person and all the wonders of His work? Oh, yes, we must remember it!

The next thing is, let us visit Him. We cannot set out on journeys, now, to go to Jerusalem on foot—little bands of us together—yet let us visit Jesus. Let us continually come to the Mercy Seat alone. Who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next, let us come up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom get out, could you not, every now and then during the day, say to your maid, if she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, “Come, let us have a five minutes’ visit to the Ark of the Covenant. Let us go to the Lord and speak with Him— maybe He will speak with us. Perhaps we have not been agreeing as we should—let us go and hear what God the Lord will speak, for He may speak peace to us in more senses than one. Perhaps we have had a trouble today and we do not see our way—let us go up to the Ark of the Covenant and hear what the Oracle will tell us. Perhaps the Lord will say, ‘This is the way, walk you in it’ and we shall know what to do.”

Frequently, in twos and threes, visit Christ your Ark and take care, also, to join the great caravans of Church prayer. One starts in this place every Sunday at seven o’clock in the morning and another at the hour of ten. Join those bands of pilgrims! A still larger company goes up to the Oracle on Monday nights at seven o’clock. Some twelve or fifteen hundred of us are usually to be found in happy fellowship going up to the Mercy Seat on Mondays. A very blessed little company meet on Thursday nights, before I begin my sermon, and they say, “Come and let us go and enquire of the Lord and ask His blessing upon His servant.” Besides these, there are meetings for prayer in this place at so many hours that I cannot now mention them all.

If you live where they are giving up on Prayer Meetings, carry home a live coal and drop it into your minister’s bosom. “Ah,” you say, “he might not like it.” That is very likely, but he certainly needs setting on fire if he lets the Prayer Meeting go out! Churches without Prayer Meetings? Pull them down, their day is over! Stop the preacher’s mouth if he does not pray and let His Church be scattered to the winds, for the Church that forgets to assemble for prayer has “Ichabod” written on its walls! No prayer, no power! The Ark of the Covenant is gone when the people no longer come together to cry unto the Lord in their companies. Let us constantly visit the ark, then, together! Let us go up to the Holy Place that we may speak with the Most High!

The last thing is, “Neither shall that be done any more,” but the margin has it, “Neither shall that be magnified any more.” Transfer your reverence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal Mercy Seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the real Mercy Seat. Oh, that I knew how to speak words worthy to lie under the soles of my Master’s feet! Oh, that I could speak a sentence that was fit to be laid in the road like the palm branches with which the disciples strewed His way, not worthy to be touched by His feet, but by the feet of the beast that He rode upon! I am not worthy to unloose His shoe lace! He is so glorious that archangels fall on their faces to adore Him! Heaven is splendid, but the splendor of Heaven is the Presence of my Lord and Master! His Throne is a glorious high throne, but it owes its Glory and its height to Him that sits upon it! Hallelujah unto You, O Christ! Hallelujah forever and ever, for You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood! If the Jew was ever permitted to look upon the golden chest of the ark, he saw but little compared with what I see in You, You Man, You God!

The wood that could not rot, covered over with precious gold, was a poor representation of His perfect Manhood and glorious Godhead. The ark was crowned, but we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels and crowned King Of kings and Lord of lords! Again my heart cries hallelujah! The Jew could but see a slab of gold that was called the Throne of God, but we see the spotless, perfect life and infinitely precious Atonement of Christ which are better than the much fine gold. I see God, not as a light for the eyes, but as shining upon the soul in Jesus, my Lord. Oh, the Glory, the Glory of that Light of God! I am reconciled! I am a child of God! I am brought near! Jehovah speaks to me! I speak to Him! Hallelujah! All praise to Him through whom such fellowship is rendered possible so that a man can see God and live! Glory, glory be unto Him who is now in the Temple above! The veil is torn and faith can see Jesus, to whom we come this day. God bless you this day. God bless you, Beloved! Amen.

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QUESTION AND EXCLAMATION  
NO. 2742

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-BAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1879.

**“But I said, How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.” Jeremiah 3:19.**

MEN think very lightly of sin unless it brings them under the eyes of the law of the land. They smile at it, as though it were a trifle, but God thinks not as they do. He calls sin by very black names. In this chapter, from which our text is taken, the Lord uses very strong terms in describing sin and He knows what sin is. He is a better judge of it than we are, so He does not regard it as a trifle, but He calls it “adultery,” which among men is regarded as one of the grossest of wrongs and the foulest of crimes. Oh, if some here who think themselves righteous, could only see themselves, not as their fellow creatures see them, but as God sees them, the sight would appall them!

Then, because man thinks so little of sin, he also thinks very little of the Grace of God. To him it seems a very simple matter to remove human guilt—just let God rub it out and leave a clean sheet. But God, who knows what sin really is, makes a very different estimate of the difficulties in the way of mercy and, accordingly, in our text we find Him asking the idolatrous nation, “How can I put you among the children?” The Omniscient, the Omnipotent, is enquiring, “How can such a thing as this be done?” The Lord adopts the language of wonder and speaks after the manner of men, as the best method by which He can communicate to our mind His own conception of the difficulty of saving a sinner. He wants to save him—longs to save him—yearns to put him among His children, but so many difficulties arise that He says, “How can I put you among the children?”

I am going to speak of my text in two ways. You have, perhaps, noticed that our translators regarded the first clause of this verse as a question and they, therefore, put a note of interrogation, or question mark, after the word, “nations.” “How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?” But the Hebrew bears another sense and some later scholars assert that the second meaning is the true one, namely that there ought to be here a note of exclamation or of admiration, as if God Himself delighted to think of all the wonders His Grace was about to work—“How can I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations!” The same meaning really underlies each of these two renderings, and we may get at the true sense of the passage by considering both of them. But please understand that my objective is not so much to expound this text as to bring unrenewed hearts into harmony with it. I long, I pray, I agonize that God may put among His children many of you who have never been numbered with them before.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF INTERROGATION. And, in that sense, it divides itself into two parts—a difficult question. “How can I put you among the children?” And the Divine answer—“I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.”

First comes the difficult question. “How can I put you among the children?”  
The Lord seems to say, “How can I do it? This man has lived in total neglect of Me. I was not in all his thoughts, or if he did think of Me at all, it was only to say to Me, ‘Be You far from me. I do not want to be brought near to You.’ How can I put him among the children? He neglected My statutes and my testimonies, and would have none of them. I called him, but he refused to come to Me. I warned him, but he despised My warnings. How can I, whom he has thus treated with neglect, put him among the children? No, he has not merely forgotten Me and neglected Me, but he has chosen other lovers. He has found some other objects for his life’s ambition and spent his strength in seeking everything but that which is for My Glory. Let him go to his idol gods and find refuge among them in the day of his trouble. Let him call upon the objects of his ambition to administer comfort to him. If he has sought gold, let gold console him. If he has gone into the pleasures of sin, let the pleasures of sin yield him sweetness in the retrospect if they can. But why should I interfere with him? He has destroyed himself. He has pulled the house down upon his own head and all the while, when I stood by offering to bless him, he refused Me, rejected Me and turned against Me. Why then should I be called in now? Why should I be summoned to the rescue of one who is his own destroyer, and who has deliberately rejected Me?”  
Let that solemn enquiry go home to the hearts of all whom it concerns. Some of you know that all these thirty, forty, or fifty years—or even longer—you have been living without God. Now that you are in trouble, you are beginning to think about Him. But suppose He were to say, “Go to your former companions and see what they will do for you. Now that you have spent all and there is a mighty famine in the land, go to the citizens of that country and join yourself to them. Go to the swine trough and fill your belly with the husks that the swine eat.” Ah, the mercy is that the Lord does not talk like that! Still, the difficulty of the task is suggested by the form of His question, “How can I put you among the children?”  
The difficulty arises, next, because of the character of the person to whom He refers—“How can I put you among the children?” “You have been a willful sinner. You have not sinned as some have done, through ignorance—you knew better! From your early childhood you have been taught the right way, but you have neglected it. You have deliberately chosen the path of evil. You were not taken unawares, like a bird in a snare, but you have gone after sin with your eyes open. You have been foolish enough to follow after your own lusts and to drink down iniquity as the thirsty ox drinks water. You have been a willful sinner—a sinner against a mother’s tears and a father’s exhortations—a sinner against a conscience that would be tender against your will—a sinner against many a dream by night and many a throb of heart by day. ‘How can I put you among the children,’ when you have been set on mischief and have made your neck like an iron sinew and have kicked against the goads that would have guided you aright?”  
Especially may the Lord put this question concerning some who, in addition to being willful sinners, have been open sinners. “O thief, how can I put you among the children? O drunkard, in your beastliness of excess, how shall I put you among the children? O unchaste, unclean haunter of the filthiness of night—you who have deceived and seduced others, and defiled yourself—how shall I put you among the children?” Does not the question seem to come with peculiar power to any who may be now present who have upon their conscience, this very hour, the guilt of sins we dare not mention in the public assembly and who, as they sit in these seats, would not greatly wonder if we were deliberately to point them out and say what they have done? Yet it is even with you, and such as you, that God determines to work marvels of mercy, although He rightly raises the question, “How can I put you among the children?”  
After all, if we have not gone into open sin, as others have done, there is not much difference between one sinner and another, for we have all sinned and, having sinned, we stand condemned by the sentence of God’s holy Law. See how God’s question appears to you now! You are a condemned criminal—“‘How can I put you among the children?’ You are one against whom the sentence of death is already recorded and you are only spared by a reprieve which the mediation of My Son brings to you when He cries, ‘Let him alone this year, also.’ Shall I have criminals in My family? Shall I take the condemned out of the cell and say, ‘These shall be My sons and daughters?’ Can it be so?” Oh, yes! Tell it the whole world over—it is so and it shall be so again tonight, by God’s Grace! But, still, it seems to strike the Lord Himself as being a difficult thing to do, for He says, “How can I put you among the children?”  
The question suggests the difficulties that must arise in the case of some who have denied the very existence of God, ridiculed the Gospel, made jests of the wounds of Christ and blasphemed His holy name, invoking His vengeance and daring to defy Him to His face. Some have persecuted the Lord’s people, as Saul of Tarsus did, and that is a great and aggravating sin in His sight. They have, as it were, thrust their fingers into the very eye of God, “for thus says the Lord of Hosts, He that touches You touches the apple of His eye.” It does seem to be a serious question as to how sinners such as these can be put among the children—yet God is constantly working this miracle of mercy! Therefore, publish the glory of His Grace! Tell what His arm has done, and can do again, and will do even tonight, but, still, while you publish the glad tidings, stand astonished that He should put such guilty ones among His children!  
Now just turn the kaleidoscope a little and get the same thought under another aspect. Think of the position which He proposes to give to this character—to put you, great sinner, “among the children.” What will the world say? “What? Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted the saints—has he become a child of God? What? Is the blasphemer saying, ‘Abba, Father’? Is he sitting at the feet of Jesus? Then, surely, we may say, ‘Let us sin, that Grace may abound.’” It may be that some ribald tongues will draw blasphemous inferences from the very mercy of God—shall it, then, be exercised?  
And if it is, what will “the children,” themselves, say? When they see such an one as you are coming in among them, will they not be likely to say, with the prodigal’s elder brother, “Lo, these many years did I serve You, neither transgressed I at any time Your Commandments and yet You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this, Your son, was come, which has devoured Your living with harlots, You have killed the fatted calf for him.” The Lord knows that there are some of His children who still talk that way and he might, therefore, very well say to the gross sinner, “How can I put you among the children?”  
It was not so very long ago that I heard a minister say that he did not believe in the revival, which was then being experienced, because so many outrageous sinners had professed to be saved. He thought it was due to regular attendants at places of worship that, if anybody was saved, they should be the first—a precious piece of abominable legalism! But the Lord does not act in that fashion. He makes them a people who were not a people, and calls her beloved who was not beloved. He takes the very lowest of the low and exalts them! He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even the princes of His people, to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Yet still, He is obliged to ask the question, ‘How can I put you among the children?’ How will the children like it?” Blessed be God, the children at the Tabernacle will like it very much! They will say, “The more, the merrier. Oh, that the Lord would bring in among us some of the outcasts of Israel, and some of the worst sinners of the Gentiles! How we would rejoice to welcome them!” Still, only fancy what would happen if you were to propose to take into your family some of the vilest characters possible? I am afraid that lady-like daughter of yours would object to such a brothel! And I am not certain that that most respectable, gentlemanly son of yours would care to receive such a sister! But God takes into His family such persons as we should never think of receiving into ours!  
Think of another individual to whom the Lord has to say, “How can I put you among the children?” Who is he? Where is he? He used to be among the children, at least, in name, for he was enrolled with them. He used to sit among them with considerable delight and he was highly esteemed among them. But he went aside to drink from the drunkard’s bowl, or he was led astray by some Delilah and his locks, like Samson’s, have been shorn. I think I hear the Lord say to him, “How can I put you back again among My children? You went from the Communion Cup to the cup of devils! You rose from your knees to go deliberately into vice. You knew your duty, but you did it not. You denied your Savior, as Peter did, even if you did not betray Him, as Judas did.” We do not wonder that God speaks thus, yet we rejoice that in this very chapter we have this gracious invitation, “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” Happy will they be who respond, “Behold, we come unto You, for You are the Lord our God.”  
There are others concerning whom the Lord might appropriately ask this difficult question. They are the Grace-resisting sinners. Years ago, they were “almost persuaded.” They almost yielded to Christ, yet they never fully surrendered themselves to Him. They were, for a time, burdened with a sense of guilt—they seemed to be, for a while, earnest in the pursuit of righteousness—but, somehow, the root of the matter was not in them. Whatever was good in them withered away and now it would take a very sharp knife to cut them to the quick, Do not some of you remember when you used to sit in these galleries and tremble as you listened to the Word? Yet, now, though I should speak to you as straight as words could enable me, and pour out my very soul so as to make the Gospel of God’s Grace a living message to you, it would only glide past your ears and utterly fail to reach your heart. Now the Lord seems to say, after so many rejected warnings, after such violence done to the man’s own conscience and to all the better instincts of his nature, “Let him alone! How can I put him among the children?” Would you wonder if He said it?  
I will speak to just one other individual, and then I will turn to another part of the subject. How old are you, my Friend? I see by your white hairs, that you are past the usual age of men. You lean heavily upon your staff—you cannot live much longer. What has been your manner of life? Alas, it has been a life spent in neglect of God and in the pursuit of sin of one kind or another! You have passed your threescore years and ten. You are going on towards eighty—perhaps you are even past that. What is to become of you? You have given your best days to the devil, may he not as well give you rest? You made your choice of masters long ago and you have served Satan even until now—so take your wages, terrible as they are. Shall God be put off with the tail end of your life? Shall all the prime, and pith, and marrow of your manhood be spent in opposition to God and then, just at the last, shall you be received and be put among the children? Yes, that you shall, if the Lord, by His Grace, brings you to the feet of Jesus, no matter how old you may be, nor how sinful you may have been! And we will give you the right hand of holy fellowship as we see the hoary sinner made into a babe

n Grace—and your end shall not be like your beginning, but you shall find mercy at the hand of our God, whose love surpasses all thought and outshines all the imaginations of our hearts!  
I think I have thus shown you that, in many cases, the question in our text is really a very difficult one. “How can I put you among the children?”  
But I must not omit to remind you of the Divine answer to it. If you will read the whole of our text, you will see that there are two, “I saids,” in it—“I said, How can I put you among the children?...And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father; and shall not turn away from Me.’” If God had left us to answer this difficult question, it never would have had a reply, but He has Himself answered it in the best possible way!  
What does the Lord propose to do? He proposes, first of all, to bring in one of his “shalls”—“You shall call Me.” But has God power over human hearts, to decide what they shall do? Is not man a free agent? Yes, he is, otherwise he would not be responsible for his actions. Yet, without at all infringing the freedom of man, God can exercise power over human minds. He is Omnipotent in the world of mind as in the world of matter and, as He said to the dark world, “Let there be light, and there was light,” so can He say to dark minds, “Let light come,” and light will come! And, often, in the inscrutable Sovereignty of His Grace, He speaks to those of whom it seemed impossible to imagine that they would ever be among His children—and He gives them an altogether new bias, so that they seek after that which, before, they had abhorred and, not knowing why, they turn and retrace their steps to the very thing from which, in the past, they had fled! Oh, I do pray that the Lord may say to someone here tonight, “You shall.” If He does but say it, you will sweetly melt under the beams of His love! You will gently dissolve as the icebergs do in the warm Gulf Stream! Your opposition to Him shall exist no longer and you will gladly yield yourself up wholly to Him!  
Observe that the way the Lord will effect the great change is this—He will give us a new spirit. “You shall call Me, My Father.” Now, it is by the reception of the Spirit of adoption that we are enabled to cry, “Abba. Father,” so, if the Lord, in His great mercy, shall give to any of you a new heart and a right spirit, then His own Divine Spirit shall come upon you and dwell in you! The change that will be worked in you will be so great that you will not be what you were before and there shall no longer be the question of difficulty, “How can I put you among the children?”  
With the new spirit, comes the new cry. The man used to say, “There is no God.” But now hear what he says, “My Father.” If he admitted God’s existence, he used to say that he did not care anything about God. But listen to him now as he says, “My Father.” He said that he did not need God, that he could do very well without Him, but now he cries, “My Father.” He said that he was happiest when he thought least of God, but now he cries, “My Father, my Father, my Father! Let me come to You, my Father. I am undone until I find You, O my Father!” He said he had no association with God and did not want to have any. But now he says, “My Father, my Father.” He said he could look up to the starry vault at night and yet not think of God. But now every star seems to twinkle the great Father’s name and he cries, “My Father, manifest Yourself to me. Come, pour Your love into my soul, for my heart says, ‘I will arise, and go unto my Father.’” Oh, yes, now there is no need to ask the question, “How can I put you among the children?” for, as soon as ever God teaches a man to cry, with all his heart, “My Father,” why, he is among the children! There was never yet the cry in the soul, “My Father,” that the Fatherhood of the great God did not respond to, but He said, “My child, My child,” and He fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and blessed him. Now I see how He puts us among the children!  
There is also a “shall not” which is worthy of notice. “You shall call Me, My Father, and shall not depart from Me.” This reminds us of the Grace that not only brings us near to God, but that also keeps us there. Possibly someone is saying, “Well, I now call God, ‘Father,’ but perhaps I may lose Him and forget Him, and go away from Him.” No, if He has brought you to Himself, you shall never go away from Him any more! There is no fear of that happening—  
*“Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.”*  
The Grace which He gives us is in us as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life!  
Now you see how sweet it is to be a child of God and to be among the others of His children, because, although a servant may be dismissed, you cannot be sent away. The servant may go, but the son always abides. “There are your wages, Mary, and I give you a month’s notice that I shall not require your services after that time.” Ah, but I cannot say that to my boys, whatever they may do! Your father could not say that to you, could he? No, no—your relationship is not a matter of wages and, therefore, it is not a matter of temporary abiding in the house. Once you are God’s child, you cannot be “un-childed” forever! Once brought by His great love to sit at His table, you are no longer like a guest at an inn, coming and going, but you are a child who has taken up eternal lodgings in the heart of his great Father.  
All things are also yours in prospect—and the day shall come when you shall possess such things as eyes have never seen, nor ears heard of! You may now be poor, but, in a very short time, you will be rich beyond the miser’s wildest dream of wealth! You may now be cast down, but, within a few months or years, you will be as happy as the angels are, and be with them forever. You may be now obscure and unknown, but if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have to endure only another prick or two of the pin of affliction and then you will go to be with God where there are pleasures forevermore! Everything is yours in reversion, and you shall have it when you come of age. You are only a child at present, but you will enter upon your majority in due season—and when you become a man, then you shall be fit to be a partaker of all those blessings that your Heavenly Father has provided for you!  
I wish I could talk about these blessed Truths of God as I should like to. If I could get rid of my tongue and my lips, and let my soul speak without the intervention of these organs of clay that are such dumb cold things, I would try to tell you the grandeur of the superlative love which takes the child of the devil and puts him among the children of God— that takes the servant of sin, the companion of the swine, the man degraded below the level of the brute—and yet lifts him up and makes him to sit among the children of the eternal God and to be made like unto them! May you all know what it is by happy personal experience!  
II. Now I must close My sermon by just asking you, very briefly, to CONSIDER THE TEXT AS WRITTEN WITH A NOTE OF EXCLAMATION. I have already tried to bring out that meaning—God Himself saying, as if with intense satisfaction, talking to Himself, congratulating Himself, depicting to Himself the bliss of His own benevolence when the object of His mercy is achieved, “How I will put you among the children!”  
In order to bring out this great Truth of God, think of the parable of the prodigal son and try, if you can, to realize the great change in his condition. There is the Father saying, “My dear, dear son, starved in the far-off country, and defiled among the swine, you shall come back to Me and let Me once but see you coming back, and how swiftly I will run to meet you! Oh, how I will fall on your neck! How I will kiss those lips that penitently say, ‘I am not worthy to be called Your son!’ I will stop that utterance with many a kiss repeated again and again. How I will press you to My bosom, My son, My long-lost son, My son that was dead and is alive again! How will I bring you to your mother’s house and to the chamber of her that bore you! How I will conduct you within My gates, and say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.’ How gloriously will I array you among the children! You shall have the best My house can afford.”  
The Father seems to see it all before it is actually done and He thinks, “How princely My poor boy will look when the best robe, bespangled with jewels, shall hide his nakedness! How I will put him among the children! He shall have a ring such as I give to My choicest favorites. ‘Put shoes upon his feet.’ My boy shall no longer be a bare-footed beggar. Then bring out the fatted calf, and kill it, and hold high holiday. Ring the bells of Heaven! Pour forth your sweetest minstrelsy, and let this be the keynote of it all, ‘My son, that was dead, is alive again! He was lost, but now he is found.’ How gloriously will I put you among the children!”  
Of whom does my Master speak this? Soul, do you feel guilty? Does your heart repent of your sin? Are you willing to be reconciled to God? Then He speaks all this of you—of you, poor draft and scum that you are in your own estimation! Since you have been precious in His sight, you have been honorable and He has loved you, and given a wondrous price for you, even the blood of His well-beloved Son. How I wish I could get side by side with some big sinner here, tonight, and tell him what I was myself, and what the Grace of God has done for me! I would tell him that my Father in Heaven has said, even concerning him, “How gloriously will I put you among the children! How I will give you a pleasant land and a goodly inheritance among the sanctified! How I will open your lips to shout of My mercy and fire your heart with zeal to proclaim My goodness!”  
Does it seem too good to be true? Listen to my own testimony. Had anybody told me, when I was seeking the Lord’s face nearly 30 years ago, that I should be here tonight to tell these thousands of people all that His love has done, in putting me among the children, I should not have thought it possible! Then, arise, young man, for the Lord can do the same for you! Look to Jesus, for the opened fountain has not yet been closed, nor shall it be till the last of His elect is washed whiter than snow—and that time has not yet arrived. Believe and live! All difficulties are removed by the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. And among the children of God you shall stand and He shall delight in all that His mighty love, His superlative Grace has done for you—  
*“Cast your guilty soul on Him,  
Find Him mighty to redeem!  
At His feet your burden lay,  
Look your doubts and cares away!  
Now by faith the Son embrace—  
Plead His promise, trust His Grace!”*  
If I had to tell you of a hard master—if I had to stand here, like Moses, to tell of the thunders of the Law of God, I would do it, though it would go hard with me to deliver such a message. But when I have only to tell you that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men—that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. When I have to quote His words, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” and tell you that, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts—“let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon!” When I have such a Gospel as this to proclaim to you, oh, I think you should accept it! No, I am sure you should accept it!  
I have not to impose hard terms upon you. I do not come with threats of war and destruction. Mercy fills the Throne of God and wrath stands silently by. Oh, come and accept the mercy of your God! Some of you will do so, I know. The Lord shall lead you to do it by His gracious Spirit— and to His name shall be the praise forever. Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HOSEA 14.**

According to the heading of this chapter, we have here, “an exhortation to repentance,” and, “a promise of God’s blessing.”  
Verse 1. O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Fallen into sorrow, fallen into shame, fallen into spiritual poverty, fallen into weakness of faith, fallen almost to destruction! Though you are Israel and God loves you, yet, “you have fallen by your iniquity,” and the only possible way in which you can obtain restoration is to “return unto the Lord your God.” Seek once again your Father’s face. Cry, with the prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father.” “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” You may do so, for He bids you come back to Him. You should do so, for it was unwise of you to wander from Him—so end your wandering and return to Him. “Return unto the Lord your God.” He is still “your God!” He denies not the sacred band which binds you to Himself. Though you have forsaken Him, yet still He bids you think of Him, not as a stranger, but as your God!  
O child of God, are you just now very heavy in heart because of your backsliding? Is the lamp of spirituality burning very low? Do you feel as if you had got into a state of spiritual barrenness? Then return—return at once—unto the Lord your God, for your sad condition is due to your iniquity!  
2. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him. He puts the Words into our mouths, for He knows that sometimes we feel as if we cannot give proper expression to our repentance. We feel it, but we cannot utter it, so He puts the very form of the confession into His children’s mouths—“Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him”—  
*2.*Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Sin has had the mastery over you, therefore ask to have it taken away by pardon and by the cleansing which shall deliver you from the influence and power of it! Do not ask the Lord merely to take away some of your sin, but say to Him, “‘Take away all iniquity.’ Especially if I have indulged some darling sin that has been my ruin, take that away.” “Take away all iniquity, and receive us.” “You cannot receive us with our sins upon us. Will You press us to Your bosom while we are black and foul with iniquity? No, that cannot be! So, first take away all our sin, and then receive us. Receive us again into favor with You, into a conscious sense of Your love. Receive us when we come to You in prayer. Receive us when we come to the Communion Table. Receive us as You did at the first, as Your sons and daughters.” “Receive us graciously.” “We cannot hope to be received on any other footing but that of Your free and abounding Grace, for even if You forgive and cleanse us, we shall still be sinners and shall still need Your Grace and mercy.” “Receive us graciously; so will we render.” “When You have put away our sin, and received us, then we will begin to serve You. And we will bring to You, not the calves of the legal sacrifice, for a sense of Your love will make us feel that You delight not in burnt offering. But we will render unto You the calves of our lips—our testimony to Your faithfulness—our declaration of Your Truth—our prayer—our praise.”  
3. Asshur shall not save us. When a man trusts to his God, he gets away from all other trust. Confidence in God is the death of all other confidences. “Asshur shall not save us.”  
3. We will not ride upon horses. Which, somehow or other, were always the Israelites’ fear and trust. They always looked upon horsemen as the most powerful friends or foes in the day of battle. But now they feel that all creatures shall be given up and they will cling to God alone. “Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.”  
3. Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy. What a sweet reason this is for confidence in God, namely, that He cares for those who have nobody else to care for them—that He becomes the Helper of those who have no other helper and the Guardian of those who are left friendless in the world! O My Soul, are you not just such an one—friendless, helpless, hopeless, orphaned? Fly, then, to that God in whom the fatherless finds mercy and you, too, shall find mercy! Now let us listen to the voice of God—  
4. I will heal their backsliding. He can do it. He will do it. He evidently rejoices to do it. He soliloquizes with Himself, as though it were a very pleasant thought to Him! “I will heal their backsliding.”  
4. I will love them freely. “Though there is nothing lovely in them, though they deserve My wrath—though, according to their own confession, they have gone after false gods, I will love them freely.”  
4. For My anger is turned away from him. “I have fully forgiven them, and I have caused My great wrath to pass away from them.” Now, dear child of God, you to whom I spoke just now, who have fallen into a dull, dead, dreary sort of state—are you not encouraged to return unto the Lord when He thus declares that He will heal your backsliding and love you freely? You shall have your joy-days back again! You shall have your old love restored! You shall have your old delight renewed! You shall again dance before the Lord for very joy of spirit!  
5. I will be as the dew unto Israel. “When they come back to Me, I will refresh them—softly, sweetly, efficaciously, abundantly, mysteriously— even as the dew refreshes the thirsty earth.”  
5*.*He shall grow as the lily. Your souls shall suddenly spring up. As the daffodil-lily springs up almost in a night, and its golden bells speedily appear, so you who seem so dead, shall grow up adorned with the golden flowers of God’s delight in you.  
5. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon. Fickle as you have been, God’s Grace will make you stable. You shall have as firm a roothold as a cedar has and be as fixed as Libanus himself.  
6. His branches shall spread. You shall begin to have influence upon others and cast a shadow over them for their good.  
6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree. His soul, bedewed by Divine Grace, shall be beautiful as the olive tree, which has an almost indescribable loveliness all its own.  
6. And his smell as Lebanon. There shall be a gracious flavor about you who are now so sapless and dry, when once the Lord returns to you because you have returned to Him.  
7. They who dwell under his shadow shall return. Your children, your friends, all those who live in your house, shall be the better for your repentance and return to God. They try you, now, but when you have left off trying God, they will leave off trying you. Among a man’s own children, there are often those who remind him of his own sin against God. Do you wonder that Jacob had so much trial with his sons when you remember what kind of man he was? Are you surprised that David’s latter days were so full of trouble when you recollect his great sin? Ah, but if the Lord restores, and revives, and refreshes you, your household shall also be blessed! “They who dwell under his shadow shall return.”  
7. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Your household shall have such a blessedness about them that observers shall say of you and yours, “They are a seed that the Lord has blest.” The Lord has a most gracious way of making families to be very choice and select, and full of comfort and peace when those families walk in His fear. But when there is sin in the head of the household, there comes disorder in the family, the departure of the Divine blessing and all goes awry.  
8*.*Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? “I have had enough of them! They have cost me enough sorrow! They have plagued me enough. I will put them away, for I must have my God, and I cannot have Him and idols too.”  
8. I have heard him and observed him. God hears the cry of the penitent, and observes what is going on in his heart.  
8, 9. I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein. The Lord give us wisdom, by His Holy Spirit, to understand and know these things—and to put our understanding to practical account by returning to Him, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2452 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HOPE FOR THE WORST BACKSLIDERS  
NO. 2452

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1886.

**“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:  
truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.” Jeremiah 3:22, 23.**

SIN is quite sure to cause sorrow—and the longer the sorrow is delayed, the heavier it will be when it comes. This ship may be long at sea, but it will come home, at last, with a heavy cargo. There was never a man who broke the Law of God who had not in the end to rue it. “He that digs a pit shall fall into it and who breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him,” is one of Solomon’s sayings, and it is most certainly true. How many there are in this world who have upon them a load of sorrow which is plainly and evidently the result of their own folly and iniquity! Their sin procured it for them.

There is also a godly sorrow which comes after sin has been committed and which is not merely occasioned by the sin, but by the love of God and the action of the Spirit of God upon the heart. When God means to save a man, He usually begins by making him sorrow on account of his evil ways. It is the sharp steel needle of the Law of God that goes through the convicted heart and draws the silken thread of comfort and salvation after it! It is not God’s way to make men alive, again, until they are really dead. I mean, that, spiritually, they must be first, slain by the Law, before they are made alive by the Gospel. It is not God’s way to heal the unwounded heart, or to provide garments for those who are already clothed. Our heart must be broken and we, ourselves, must be stripped before the healing balm can be applied—and the robe of righteousness can be put upon us.

I know that what I say upon this subject will be had in small esteem by those who have not learned the evil of sin. It is to such, only, as have felt the arrows of the Lord’s righteous anger rankling in their spirit that the Gospel message will come with any kind of sweetness. If any here are suffering greatly under the burden of sin—as once I was myself—if any here are crushed to the earth as once I was crushed, they will be glad to hear God’s invitation of mercy and to know the way by which it may be accepted!

The other day I read in the newspaper a story which certainly surprised me and, undoubtedly, it is an instance of wonderful patience and forbearance on the part of a loving woman. I do not think that I have heard or read the likes of it in all my days. And I should think that such action as hers never was excelled. The wretch of whom I speak must have been the meanest man who ever lived—and died without being hanged! And the woman must have been one of the most wonderful of women ever seen upon the face of the earth! According to the account I read, the man had not been long married, but he did not prosper in his profession and, feeling that he had talent and ability, he came to London with his wife’s permission and consent, that he might make his way in the world. He did make his way and became, afterwards, a portrait painter of considerable eminence, so that he obtained admission into fashionable society and lived upon the fat of the land.

He had told his wife, when he wrote to her once, that if she came she might be a burden to him, so he never fetched her up to London. Indeed, he never but on that one occasion communicated with her and never sent her even a solitary sixpence! That state of things lasted for 40 years and the wife remained true and faithful to him notwithstanding all the heartbreak caused by his cruel conduct. In the process of time, he spent all his money and reduced himself to beggary—beside that, he was full of disease, yet he was mean enough to crawl to the door of the woman he had neglected all those years and, strange as it may seem, she opened it with delight and welcomed him back to her heart. She put him in her bedroom, she carefully nursed and cared for him and she wore her own life away by sitting at his bedside till he died.

Was it not splendid on her part? What monument ought not to be raised to such a loving woman as that? But I merely tell you this story in order to say that this woman’s forgiveness of her unworthy husband is but a faint picture of the great love of God towards ungodly men! He feeds them and supplies their every need—they are always dependent upon Him—they could not live an instant without His permission, yet some whom I know have never communicated with their God for 40 years! Forty years, did I say? Fifty, 60, or perhaps even more years than that they have lived as if there were no God! And worse, still, they have, perhaps, only used His name for the purposes of blasphemy! They have made a mockery of holy things, they have provoked the Lord to jealousy and yet even now, though they are decrepit and old, if they are not only sick but sorry, if they are broken down and despairing, if they will but come creeping to God’s door, He will say, “Come in and welcome!”

He never yet refused to receive a soul that came to Him by Jesus Christ, His Son. And Jesus Christ Himself has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Oh, how many old sinners have come to Christ even at 80 years of age and He has never uttered a word about those 80 wicked years—but He has said to each one of them, “Come in. I died for you. Come in and welcome.” There have been many, many sins of the most aggravated kind committed, yet those who committed them have been freely forgiven! What did the Lord Jesus say to Saul of Tarsus? “I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” Yet, having asked, “Why do you persecute Me?” He had nothing more to say to him by way of reproof or rebuke, but He blotted out his sin and, more than that, He counted him worthy—putting him into the ministry—so that this very man could afterwards say, “To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I earnestly trust that God’s infinite mercy and patience may be verified in the case of some whom I am now addressing, who have not yet turned to God. Pray, dear Christian Friends, that it may be so! In handling this subject I shall notice two things in my text. The first is, the call from God—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” The second is the method of obeying the call. This is set forth in the words, “Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.”

I. To begin, then, here is THE CALL FROM God—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.”  
You observe that it is a call to come back to God—and that means, first, remember Him—begin to think of Him, let Him be a living God to you. Come back to Him in your thoughts. The Lord Jehovah is the greatest factor in the universe! He works all things. He is the great Unit without which all the rest of the figures would be but ciphers. He made you— you are dependent upon Him from day to day. Before long your spirit must return to God who gave it—and you will have to stand before His Judgement Seat. Why, of all the persons in the world, must God be forgotten? Why, of all the things that are, should you forgot this chief of all things, the great I AM? Do you say that there is no God? Ah, then I have nothing to do with you—your conduct in forgetting Him may be quite consistent with that declaration, though I am sure that you know better. But if there is a God and you believe that He is, begin to think of Him in due proportion. I mean that as He is the greatest of all beings, give to Him your greatest and highest thoughts. And as He is most to be reverenced, give Him your most reverent and careful consideration.  
I think that I am not asking too much of you. Certainly, if you are sorry for your sin and wish the Lord to forgive you, the very first thing for you to do is to obey that ancient command, “Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come to you.” I know that the thought of your sin sometimes troubles you—so it ought, and it will do you good to be troubled if it leads you back to the Lord against whom you have sinned! If you have offended anyone, go and confess your offense and make matters right. Perhaps you say that you do not like the person and you are not willing to go to the person. Of course you are not! But that only proves how very right it would be for you to do so! That dislike of yours has sprung out of two things—first, your having been the offender and secondly, your not being acquainted with the offended one. Now, if those two things are acknowledged, confessed and remedied, you will soon find it to be the most joyful thing in all the world to think of God! It will be your delight above all things to rejoice in Him and in all that He does. Begin, then, to think of God, for this is what He means when He says to you, “Return, you backsliding children.”  
The next thing is, really turn to Him. I know that you must have been shocked with the figure used in this chapter. [See exposition at the end of this sermon—EOD.] That sense of shame I cannot help. As God used this symbol, it is good enough for me, and I am sure that there is an instructive meaning in it. I must turn again to that figure. We will suppose—(and, alas, bad as the case is, we need not go very far to find the likes of it)—that a woman has grievously offended against the honor of her husband. She has gone away and left him and plunged into all sorts of sin an vice. Well no, suppose that there should come to her the message, “Return. He knows it all. He realizes all that it means. He has grieved over it all, yet he says to you, Return.” She says, “I have spent all. I am in rags. I have but a miserable lodging. Those who once flattered me and lived with me in sin, have forsaken me. I am a poor cast-off wretch, whom even a reformatory refuses.” Then the husband writes to her and says, “Return. Return to me and all shall be forgiven you, whatever it may be.”  
Do you not fancy that you can see her starting to go back to him? If there is anything left in her that is worth saving, she makes haste to accept the invitation. Yet she is very timid and very much afraid. Oh, how her sad face is covered with the blushes of shame! How the tears fall down her furrowed cheeks! Sometimes she can hardly believe that such wonderful love can be exhibited to so undeserving a woman as she is. Perhaps she is troubled, and rightly troubled, by the thought that no man would do such a thing as her husband appeared to have done—and that it would not be right that he should do so. She therefore stops a while and considers the matter. Yet it is all true. Her husband is one in a million, perhaps there is no other quite as loving and forgiving as he is. “Come back,” he says, “only confess your transgression and comes back to me just as you are.” I think she must be a wretch, indeed, if she does not feel that she will lay all the rest of her life out in service and love to such a forgiving husband as she has!  
Now, this is just how the Lord offers to deal with you. He says, “Come back. I will say nothing about the past. ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return to Me; for I have redeemed you.’ I have forgiven your iniquities. I laid them all on My dear Son. He died for you, His precious blood has washed all your guilt away. Come back to Me. Come back to Me. ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.’ Come back to Me. ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.’ I have not put you away, notwithstanding all your sin and all your iniquity. Here is the message of My love and mercy, ‘Return, you backsliding children,’ for I am married to you, says the Lord your God.”  
Well now, in some such way as that striking figure would import, come back to your God at once, poor wandering sinner, confessing all your wrong, wondering that there should be mercy for you, trusting that what the Lord says is, indeed, true because He says it—and resolve henceforth to live and to die at His dear feet—His servant as well as His beloved. This is the way to come back to God, so I would entreat you thus to return to Him!  
There is one word in this call from God which proves that you are invited to come back just as you are. He says, “Return, you backsliding children.” I notice that He does not say, “Return, you penitent children.” He pictures you in your worst colors, yet He says, “Return, you backsliding children.” I also notice that He does not say, “Heal your wounds, first, and then come back to Me.” He says, “Return, you backsliding children,” with all your backslidings unhealed—“and I will heal your backslidings.”  
Many sinners seem to suppose that they must make themselves better and then come to Christ—a most unworthy supposition and an utterly unfounded one! Come just as you are, with no goodness, or virtue, or hope of any sort—come to Christ for it all! “But all who would be saved must believe in Jesus and repent of their sins,” says one. Exactly so, but Christ does not want you to begin the work of salvation and then let Him finish it! He never came to be a make-weight to add the last half-ounce to all that you had gathered. Come to Him with nothing and He will fill the scale! Come empty, ragged, filthy, just as you are, and believe in God that justifies the ungodly. Cast yourself on Him who came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance! Bow in humility and patience before Him who flashes the lightning of Sinai in the face of every selfrighteous sinner, but who kindles the milder, genial rays of Calvary to guide every truly humble and repentant sinner into the Port of Peace and everlasting love!  
Thus have I put before you the call from God—“Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.”  
II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you THE METHOD OF OBEYING THIS CALL. There are two things in the text that are specially noteworthy. First, he who would return to God and find salvation, must distinctly renounce all other trust except that which God Himself gives him and sets before him in the Gospel. Listen—“Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains.” Judea was a hilly country and wherever there was the peak of a mountain, or the summit of a hill, there was an idol temple—and wherever there was a grove of oaks, there would be an idolatrous shrine. Whenever the people traveled through the valleys, they kept looking up to these shrines, so their trust was in the hills and in the multitudes of mountains. They had gods everywhere, blocks of wood and stone. So the Lord said to them, “If I am to receive you back, you must renounce all this idolatry.” The spiritual meaning of this passage is this—if you are to be saved by the Grace of God, you must solemnly, formally and heartily renounce all confidence in any but the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ!  
First, there must be a distinct renunciation of all righteousness of your own. You are a very excellent person in your own estimation. You think yourself well up to the mark—what have you ever done that is wrong? Ah, Friend, there is no salvation for you on that ground! Your righteousness must in your own esteem become as filthy rags! You must acknowledge yourself to be defiled and undone or there is no hope for you! The man who clings to his own righteousness is like a man who grasps a millstone to prevent himself from sinking in the flood. Your righteousness will damn you if you trust in it, as surely as will your sins, for it is a false proud lie—there is no truth in it and no dependence must be placed upon it. There is not a man living who, by nature, does good and sins not—and the soul that sins must die. We have not, any of us, a righteousness that will stand the test of the all-searching eyes of God! And in our heart of hearts we know it is so. Therefore, away with that lie once and for all!  
When I came to Christ, this matter did not trouble me, for I had not any righteousness of my own to which I could trust. And there are many poor souls who are in much the same condition in which I was. They do not want to keep the counterfeit money which they once reckoned to be great riches—they are anxious to be rid of it! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and even at this present moment I do not know of anything that I have ever been, or done, or thought, or said that I could patch up into a righteousness upon which I could place the slightest reliance! I have not anything to trust to except the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior! And, what is more, I never wish to have, and never shall have any other ground of confidence. And I am sure, Beloved, that you must build on the same foundation, or else Christ will never save you. You must altogether renounce any trust in your own righteousness.  
The next thing that you must renounce is your own strength. There is many a young man whom I have known who has been going into impurity and into drunkenness. And he has been warned by kind friends to see the wrong in his course of action, but he has said, “Yes, I see it, but I shall make everything right. I shall become a total abstainer. I shall forsake evil companions. I shall keep out of harm’s way. I shall be as right as a trivet, I know that I shall. I have great strength of mind and I always could command myself.” Excuse me, dear Friend, but I should like very politely and very kindly to tell you that you are a fool. You have not any strength and, what is more, if you have, you will certainly be lost, for I read concerning those who are saved, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” So that those for whom He died had not any strength! Believe me, dear Friend, you have not any strength.  
Oh, I have seen many a young man with splendid moral principles trusting in himself! But where has his moral principle been when a woman’s pretty lips and smiling face have enticed him to wantonness, or when, in frivolous company, he has been chaffed into that other glass of wine that has upset his balance of mind and has led him to say things which he never thought could have come out of his mouth? Poor Hazael was told by the Prophet Elisha of the enormities he would commit and he said, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” No, he was not a dog, but he was much worse than a dog, for he was a devil— yet he did not know it! And there is many a man who is fair to look upon, who is like John Bunyan’s tree which was green on the outside, but inwardly it was as rotten as to be only fit to be tinder for the devil’s tinderbox! You must give up your own strength—there is not much of it to give up, but whatever there is, give it all up, renounce all trust in your own strength as well as in your own righteousness!  
With that must also go all trust in your own knowledge and abilities and even in your own understanding. Yet this is the bane and ruin of many men! They know so much that, like Solomon’s sluggard, they are wiser in their own conceit than seven men who can render a reason. See how they treat the Bible, itself—when they open it, it is not that they may hear what God says in it—but that they may tell God what He ought to have said! When they condescend to listen to the Gospel, it is not that they may hear what the Gospel is, but that they may note how the man preaches it. Is he an eloquent orator? Does he use fine words? That is all that many care to hear. Sirs, if I could use grand words, I would loathe to use them lest I should ruin your souls! As the Apostle Paul said, so say I, “Not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” If I could get you to Heaven by using the plainest words that can be uttered, I would sooner do it than I would leave any to perish in their sins because I was anxious to display the niceties of language and the beauties of style!  
There are some men who are so wonderfully wise that they would quarrel with the angel Gabriel, or with the archangel Michael, himself. Solomon—well, Solomon did not know everything, but these men do. According to their own ideas they not only know everything, but they know a little more besides! If ever we need anybody to rule the nation, I would undertake to find 50 prime ministers, so wise in their own esteem are many men, who are, I must add, so little and so foolish when they come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and the unerring scales that God holds in His hand! Hear this, you great ones of the earth, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” He must become as a little child who would become a child of God. To be saved, we must not only—  
*“Cast our deadly ‘doing’ down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet,”*

but we must also—  
“**Lay our boasted reason down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet,”**  
and ask that He may be made of God unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Now, Friends, what do you say to this? Are you willing to give up your own mind to God and simply to believe what He tells you in His Word? Are you also willing to give up self-rule? “We are our own,” says one. “We may do as we like. Our tongues are our own, we may say what we like. We are free thinkers and free livers.” Let me tell you that if you are saved by Christ, you shall find the only true freedom you can ever enjoy! But there must first be a complete surrender of yourself to your God. Come now, who is to rule? Shall it be His will, or your will? Shall it be His way, or your way? If it is to be your way, it will be your ruin! But if it is to be God’s way, it shall be your salvation! When the Romans attacked a city and the people yielded to them, they usually drew up a declaration which ran something like this—“We, craving mercy at the hands of the powers of Rome, surrender ourselves, our houses, our goods, our bodies, our souls, all that we have, and all that we are, to be dealt with by the Roman power exactly according to its will.” It was so worded that there could be no escape from it and it contained no stipulations and no conditions. And then, as soon as it was signed, the Roman conqueror, in the generosity of his power, said, “You have yielded to me, now you are free.”

God demands just that kind of submission! If you are to be forgiven, you must yield yourself up body, soul, spirit, purse, heart, brain, everything to belong wholly to Christ henceforth and forever! I wish that yielding were over with all of you. If you would be saved, that submission must be yours. Oh, then, let it be so at once! Will you keep your sins and go to Hell, or leave your sins and go to Heaven? Will you have sin or the Savior? Which shall it be? Oh, that the blessed Spirit may lead you to the right decision and lead you to that decision at once!

Finally, it is clear from the text that there must also be a hearty, trueminded acceptance of God, alone, as our one hope. Read the passage again. “Behold, we come to You; for you are the LORD our God...Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.”

There is but one living and true God! Men have made almost as many gods as there are sands on the seashore. There is, however, but one God—whose name is Jehovah—the Creator of all things, in whom we live, move and have our being. Will you have this God to be your God? Will you say, “This God is our God forever and ever—He will be our Guide even unto death”? Will you take Him to be yours, not regarding Him merely as another man’s God, but henceforth as your God, whom you love, whom you embrace, not comprehending Him by thought, but apprehending Him by love?

Will you take God to be your God and shall He be truly yours? Notice how the text says, “Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.” There must be no playing at this acceptance of God as our one hope. There must be no mocking of God by a pretended yielding up of ourselves to Him. It must be a true acceptance of God, to be our God henceforth and forever.

God only must be accepted as yours. There cannot be two Gods, nor two Christs. No man can serve two masters, nor can a woman love two bridegrooms. If you would be saved, you must, by a deliberate act, give up yourself, your whole self, to Christ, and take His whole salvation to be yours!

To help you to do this, let me remind you that there is a blessed Trinity in Unity. There is, first, the ever-blessed Father. What say you? Will you have this Father to be your Father? You have sinned against Him, will you crave His forgiveness for Christ’s sake? Will you ask to be admitted into His house by the blood-stained door of His Son’s atoning Sacrifice? Will you honor Him as your Father? Will not each of you young people from this time cry unto Him, “My Father, You are the Guide of my youth”?

The next blessed and adorable Person of the United Trinity is the Son of God. Will you have this Son of God as your Savior? He died that sinners might live—will you have His death to be your life? He poured out His blood to cleanse the guilty from every stain of sin—will you be washed in the crimson stream? Shall Christ be Prophet to you? Will you sit at His feet and learn of Him? Shall Christ be Priest for you? Will you trust Him to present His Sacrifice for you and to intercede for you? Christ is a King—will you have Him as King to reign over you? In reality, will you have Him in all His offices and in all His relationships, in the majesty of His glorious Godhead and in the humiliation of His perfect Manhood? Will you have this Man as yours? I put the question to you as one of old put it to the damsel he met at the well, “Will you go with this man?” Will you have Christ to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, so that death, itself, shall not part you from Him? If so, have Him and welcome, for He is prepared to give Himself to every soul that is willing to accept Him!

There is a third Person of this blessed Unity and that is the Holy Spirit. Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit come and dwell in you? It is He who must regenerate you if you are to be born again. It is He who must teach you. It is He who must sanctify you. It is He who must illuminate you. It is He who must comfort and guide you. Without Him you can do nothing. The Holy Spirit is the very life of the Christian. What the Father decreed, what the Son purchased, that the Holy Spirit applies— and without that Holy Spirit, there is nothing for you. Will you obey His monitions? Will you put yourself under His superintendence? Will you resign your body to be His temple?

If you will do all this, God helping you, then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! His own word is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” With the heart, believe on Him, then let the body be washed with pure water in Baptism. Those two things the Lord Jesus Christ asks of you. Again I remind you that it is He who says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Demur not to either of these Gospel words. Come at once and do what He bids you, and enter into life, for he that believes in Him has everlasting life! And then, at once, make the Scriptural confession of your faith, as they did who heard the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost—“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Now look, Sirs, I have done, for I do not know what more I can say to you than I have said. If I did know what more I could say, I am sure that I would say it, but I will tell you how this matter strikes me. If I had come into this Tabernacle, tonight, conscious of guilt and desirous to be saved, I feel that, after hearing what has been said, tonight, I could not go out of this place without willfully refusing the Gospel invitation, if I did refuse it. May you not refuse it, but accept it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 3:1-23.**

In this chapter, the sin of God’s people is put in the strongest possible light. The figure used may even be said to be a coarse one, but man’s sin is, itself, a coarse thing. The thoughts suggested in this chapter are not what the delicate might desire, but then there is no delicacy in sin.

1. They say, If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted? God Himself seems, here, to be at a nonplus. His people had gone away from Him, they had acted unfaithfully to Him, they had joined themselves unto other gods. The case was a very difficult one. If the Lord takes these people back, will it not look like putting a premium upon sin? That is just the question that is constantly being raised. If God freely forgives great sinners, will it not look as if He treated sin too leniently? Will not free salvation, by faith in Jesus, lead to sin? The world says that it will and even the Scripture seems to raise the question—“If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted?” Yet Judah had been worse than the woman here described.

1. But you have played the harlot with many lovers. Here was an awful depth of sin, a terrible enormity of wickedness!  
1. Yet return again to Me, says the LORD. What a splendor of Divine Love is here revealed! I do not wonder that the question should be put, “How can God act thus, and yet be just?” He can do it and yet be just, as we have often showed you, but, still, it is a very great wonder of Grace.  
2, 3. Lift up your eyes unto the high places, and see where you have not lain with men. By the road you have sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness and you have polluted the land with your whoredoms and with your wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain; and you have had a whore’s forehead, you refused to be ashamed. This was very strong, rough language, but oh, how true it was! The people had gone astray from God into all manner of filthiness and pollution. And even when God had chastened them by withholding the showers till they were threatened with famine, they did not turn to Him. They seemed to have a brow like granite, they could not be made ashamed. There may be some persons of that kind in this assembly—if so, let them notice what God says—  
4. Will you not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, You are the Guide of my youth? Will not you come back again? You are invited to return to the Lord, in spite of your wandering, your perverseness, your abominable iniquity! Will you not remember the better days when God was the Guide of your youth? You were not always what you are now. Will you not, from this time on, cry unto the Lord, “My Father, you are the Guide of my youth”?  
5. Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end? No, that He will not! There is none so slow to anger as our God and there is none so ready to be rid of it as He is. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive, delighting in mercy. Even though the sin should be as foul as that I read to you—I seem almost to blush in the reading, as you may in the hearing—yet, black as it is, God can put it all away in the greatness of His mercy.  
5. Behold, you have spoken and done evil things as you could. You have gone as far in sin as you could go! Only lack of power has prevented you from being even worse than you are. Yet this is the kind of people to whom God speaks in mercy, inviting them to return to Him.  
6. The LORD said also unto me in the day of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. Building temples to false gods on every mountain and in every grove.  
7. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. That made Judah’s sin even worse than that of Israel! She saw this great iniquity in another, and yet went and committed it herself.  
8, 9. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with trees. Bowing down before idols made of wood and stone!  
10-12. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north—What must these words be? Must they not be, “You have treated Me so ill that I will never have anything to do with you again! Even common decency requires that I should put you away from all hope forever”? No! Listen to these words and be astounded—  
12. And say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever. Oh, the measureless mercy of these gracious sentences! Deep and black as the sin is and fearful and terrible as is the description of it, how bright, how clear is the immeasurable love which promises to put that sin away and forget and forgive it once and for all!  
13. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord. Confess that sad fact. Acknowledge that you have thus sinned. Into the ear of God pour out the full confession of your criminality. He cannot ask for anything less than this—surely you cannot refuse to do it! If you have thus treated Him, come and confess it with your head on His bosom, for He is willing to receive you even if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell.  
14, 15. Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you, one from a city, and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. When God once begins to pardon men, there is no end to it. He goes on to bless them with all that they need! He makes them to be like the sheep of His pasture who shall be richly and happily fed.  
16. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. You know that they had been accustomed to the old ceremonial religion which was full of outward rites and forms. God says that when He brings His erring people back to Himself, they shall have done with all that mere externalism. They shall come to worship God in spirit and in truth and to commune with Him without the medium of the Ark of the Covenant or an earthly priest. They shall walk before Him in the joy of their spirits—yet these, mark you—are some of the people who are described in this chapter as having defiled the House of God, and gone astray from Him to their utter disgrace!  
17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. Even to that very city that had become like a harlot and was full of abominations.

17, 18. Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, There is no more quarrelling when Divine Grace comes in! Israel and Judah in the old days fought against each other, but when they, alike, taste of pardoning Grace, they shall love each other.

18-19. And they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, how shall I put you among the children—When God had said all this, He appears to have come to a pause and, even in His own heart the question seems to arise, How can He deal with these greatly sinful ones as His children? “I said, How shall I put you among the children”—

19. And give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? And I said, You shall call Me, my Father; and shall not turn away from Me. God knew how to change the character and to change the heart so that these filthy ones who went farthest astray, should come back to Him and should become among the most holy, the most loyal, the most obedient of all His children! Oh, that His Grace might work that miracle, again, in our midst! Remember what He did for Saul of Tarsus, that transcendent persecutor, how He made him to be the very bravest of His Apostles? He can at this moment take those who form the chosen bodyguard of the devil and so change them that they shall become the soldiers of the Cross, nearest to Christ, the great Commander! The Lord, by His servant the Prophet, goes over this sad story again—

20. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. But listen—

21. A voice was heard upon the high places. The places where they had built the altars to the false gods—“A voice was heard upon the high places”—

21. Weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. How pleasant to the ears of God is the weeping of His backsliding people! The happy God does not wish men to be sorrowful, but He is glad that they should be sorrowful for sin. Now that they have begun to bemoan their wanderings and their wickedness, they will come back to their God, so He says to them—

22, 23. Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come to You; for You are the LORD our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. So they come back to Him and find the salvation which they need.

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BAD LODGERS AND HOW TO TREAT THEM  
NO. 1573

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

**“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” Jeremiah 4:14.**

ONE notices, in reading such a chapter as this fourth of Jeremiah, that the change which God required in the Jewish people was a very deep and thorough one. It was not only the washing of their hands, nor the cleansing of their outward lives, but the washing of their hearts from wickedness—and the Lord did not only require of them that they should cease from wicked actions, but even from vain thoughts. The like demand He makes of us, for He says by the mouth of His servant James, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.” This makes our holy religion a weighty and solemn business!

If it were wholly a matter of outward ordinances, we might take the child and sprinkle it, or might bring the adult and plunge him. Or we might admit all to a table where they should eat and drink such consecrated materials as should save them. This would all be easy enough and, therefore, men cling to a religion of ceremonies, for heart religion is troublesome and the ungodly cannot endure it! Ritualism is the most popular religion in the world because it is all, “Ho! Presto!” Done in a minute— nothing to think of, nothing to care about, nothing to sorrow over! It is all a mere matter of form which men leave to their priests—as they leave their deeds to be drawn up by their lawyers and their medicine to be prescribed by their doctors! The little that is needed of them can be done without thought and they can go on in their sins as pleasantly as ever.

Next to that in popularity is the religion of mere morality. “Yes, we know we do amiss. We will amend. Gross vices shall be lopped off as stray branches that run over a wall. We will at once purge ourselves from everything for which our fellow men would blame us. Is not that enough?” Many hope it is and live as if they felt sure it was! But the religion of the Word of God is not so. It is, “Rend your hearts and not your garments”— therefore ceremonies are not enough! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”—therefore outward actions are not enough! This is too hard a demand and as for repentance and faith, the ungodly cannot enter upon such spiritual duties for they have no mind to them.

The carnal mind hates the mention of spiritual things. This, I take it, while it makes the Christian religion so solemn, throws us back upon one of its great first principles—that salvation must be of Grace because if it is necessary that my heart must be changed, can I change it? I am bid to do so! I am told in such a text as this to wash my heart from wickedness! But how can I do it? Shall a fountain purge itself? It has sent forth bitter waters, bitter as Marah—can it, of itself, do the reverse? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” That would be a very simple business, for skin and spots are outside things—but how shall a man change his heart—his very nature?

Do you expect the crab tree to change itself into a sweet apple-bearing tree? Will you go and talk—to come back to the former metaphor—to the waters of Marah and expect them to change themselves into the sweet wells of Elim? No, this requires the finger of God! If ever this is done, God must do it. It is a rule that Nature can only rise as high as Nature. Put water where you please, it will rise up to where it started from and, unless under pressure, it will rise no higher. And you shall not find man rising above his fallen and depraved nature. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can it be.”

Out of the grave there comes not life. Out of an unclean thing there comes not a clean thing. We must be born from above if we are ever born aright. We must be newly created by the Creator, Himself, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus or else we can never come up to the mark which God’s Law requires. “Wash your heart.” Oh, God, how can I wash my heart? Though I take to myself snow water and make myself seem outwardly ever so clean, yet what have I done with my heart? You bid me drive out my thoughts, but, O my God, my thoughts often come against my will and sometimes with my will and I am tossed about by them as a poor sea shell by the restless waves of the sea! They compass me about like bees! Yes, they compass me about, these vain thoughts of mine, like bees which sting my good desires to death.

Like flies of summer, they buzz about my ears and fill my mind with corruption and they will not be driven away. I can no more resist them than Jannes and Jambres could withstand the Egyptian plague! Oh, how can I purge out vain thoughts? Where shall I turn for strength to perform this necessary duty? “By Grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” And what you cannot do, in that you are weak through the flesh, God can do for you and His Divine Spirit will sweetly enable you to perform all duties which He requires of you! If you are willing and obedient and yield yourselves up to the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God, He will make you clean—and your thoughts, too, shall be purged as with fire till they shall rise like a sweet incense unto Him! Let this word at the outset encourage any person who may be inclined to say before I have done, “It is a hard saying: who can bear it?”

Now to our text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” Bad lodgers! Some people have admitted bad lodgers into their chambers. I have known a good many people troubled with them and there is no use in keeping them—they must be sent adrift. So the text says, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” It means that we must not be slow to give them notice to leave, for they ought not to be tolerated in the human breast. First, let me name some of these lodgers. Secondly, let me show what bad lodgers they are. And, thirdly, let me give you some advice as to how to get rid of them.

May the Holy Spirit come and bless this word to their immediate ejectment and may a stronger than they come and dwell forever in you, not as a lodger, but as Lord and Owner of your whole being!

I. First, then, HERE ARE CERTAIN BAD LODGERS and I should not wonder if some people here have found and furnished chambers in their hearts and heads for these mischievous tenants whose name is “vain thoughts.” Many thoughts may be called vain because they are proud, conceited thoughts. Thus, whenever a man thinks himself good by nature, we may say of his thoughts, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity!” If you are unrenewed and dream that you are better than others because your parents were godly, it is a vain thought!

If you have never been born again by the Spirit of God and are trusting in your infant baptism, it is a vain thought! If you have never come to believe in Jesus but think yourself very good because you are a respectable person and regularly attend a place of worship, it is a vain thought! If you have got it in your head that when we talk about sinners we do not mean you and that when God’s Word condemns men for their sins it leaves a loophole of escape for you, it is a vain thought! If you have an idea that you do not need to come to Christ as a poor, helpless sinner—that you do not need the same kind of change as others—that, indeed, there is a private way to Heaven for you and you have found the silver key for it, you have made a mistake! It is a vain thought!

You will have to be born again or else if you are not born twice you will die twice! You will have to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ or you will die in your sins! You will have to come crying to Him for mercy and to find everything in Him or you will remain under condemnation and perish in your iniquity! If you think it is not so, it is a vain thought! Every thought of self-righteousness is a vain thought! Every idea, moreover, of self-power—that you can do this and do that towards your own salvation and at any time, when it pleases you, you can turn and become a Christian and so there is no need to be in a hurry, or to seek the help of the Holy Spirit—that, also, is a vain thought! To reckon yourself to be anything more than a mass of sin and helplessness is a vain thought! You have misconceived your own true value and your condition before God.

Now, perhaps I speak to some here who really are a very nice sort of people. At least they feel they are, for they go to a place of worship where they are not often spoken to very personally. And if the minister does speak pointedly, they say, “I do not think he has any right to talk in that way. People should be charitable.” Is it supposed to be charitable to allow people to go down to Hell without warning them? My charity leads me to try, as best as I can, to break up all shams and I am sure that selfrighteousness is a sham, a deadly delusion, a destructive error! It is ruining tens of thousands of people—good, quiet, harmless, inoffensive people—people, too, that are generous in their business and kind and all that and who, therefore, conclude that they are safe for time and eternity.

They say, “Well, now, I don’t know that I have done anything so very wrong. I do not see that I need repentance and faith, or that I need come as that poor thief did on the Cross and just look to Christ and say, ‘Lord, remember me.’” Dear Friend, I must address you in the language of the text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” For they are all vain, every one of them! “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” in the sight of God. The way to Heaven is not by our fancied works of righteousness—salvation is by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ! Another sort of vain thoughts may be ranged under the head of carnal security. The poet says, “All men think all men mortal but themselves” and, as often as the saying is quoted, never was a proverb more generally true.

We are surprised to hear that So-and-So, who was well and hearty three days ago, is dead. We are quite taken aback for the moment but we never dream that it will happen to us! We are alarmed when we hear that a person who was sitting near to us in the pew on Sunday is now in his coffin, but we indulge the hope that we shall see old age! A person, the other day, who was consumptive died suddenly of hemorrhage of the lungs and yet another consumptive person says, “This sad thing does happen to invalids whose lungs are diseased, but I do not suppose it will ever befall me.” Men go out to their daily business and they say, “Many that wake this morning will never see the sun go down,” but they, themselves, talk of what they will do in the evening as if they were sure of surviving! There is no hint of, “If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that.”

We know, all of us, that life is very uncertain, yet multitudes are hazarding their souls upon the uncertainty of that life under an inward belief which they would not dare to express—that somehow or other they are sure not to die just yet. What is such security but a vain thought? Does it not strike you, dear Friends, when a man is 80, 88, 90, that surely he cannot expect to get through another year? As a reasonable man, he must reckon that he is soon to die. Not at all! He is often the man who thinks least about death and if you introduce the topic, he does not like the conversation and starts you on another tack. Many who are younger than they do not like you to mention anything about advanced age or growing old. You must talk of these old sheep as if they were still lambs or they will not like it—speak plain truth about their years and they are offended.

If you want an old man to move quickly out of the road when you are driving, always cry, “Move on, my lad,” and he feels complimented and moves immediately because there is in him a joy in being thought young and an aversion to the idea of his being old. This is ridiculous! You smile and you may well smile, for it is a folly, but yet how common a folly. Why, when a man is of ripe age, or a woman, why should they not know it and let it be known? Why should they not number their days and keep the reckoning before their own minds? If all things are right with you and me, the older we are, the better!

Someone said to a Christian man, “What is your age?” and he replied, “I am on the right side of seventy.” They found out that he was 75 and they said, “You told us you were on the right side of seventy.” “So I am,” he answered, “that is the right side, for it is the side which is nearest Heaven, my blessed Home.” Why should not all Christians think so? They do think so when they judge rightly, for they joyfully sing*—*

*“Here in the body tent,  
Absent from Him I roam,  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day’s march nearer Home.”*

If a day’s march is worth singing about, is not a year’s journey nearer Home a theme for still greater delight? Should we try to make out that we have so much longer to stay in exile—so much longer before we shall see the face of the Well-Beloved—so much longer before, like heirs that have come of age, we shall enter on our Divine inheritance?

My Hearers, drive out these vain thoughts about not dying! I will lead the way for you. I am as likely to die tonight as any other man upon the face of this earth. You, too, my Friend, may as likely never see another Sunday as anyone else. You tell me you do not know that you have any special disease and, indeed, I hope you have not—but we all carry something about us in which Death can fix his arrow. Depend upon it that the seeds of mortality are in every constitution. I have met with one man—no, with two men—who do not believe that they shall die. But as they are getting very much older and one of them stoops very much, I am under the impression that they will die—and I pray anybody here who thinks that such an idea is a folly, to remember that it is a minor form of the same folly to say—“I shall not die just yet.”

You may as well say, “I shall not die at all,” for it leads to the same practical conclusion—death at a distance influences us very little more than no death at all! You may die at any moment! And what, my dear Hearer, if at this moment, while seated in that pew, your naked spirit were suddenly to find itself at the bar of God? What would become of you? I charge you, by the living God and by your care about your own soul, do not let that thought escape your mind! It is a vain thought for me to suppose that I shall have 10 minutes longer to live! It is a vain thought to grant myself a lease for another week, for I am a tenant-at-will and I may be ejected in a moment! So let me get rid of the folly and vanity of carnal security.

At this moment the Holy Spirit says to any of you who may be presuming upon long life—“How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” I know another set of thoughts—they are better looking, but they are equally vain—for they promise much and come to nothing. They are vain because they are fruitless. These vain thoughts are like the better order of people in Jerusalem—good people after a sort—that is to say they really thought that as God threatened them with judgments they would turn to Him. Certainly they would! They had no intention of being hard-hearted! Far from it! They acknowledged the power of the Prophet’s appeal. They felt a degree of awe in the Presence of the just God as He threatened them and, of course, they meant—they meant to wash their hearts and they meant to put away all their forbidden practices—but not just yet!

They would not wait very long, of course. A long delay would be very dangerous, but they might safely tarry a little longer. They had an engagement which would take them into worldly company and so they must wait till that was over. They had formed close connections which they could not very well break and so religion must be regretfully postponed for a more convenient season. They were engrossed in a certain business which they could not easily get out of for a term of years—but they would! Oh, they would! Certainly! Certainly they would attend to God and their souls! Though they did not say so in words, yet their faces appealed to the preacher pleadingly—“Do not press us too much just now. We are honest people. We acknowledge the bill. Let it run a little longer. We do not mean to break away from the demands of God by any means. We quite intend to comply with them at a near date, but not today. Oh, no, we do not deny the Scriptures! Do not think that we are infidels! We do not doubt the love of Christ to men or the power of His Gospel—we hope to feel it in a little while.”

They mean to enjoy the love of God one of these days and they hope to wind up their lives in a saintly manner. They feel rather pleased with themselves because they are so good as to resolve—if it is not virtue, itself, which they possess—yet the resolve to possess it flatters them into great notions of themselves! It is a great deal to be able to get so far as good resolutions, so they think. Well, now, my Friend, has not that been the style of your thoughts for a great many years? Did you not think like that when you were a child—when you were yet fresh to the ways of religion and had not yet learned so much of other ways as you have now? Do you not remember those early impressions—those tears at night, those childlike cries to Jesus, your mother’s Savior? Yes, you do remember them and there were times not so very long ago when all came back to you and you sat in the House of God trembling and wishing you could get to your chamber and bow your knees in prayer!

You were on the borders of Immanuel’s land and there was only a step between you and Life. You wished that the step was taken, but still—well, there was a reason why it should not be taken just yet—and so you dared to bid the Lord to wait your leisure as if He were a beggar at your door to whom you were under no obligation. Alas for this constant delaying! Where will it land you? I see upon your head the signs of age, but you are not yet born of God. Your eyes are failing. You need spectacles, but you have not yet looked to Jesus! Years have followed years and the record of your sin is a long roll written on both sides and you are still resolving and still making up your mind to something very good—still hoping that the right time is coming, only you must wait a little longer.

Now, the Lord says, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” for they are all vain, these delays, these false promises, these selfdeceptions. How long shall it be that they shall throng the avenues of your soul and curse your spirit? In some, who I hope are saved, their vain thoughts lie in a similar direction—they trust that they have believed, but they are slow to obey their Lord in publicly avowing their discipleship. They know that the Gospel has two precepts—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” or, in other words, “He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.”

They resolve that they will, one of these days, make a confession of their faith—such is their fixed intention—but the time is not yet come, for at present they are filled with questions as to their condition. They once felt sure that they had faith. Had they confessed it, then, that certainty might have continued. They have so long kept their obedience to their Lord in abeyance that they begin, now, to question and, perhaps rightly, whether they have really believed. The Lord Jesus has said, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven.” But, then, somebody would laugh at them—they would have a cross to carry and this hinders them and so they postpone obedience to an indefinite period.

Jesus Christ says, “He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me is not worthy of Me.” But they mean, if they can, to find a by-path, so as not to go along the king’s highway and pay toll at the gates, or be met by the king’s officers, or be seen by the king’s enemies. They will, if they can, creep under a hedge when the battle begins and so escape the perils of the fight. Their religion gives them the courage of a rat behind the wainscot and no more. They do not come out except at night when nobody sees them. But this cowardice is not intended to last forever—they are going to be very brave one of these days—you shall see them performing great exploits! They intend, before very long, to openly say, “I am on the Lord’s side.”

They will come forward and display their colors. They will be the bravest of the brave—only not just yet. Another time for seeing the Church officers with reference to union with the Church will pass away and another and another and yet they will be no nearer the point of decision. Their resolutions are vain thoughts and so I put the question, “How long?” Do fix some time or other! Do not forever remain a trifler with God and His Church and His command! “How long shall your vain thoughts”—your ineffectual promises of obedience to Christ—“lodge within you?”

Now I shall come closely home to some here whom I love in the Lord if I say that resolutions to be very useful, prayerful and holy are often little better than vain thoughts because they are encumbered with procrastination. There are many who love the Lord who have never done much for Him because the time of figs is not yet. Leaves and leaves, only, have they produced. They are live branches of the vine, although they have not brought forth many grapes—but they cheer themselves with the conviction that one of these days—they do not quite know when—they will bring forth clusters as famous us those of Eshcol, though, up to now, they have been poor specimens of Christian professors! Their mind is made up to rise to a higher life! They will grow in Grace! They will give more time to Bible-reading and prayer! They will live nearer to God! They will grow to be strong Christians—and when that happens they are going to do some great thing—I do not know what form their resolution is to take, but they will do something extraordinary!

They will enter the Sunday school and bring scores of little children to the Savior’s feet. They will commence a class for young men—the class is sure to grow and out of it many will come to build up the Church of God. They will become fathers or mothers in Israel and their children will be many. Or they are going to preach at the village stations, draw large congregations and lead hundreds to the Savior! They are going to serve the Lord by personal exertion, or to give to the cause of God very much of their substance. It has been on their hearts a long time to be bountiful benefactors to the poor, to the Church at home and to missionaries abroad. They have not given much, yet, but before long they intend to overflow like gushing fountains which send forth rivers of water! They are resolving—when will they come to acting?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we had, any of us, done about half what we thought we would do, we would have been tolerably fruitful branches of the vine! But we spend so much of our time in this proposing and then proposing again, that we have little left for the actual performance of anything! We dream with our eyes open, not at night when we are asleep and are being really refreshed, but in the day when our dreaming does no good, but merely flatters us into a good opinion of ourselves. These are vain thoughts, for the Lord deserves to be really served—not with imaginary blood were you redeemed—nor with imaginary fruit can you reward your Savior’s love!

Not with imaginary woes, nor with a painted death upon a painted Cross did Christ ransom us from Hell and do we think to reward Him with proposals and plans and schemes and fancies and hopes and resolves? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Some men brood so long over their future intentions that they, all of them, become addled eggs and nothing whatever is hatched! O Man, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it!” Do it! Do it “with all your might!” Do not leave it for somebody else to do when you are dead! Many make up their minds that a great thing shall be done—when they die. When they cannot hold their money any longer, then they will give it up—a wonderful sacrifice to God! But he that would serve God acceptably determines, “I will give Him of my substance while it is mine and not when it is my heir’s.”

My dear Friend, I would have you regret your idleness! It is infinitely better to get to work and perform the little which you are able to do—to give the Lord your service while you can serve Him—than that you should have to lie upstairs trying to amuse yourself or quiet the upbraiding of a guilty conscience by proposing to do great things which you could not accomplish if you were to set about them and which, indeed, you will never even so much as attempt!

I have thus mentioned to you several groups of bad lodgers, of whom the text says, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” “How long,” says God to every Christian here that has loitered, lingered, hesitated—“How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” Perform at once the doing of that which you have resolved, if, indeed, the resolve is such as you ought to have made. God help you, by His sacred Spirit, to lead a practical life and not a dreamy one!

II. Now, secondly, let me show WHAT BAD LODGERS THEY ARE. Vain thoughts get admittance into our heads and hearts and there they make themselves at home and do mischief without end. They run upstairs and downstairs and all over the house and they multiply every day. They are dreadful pests—the worst lodgers the soul can harbor. For, first, they are deceitful. The man that says, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for you,” does not ever send for Paul—He never intended to do so. A man says, “Tomorrow,” but tomorrow never comes. When that comes which would have been, “tomorrow,” it is, “today”—and then He cries, “Tomorrow”—and so multiplies lies before God!

What deceptiveness it is on the part of any man who knows to do good and does it not, that he should think to put off God with empty promises! Now, listen to this—“To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” “Sin.” That is God’s word, not mine. But you ask me, “To him that knows to do good and truly intends to do it, does not the intention remove the sin?” I answer decidedly, No! “To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” So long as he refuses to do what he knows to be right, he is sinning and every minute that he delays heaps up another sin and so the sin multiplies like money that is borrowed at compound interest! The amount of guilt runs up and you never know what it comes to.

Delay in performing duty is the most mischievous evil, doing infinite damage to the heart in which it lodges because it defiles it with falsehood upon falsehood and thus provokes the Most High. Oh, I would turn such a lodger as that out! David said, “He that tells lies shall not tarry in my house.” Do not suffer these vain thoughts to lodge a day longer, for they disgrace you and place you in jeopardy. Vain thoughts are bad lodgers, for they pay no rent—they bring in nothing good to those who entertain them. There is the lodger of self-righteousness, for instance. What good does self-righteousness ever do to the man who entertains it? It pretends to pay in brass farthings—it pretends to pay—but the money is counterfeit!

What good does it do any man to harbor in his mind the empty promise of future repentance? It often prevents repentance! I would rather hear a man say straight out, “Now, look here. I never mean to repent or believe! My mind is made up as to that matter.” This, at least, is truthful. That man will, perhaps, change his mind, or God will change it. But that other man—the soft, putty-like being, the India rubber man—squeeze him; pull him out; force him together again. Do what you will with him, he gets back into his old shape! There is no solid stuff in him. You cannot make anything of him. These irresolute men, “unstable as water,” cannot excel. They are neither good for use nor for ornament and we have plenty of this class! Are you one of them, my Friend? If so, God help you to get rid of these bad lodgers of instability, self-sufficiency and constantly promising, because they pay no rent. And as for you Christian people who are always on the verge of being splendid—you members of churches who are always going to be generous, who are quite certain that you shall be useful, only you never are—what profit has ever come to God or yourself from this continued hesitation? Let such a lodger as that depart at once, for the longer he lingers the more will you lose by him.

The next reason for the ejectment of these lodgers is this—they are wasting your goods and destroying your property. For instance, every unacted resolution wastes time and that is more precious than gold. It also wastes thought, for to think of a thing and to leave it undone is a waste of reflection. It is a waste of energy to be energetic about merely promising to be energetic! It is a great waste of strength to be forever resolving to be strong and yet to remain weak. You screw yourself up to the stickingpoint and you are going to be holy and yet never are! You mean to turn to God and yet never do. Why, you are wasting time! You are wasting thought! You are wasting opportunity! You are wasting the Gospel under which you sit! These bad lodgers are causing you such daily loss that before long you will be utterly ruined unless you can cleanse your house of them! You cannot afford to give them shelter—send them packing at once! Worse than their damaging your house, they are damaging you!

Bad lodgers will break your windows, burn your shutters, pull down your wainscots and do a thousand spiteful things. When they will neither pay nor go, they will do all the mischief they can! And thus do vain thoughts—foolish, ineffectual thoughts—work us grievous ill, for the man that resolves and does not carry out the resolve grows in irresolution. He that yesterday said he would, but today does not, may today say he will, but there will not be so much strength in his resolve as there was in that of yesterday. And since he failed yesterday, he is even more certain to fail now. A man that has been 10 years making up his mind to think about eternity is 10 degrees less likely to do so. A man who has had 10 years’ sermons earnestly driven at him and yet they have not penetrated him, is as one that has been 10 years hammered on the anvil and is just so much the harder. O, how men are hardened, besotted, befooled and enslaved by vain thoughts! How long will you let these lodge within you? Shall they remain till they have plundered you of heart and hope and left your mind a wreck and ruin?

Worst of all, these vain thoughts are bad lodgers because they bring you under condemnation. There have been times when to entertain certain persons was treason and many individuals have been put to death for harboring traitors. Rebels condemned to die have been discovered in a man’s house and he has been condemned for affording them a hiding place. Now, God declares that these vain thoughts of yours are condemned traitors. Are you going to harbor them any longer? If a lodger came to your house and, after a while, a policeman called and said, “You let your front room, I think.” “Yes.” “What kind of a person is your lodger and what is his business?” I think after one or two visits of that kind you would say to your lodger, “I shall be obliged if you will go somewhere else,” for you would not enjoy the idea of having a suspected person within your doors. Nobody does.

Now, these vain thoughts, these self-righteous thoughts, these boasts in self—they are something more than suspected—they have been judged and condemned to die! And, oh, let not your heart become a haunt for things that God abhors! And when He sends a summons, as He does tonight in the words of the text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” oh, that God would grant you Grace to drive out the Canaanites who will dwell in the land as long as they can find a den to hide in! Let Beddome’s hymn be your prayer—

*“Astonished and distressed,  
I turn my eyes within:  
My heart with loads of guilt oppressed,  
The seat of every sin.  
What crowds of evil thoughts,  
What vile affections there!  
Envy and pride, deceit and guile,  
Distrust and slavish fear.  
Almighty King of saints,  
These tyrant lusts subdue;  
Drive the old serpent from his seat,  
And all my pow’rs renew.  
This done, my cheerful voice  
Shall loud hosannas raise;  
My soul shall glow with gratitude,  
My lips proclaim Your praise.”*

III. That brings me to my closing head, which is LET US SEE WHAT TO DO WITH THESE BAD LODGERS. The first thing is to give them notice to leave at once. Let there be no waiting. When a man is converted, it is done at once. There may be a long process by which he comes up to it and there may be a long succession of the breaking Light of God before he gets clear about it, but there is a turning point. There is a line, thin as a razor’s edge, which divides death from life—a point of decision which separates the saved from the lost. Did you ever notice, in our Lord’s parable of the prodigal son, the decision of the repenting one? He said, “I will arise and go unto my father”—and he arose and went to his father and, as I heard a quaint Divine say, he did not give his master a day’s notice!

The narrative tells us that he had joined himself to a citizen of that country who had sent him into the fields to feed swine. He ran off, then and there, just as he was! If he had gone to see his master and had said, “Sir, I am obliged to go home and see my father,” or if he had stopped to clean himself—if he had stopped to purchase better linen and a fairer suit of clothes before he went home, he would have died of hunger at the swine trough. But, instead of that, he did the right thing—he ran for his life— and that is what you must do. “Well, I shall, I hope,” says one. You never will, my Friend, if you get no farther than that! It must be done at once. And, possibly, it is, “now or never”—before the clock ticks again.

Will you have Christ and go to Heaven, or your sins and go to Hell? Quick! Sharp! God help you to answer aright, for on that answer may hang eternal things! I believe that it is always so. Men decide at once, or not at all. It was so with me. I was thinking, as I stood up here to preach, that this is just the kind of weather in which I found the Savior. Some did not come out that morning, it snowed so hard. But I had a heavy heart and I wanted to lighten it and so I went out to the place of worship and when I heard the Gospel and he that preached it said to me, “Look! Look, young man! Look, now!” I did, then and there, look to Jesus, otherwise I had never looked! When the Word of God came to me, by His Grace, I immediately received it!

There is one heavy knock, sometimes, at a man’s door and he must open then, or no other knock may come. I think that somebody has come in here tonight that, in God’s name, I may give that knock at his heart. And if the door is opened and he says, “Come in, blessed Savior,” then it shall be well. The first thing, then, is to give a notice to leave to all selfrighteousness. Away with it! Away with it! What a fool I was ever to have any! All self-confidence—away with it! I had better lean on a broken reed than lean on myself! To all delays—to all hopes that I shall live another week—away with them! Away with them! I have no ground for such hopes. Away with them! Leave, leave, vain thoughts! Oh, that they would go at the bidding!

Suppose that these vain thoughts will not go just when you bid them to go? I will tell you what to do to get rid of them—starve them out! Lock the door and let nothing enter upon which they can feed. I would have you unconverted people say, “We confess that we have fed our vain thoughts, but now we will not go where they can get food. We will not go to ungodly amusements, nor into evil company, nor will we talk with idlers on our way home.” Send into your heart what you know vain thoughts cannot be nourished upon—what will be poison to them. Give them God’s Word! Read it and study it and cry to God to have mercy upon you. Do nothing which will help these vain thoughts live.

I will tell you a secret and then I have done. The best way in all the world that I know of to get rid of vain thoughts out of your house—these bad lodgers that have gone in and that you cannot get out—is to sell the house over their heads. Let the house change owners! When you have done that, you know, it will be the new Owner that will have the trouble of turning them out—and He will do it. I recommend every sinner here that wants to find salvation to give himself up to Christ. Come out, you vain thoughts! They will not come out. We give you a notice of eviction—but they will not go!

Now we will tell them something that will change the nature of the struggle. Lord Jesus, I trust You to be my Savior from every form of evil and I am not my own, now, for You have bought me with a price. Ah, now the stronger than they are has come and He will bind the strong ones and He will fling them out of the window and so break them to pieces with their fall that they shall never be able to crawl up the stairs again! He knows how to do it! He can expel them—you cannot. Oh, that you might have Grace, now, to give your whole nature to your Creator and Redeemer! Give the house over to the new Owner and let Him come and He will drive them out and He, Himself, will come and live there and His Divine Spirit will come and fill every chamber with His own Presence and there shall be no fear that these bad lodgers shall ever come back again!

God bless this simple word to many, for His name’s sake. Amen.  
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THE WAILING OF RISCA  
NO. 349

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 9, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment.” Jeremiah 4:20.**

THE sorrow of the weeping Prophet was exceedingly heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning that we cannot spare so much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land and His strokes have been exceedingly hard. We are constrained to take up a wailing and cry aloud, “Suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment.”

There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys—the breathing of its air refreshes the body and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills, I have seen the ever-widening landscape, the mountains of Wales, the plains of England and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women and worshipped God in their assemblies.

These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they have listened to the Word. Well does my soul remember one night which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ’s minister with their “gogoniants” encouraging me to preach the Gospel and crying “Glory to God” while the message was proclaimed.

I remember how they constrained me and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons one after another, almost without rest— for they loved to listen to the Gospel. God was present with us and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night’s labor. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God’s blue sky I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot. The Spirit of God was poured upon us and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard.

But now our visitation of that neighborhood must ever be mingled with sorrow. How has God been pleased to smite down strong men and to take away the young men upon a sudden! “How suddenly are my tents spoiled

and my curtains in a moment.” Oh, valley of Risca, I take up a lamentation for you—the Lord has dealt sorely with you. Behold and see if there is sorrow in any valley like unto your sorrow which is done unto you. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon you. The awful reaper has gathered to himself full sheaves from your beautiful valley.

You all know the story—it scarcely needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week some two hundred or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long—their wives and their children had risen and their little ones had gone to their schools when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit—it was an explosion—all knew what it meant. Men’s hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself.

They wait awhile—the foul gas must first be scattered—brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit and when they are able to see with the dim miner’s lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive and scarcely alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame. But the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death.

Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire. But many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit flaming both night and day? The thick mist? The pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley?

Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit shrieking for their sons and their husbands and their fathers? Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul? And there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now, alas, taken from her forever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers and who know not where they are and feel a thousand deaths themselves because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description—those who have witnessed it fail to be able to picture it.

As the cry of Egypt in the night when the destroying angel went through all the land and smote the firstborn. As the wail of Rachel when she could not be comforted for her children because they were not—such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley.

My Friends, this judgment has a voice to us and the scarce buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow and of the childless mother shall come up into our ears today and, O Lord God of Sabbath, may it so arouse us that we may hear and fear and tremble and turn unto You—that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men.

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon sudden bereavements. Then I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of sudden death. And afterwards we will say but a little, for we know but little of the sudden exchange which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

I. Our first sorrowful theme is SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS. Alas! Alas! How soon may we be childless! How soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, You have shown to us this day how soon You can blast our gourds and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood—how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us—our children the offspring of our loins, how soon can You lay them beneath the sod. We have not a single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All that are dear and precious to us are only here by God’s good pleasure. What should we be today if it were not for those whom we love and who love us?

What were our house without its little prattlers? What were our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our trials? Ah, this were a sad world indeed if the ties of kindred, of affection and of friendship all were snapped. And yet it is such a world that they must be sundered and may be divided at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible—not only to miners and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but to us also—I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first let us learn to set loose by our dearest friends that we have on earth. Let us love them—love them we may, love them we should—but let us always learn to love them as dying things. Oh, build not your nest on any of these trees for they are all marked for the axe. “Set not your affections on things on earth,” for the things of earth must leave you and then what will you do when your joy is emptied and the golden bowl which held your mirth shall be dashed to pieces?

Love first and foremost Christ. And when you love others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying—love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold your friend that you shall not wonder when he vanishes from you. So view the partakers of your life that you will not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See you the disease of mortality on every cheek and write not Eternal upon the creature of an hour.

Take care that you put all your dear ones into God’s hand . You have put your soul there, put them there. You can trust Him for temporals for yourself, trust your jewels with Him. Feel that they are not your own, but that they are God’s loans to you—loans which may be recalled at any moment—precious benisons of Heaven of which you are but a tenant at will.

Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of God. You shall find it greatly mitigates the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things that are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God.

Further, then, you who are blessed with wife and children and friends, take care that you bless God for them. Sing a song of praise to God who has blessed you so much more than others. You are not a widow, but there are many that wear the weeds and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaved of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is rent in two by such a calamity—why is it not your portion, too? You have not to follow tomorrow your little ones to their narrow graves—early flowers that did but bud and never ripened, withering alas, too soon. Oh, by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them.

We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that He spared them to us for so long. Oh, be not ungrateful lest you provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which you do not value. Sing unto the Lord, sing unto His name. Give unto Him the blessing which He deserves for His sparing favors which He has manifested towards you in your household.

And then permit me to remind you that since these sudden bereavements may come and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat your hoary father as you would if you knew he would die tomorrow. When you shall follow him to the grave, amidst all your tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of your ill behavior to him.

And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message— your children are committed to your care—they are growing up and what if after they are grown up they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent! Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder—“Oh that I had prayed for my children! Oh that I had taught them before they departed.” I pray you so live that when you stand over your child’s dead body you may never hear a voice coming up from that clay, “Father, your negligence was my destruction. Mother, your want of prayer was the instrument of my damnation.”

But so live that when you hear the funeral knell, for a neighbor even, you may be able to say, “Poor soul, whether he is gone to Heaven or to Hell, I know I am clear of his blood.” And with double earnestness be it so with your children. “Yes,” says one “but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ and being more earnest in prayer for them byeand-by.” But what if they should die tomorrow! “Yes,” says the wife, “I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband and trying to induce him to attend the house of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two.”

Ah, what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay and not madly to destroy themselves. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children’s souls. Gather them together around you this afternoon and say to them, “My dear children, I have learned today that you may die. I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you that as you must die, I am anxious that God’s Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Savior.”

And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks and bid the little ones kneel down and pray, “O God! upon their infant hearts, stamp the image of Yourself. As they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly that at the last I may be able to say, ‘Here am I and the children You have given me.’”

II. The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, SUDDEN DEATH. AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have—nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how very many had gone up and down and had not perished? No, they had grown so fearless of danger that some of them even thrust themselves into it in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life. They were bold and careless and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all.

We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident. God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed and have to answer before their God—but, at any rate, sure it is that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous and those who are most exposed are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. “Why need I be so careful? I have done this fifty times before. Why may I not do it again?”

But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up—in a moment the gas explodes and they stand before the Eternal God. It was but the twinkling of an eye—as though the last trump had sounded (and indeed it did sound

as far as they were concerned) and down fell the lifeless corpse and the spirit returned to God who made it. And you and I are in danger, too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death. How many there are who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their own homes?

I stayed but a week or two ago with an excellent Christian man who was then in the best and most hearty health. I was startled indeed when I heard immediately after that he had come home and sitting down in his chair had shut his eyes and died. And these things are usual and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation. Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after long sickness. But probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it is so, if there are a thousand gates to death. If all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life. If really, after all, spiders’ webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life. If we are but a vapor, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness—what then?

Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men, let us not reckon on tomorrow. Oh, let us not procrastinate. For taken in Satan’s great net of procrastination we may wait and wait and wait, till time is gone and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution. Today is your only time. O mortal men, the present moment is the only moment you may call your own and oh, how swift its wings! This hour is yours. Yesterday is gone—tomorrow is with God and may never come. “Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts.”

Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know even that children might die. I did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household. What better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal. They ought to live in a world where they can never die—for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan.

There are infidels on earth but there are none in Heaven and there can be none in Hell. They are all convinced—convinced by terrible facts— convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath His vengeance and made to tremble at His eternal power. But I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race. Let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a sea shore. That hour-glass yonder contains all the sands of your life.

Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passages of its days. Ah, and that glass shall never be turned again—it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out and you will die. Oh, live as though you meant to die. Live as though you knew you might die tomorrow. Think as though you might die now and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb.

And then take care, I pray you, that you who do know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh what a work we have to do and how short the time to do it in! Millions of men unconverted and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach the Word! My soul, shall you ever condemn yourself in your dying moments for having preached too often or too earnestly? No, never. You may rebuke your sloth—but you can never bemoan your excessive industry. Minister of Christ! In your dying hour it will never be a theme of reproach to you that you preached ten times in the week—that you stood up every day to preach Christ and that you so preached that you spent yourself and wasted your body with weakness.

No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studying, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them. Our hunting after popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up and saying to the people, “Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ”—preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come and of the love of Christ. Oh, there are some of you members of our churches—who are living—but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money—that is the worldling’s object. Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast’s delight. Oh, how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their hearts.

Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ’s service as much time as we give to many of our trifling amusements? Why we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability—who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else—but as Christians they have nothing to do. They can be energetic in parish vestries or in the rifle corps. But in the Church they give their name but their energies are dormant. Ah, my dear Hearers, you who love the Savior, when we shall come before Christ in Heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here.

I think as we fall down before His feet and worship Him, if we could know a sorrow it would be because we did not bring Him in more jewels for His crown—did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked—did not give more to His cause and did not labor more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live. While it is called today, work, for the night comes wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people whether they may go to the theater, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come. You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you. But if you would dread to die in any spot, go not there. If you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lip, utter not that word. Or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the Judgment Day, seek not to think that thought. So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go.

Happy is he that dies in his pulpit. Blessed is the man that dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him serving his Master. But, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched when God shall appear in judgment. Power Supreme. You everlasting King—permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour—but find me rapt in meditation high—hymning my great Creator—proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow-sinners. Let me but serve my God and then, Death, I will not say to you when you may come—come when you will. But if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls. Come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lip and when I am weeping over the souls of men Come to me, then, that men may say—

*“He did his body with his charge lay down, He ceased at once to work and live.”*  
But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but

ah, Sirs, I cannot stir your hearts for I cannot stir my own as I would. The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event—we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalogue of deaths and take the average and we say, “Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average,” but our dying never comes home to us.

All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London which every day ate ten of the inhabitants of London alive we should be dreadfully miserable—especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten, too. If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-by, but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster’s den and say, “When will it be my time?” And that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog.

But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal. And with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps crying out for more. Its greedy and insatiable appetite is never filled. Its teeth are never blunted. Its ravenous hunger is never stayed. And here we are and though it will be our turn by-and-by to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do we think about it! One reason I think is because we so seldom visit the dying. I stood once by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday-School teacher. He had received very little good training at home and though he was but a lad of seventeen, he became a drunkard and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him and talked to him and tried to point him to the Savior and heard at last the death-rattle in his throat and as I went down stairs I thought everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die.

I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street—the men who were busy at their shops and those who were selling their wares—as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ and inviting them to trust in His precious blood. And yet in an hour or so all things took their usual shape and I began to think that I was not dying after all and I could go away and be, I fear, as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were after all wise in thinking of this world and not the next. I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so.

The impression of the deathbed was soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders whose canoe, being disabled, floated upon a raft and they were attacked by sharks. They disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenance of these few? If they knew a god, do you not think they would then indeed call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them, were they different from us?

Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring Monster. Friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. Yon gray-haired man may be the next that is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood. Some have already passed it and are singing the eternal song and—

*“We are to the margin come,*

*And soon expect to die.”*  
God help us so to live in the expectation of death that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake and that we may be able to say, “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.”

III. I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.

You see yonder Christian man—he is full of a thousand fears—he is afraid even of his interest in Christ. He is troubled spiritually and vexed with temporal cares. You see him cast down and exceeding troubled, his faith but very weak. He steps outside yon door and there meets him a messenger from God who smites him to the heart and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears. His tears are wiped away once for all from his eyes. And, to his surprise, he stands where he feared he should never be—in the midst of the redeemed of

God, in the general assembly and Church of the First-born.  
If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for  
thinking so much of his trials and of his troubles and for looking into a  
future which he was never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk,  
he has a hundred pains in his body. He says he is more tried and pained  
than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him and he dies. How  
marvelous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit. He then is  
supremely blest, the decrepit has become perfect, the weak has become  
strong, the trembling one has become a David and David has become as  
the angel of the Lord!  
Hark to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now  
groaned. Look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man  
just now racked with pain and tormented with anguish! Was ever change  
so surprising, so marvelous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it  
to come across myself this morning. To go from the thousand eyes of you  
that look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ and to go from your  
songs, to the songs of spirits before the Throne. To leave the Sabbath  
work on earth for an eternal Sabbath of rest—to go from unbelieving  
hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered and sinners that need to  
be convinced—to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one  
eternal song sing “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb” !  
I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be surprise. I can conceive that  
the spirit knows not where it is. It is like a man waking up from a dream.  
He looks about him. Oh, that glory! How resplendent yon Throne! He listens to harps of gold and he can scarce believe it true. “I, the chief of sinners and yet in Heaven? I, a doubting one and yet in Paradise?” And then  
when he is conscious that he is really in Heaven, oh, what overwhelming  
joy—how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it—scarcely  
able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal  
weight of glory.  
And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself and open its eyes  
from the blindness caused by this dazzling light and to think—when its  
thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss—the next emotion will be gratitude. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head and  
with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Savior’s Throne. Hear  
how he sings! Was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had  
the fullness of Paradise and perfection in it?—“Unto Him that loved me  
and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory.” And how he repeats it and repeats it again and looks round to cherubim and seraphim and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the  
harps of Heaven and re-taught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the  
one faithful heart and send up another hallelujah and yet another and  
another—while the floods of harmony surround the eternal Throne of God! But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are  
over forever. His death is the death of his happiness—his funeral is the  
funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups. He has another cup  
to drain which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the  
harp and the viol and the music of them that make merry. An eternal  
dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of  
damned souls. What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! “Good  
God,” he says, “I thought it was not so, but lo, it is. What the minister  
said to me is true. The things I would not believe are at last really so.” When the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends and  
lifts up his eyes in Hell, being in torment so hot, so feverish, so thirsty,  
that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a  
million years, what will be his surprise! “And am I,” he will say, “really  
here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago. I was singing a  
song but an instant before and here am I in Hell! What? So soon damned?  
Is the sentence of God like a lightning flash? Does it so instantaneously  
give the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?”  
And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in Hell, can  
you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it? It, too, will  
be stunned with a mighty flood—not with a flood of glory but with a flood  
of anger, of wrath, of Divine Justice. Oh, how the spirit is tormented  
now—tormented beyond thought! And then at last, when the wave recedes  
a moment and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon  
the spirit! Have you ever seen men die without hope? I read but yesterday  
a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times and at last  
she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed  
she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to  
her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden  
stroke of God and she prayed—prayed till she fell back fainting and her  
lips were livid and her cheek was pale, while she cried, “God be merciful  
to me a sinner.”  
Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her and bade her trust in  
Christ. But she said, “It is of no use for you to comfort me. No, it is too  
late. I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the  
world and that resolve has destroyed my soul.” And then she rose up in  
bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets and prayed again till she  
was breathless and groaned and cried and fell down again in a faint,  
needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with a ghastly  
look—an awful look of horror—as though she felt the anguish of another  
world, she expired.  
Now if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God—if  
the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope and beat in pieces all  
our boastings—what will the eternal hail be—what will the everlasting  
sleet of Divine Wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from Heaven shall be nothing compared with  
the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner. Do you think I love to  
speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it. No, I would sooner preach of other things by far—but it is needful that  
men may be awakened.  
Oh, I implore you, Brothers and Sisters, you that know not God and are  
still condemned because you believe not in Christ—I pray you think of  
these things. Oh that I had a Baxter’s heart that I could weep over sinners  
as he did. But my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever  
Baxter felt. Oh that you would be saved! My eyes ache. My brow is full of  
fire now because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you. Oh that  
God would take up the work and send that Truth right home. I know I shall soon die and you, too. And I shall face each of you and  
your eyes shall stare on me forever and ever, if you are lost through my  
unfaithfulness. And shall it be—shall it be? Oh that we had a hope that all  
of us might see the face of God and live! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ  
and you shall be saved.” Spirit of God, convict of sin and bring the heart  
to Christ and may we all without exception see Your face in joy and glory  
and praise You, world without end. Amen.

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SUDDEN SORROW  
NO. 1363

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 8, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

**“Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” Jeremiah 4:20.  
“And when you are spoiled, what will you do?”  
Jeremiah 4:30.**

JEREMIAH was describing the havoc of war, a war which was devastating his country and bringing untold miseries upon the people. He says of it, “My soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled; suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?”

How grateful we ought to be that war is not raging in our own land. We should read those terrible stories which come to us concerning the destruction of human life by the two armies in the East with the utmost regret. On whichever side the victory may turn, it is still to be daily lamented that men should slaughter men and glory in wholesale murder! How true it is neither the elements in their fury, nor wild beasts in their rage, have ever been such terrible enemies to man as men! We should thank God that we dwell apart and see our harvests ripening without the dread of their being reaped by invaders. We walk our streets without the fear of bursting shells and seek our chambers without the apprehension of being awakened in the dead of night by the shouts of advancing adversaries.

Blessed be the Lord who has given centuries of peace to the fertile hills and valleys of His chosen isle—  
*“O Britain, praise your mighty God,  
And make His honors known abroad!  
He bade the ocean round you flow;  
Not bars of brass could guard you so.”*

Let the name of Jehovah our God be praised, this morning, for giving peace in our borders and filling us with the finest of the wheat. There are, however, in this land, and in all lands, whether at war or peace, many calamities which come suddenly upon the sons of men concerning which they may bitterly lament, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” This world, at its best, is not our rest. There is nothing settled below the moon. We call this terra firma, but there is nothing firm about it—it is tossed to and fro like a troubled sea forevermore. We are never, for any long time, in one stay—change is perpetually operating.

Nothing is sure but that which is Divine. Nothing is abiding except that which comes down from Heaven. All things change as they pass before us and perish in the using. At this moment your ship lies becalmed—be not too secure, for within the next few minutes you may be driving before a hurricane with bare poles. Today your garden is planted with blooming flowers which are loading the air with their perfume—rejoice not too much in their sweetness, for within a short time nothing may remain—the spoiler may tear them up by the roots and your garden may become a desolation. There is nothing bright, beautiful, fair, lovely, or desirable beneath the sun which may not be speedily withered!

Even as a vision are all these things—they are, and lo, they are not! They flash upon us as the meteor which blazes in the midnight sky and then leaves the darkness to be blacker than before. “Boast not yourself of tomorrow,” yes, boast not yourself of today, lest haply on that morrow, or even in this very day, you may have to cry with Jeremiah, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!”

This expression may be, without any straining, very readily applied to many matters and to three especially. First, to the sudden spoiling of all human righteousness. Secondly, to the sudden spoiling of all earthly comfort. And, thirdly—and this is by no means an unusual thing—to the sudden spoiling of human life, itself. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations upon the instability of all earth-born things so that we may despise the things which are seen and temporal, and follow after the things unseen and eternal!

I. A SUDDEN SPOILING HAPPENS TO HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Beloved, when I put those two words together—“human righteousness”—I inwardly smile. It sounds like a comedy or a satire, I scarcely know which! “What is man that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” Mere human nature and righteousness are two things not easily joined together—and when they are united for a time, they soon separate—for they agree no better than oil and water. There is a Divine righteousness, worked out by our dear Redeemer and imputed to all His believing people, which will remain—

*“That glorious robe the same appears  
Then ruined nature sinks in years.  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new.”*

But the righteousness which comes of man is a dream—how suddenly does it vanish from our view! Lighter than the spider’s web, more subtle than the mist, more fleeting than the wind—the very name of it is vanity! Let us look at the history of human righteousness and begin in the garden of Eden and lament the Fall. Human righteousness existed in the bowers of Paradise and man was happy with his God. Adam was created sinless. His mind was upon an equal balance and without tendency to evil. He was placed in a garden of delights, with but one commandment to test him, and that a very simple one, costing but slight self-denial to obey.

We do not know how long Adam was in the garden, but we know that man, being in honor, continues not, and in a very short time he and our mother, Eve, were spoiled of all they had. The serpent crept in and beguiled them. He who was a murderer from the beginning plundered them! How suddenly were their tents spoiled and their curtains in a moment, for their eyes were opened and they perceived that they had lost all! The righteousness which covered them much better than a vesture had been taken from them so that they were utterly naked before the eyes of the living God. He is a cruel spoiler, indeed, who strips a man of every garment. But thus completely were our first parents robbed and despoiled!

They found that they had lost the garden wherein they had lived in such content, lost peace, lost happiness, lost themselves, lost their posterity, lost all! Everything was taken from them except that which Infinite Mercy stepped in to give them in the form of a gracious promise concerning the restoring Seed of the woman. Whenever we think of the Fall we ought to be humbled and to be restrained from all idea of selfrighteousness, for if Adam, in his perfection, could not maintain his righteousness, how can you and I, who are imperfect from our very birth, hope to do so? If the thieves broke in and stole our ancestor’s righteousness when his tent was pitched amid the sunny glades of Eden, how much more will our curtains be spoiled in this land of the Ishmaelite and the Amalekite? If the old, wily serpent found a way into the unfallen hearts of our first parents when they had no surroundings to mislead them, how vain is it for us to hope to overcome the Evil One so as to attain to everlasting life by the works of the Law?

A second instance of this very commonly occurs in the failure of the moralist’s resolutions. See yonder young people tutored from their childhood in everything that is good! Their character is excellent and admirable, but will it so abide? Will not the enemy despoil their tents? Often it is so. The young man starts in life with the conviction that he is not of the common herd of sinners and will never descend to their level. He has heard of other youths who have fallen into temptation and destroyed themselves by dissipation, but he feels certain that he shall do nothing of the kind. Like Hazael, he cries, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?”

He fancies that his ship can weather all storms and he plumes himself upon the idea that the record of his life will be very different from that of other men. How truly lovely, at first sight, he seems! How honest, generous and true! Even looking upon him with the eyes of Jesus, we might love him and only mourn that he lacks one thing. The righteousness which he wears is merely an human one and it is altogether in his own keeping, but he believes that he shall hold it fast and never let it go. His tent is so well pitched that no wind from the wilderness will ever overturn it!

Have not these delusions been sadly dispelled in hundreds of instances? A fierce temptation arises and the man’s resolutions are carried along like thistle in the wind! The young man did not think that such a temptation could ever happen to him. He had been kept by his parents and friends like a flower in a conservatory and he could not believe that the nights could be so bitterly frosty in the cold world outside. But now he has to feel the nipping influence of sin and he withers speedily. Satan, discovering his weakness, takes him at a tender point. He brings before

him that lust to which he has the greatest tendency, sets before him that dainty delicacy of sin to which he has the sweetest tooth and, by-and-by, the hopeful youth can no longer talk of his virtues nor boast of his purity, for he has fallen low.

The ship Boastful has struck on a rock and is going down! The selfconfident young man now finds himself to be human—being human, to be liable to temptation! Being tempted—to be ready to yield to sin. “I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble,” for the cords of resolution are broken and the stakes of principle are loosed. Alas, poor human righteousness, you are soon smitten on the forehead and speedily rolled in the dust! How soon does the comeliness of human nature pass away in the hour of trial! Many a young man and young woman, opening their eyes all of a sudden after temptation, have had to cry,” How suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment!”

Ah, you that think yourselves beyond all danger of falling into sin! But you know not yourselves—you understand not the plague of your own hearts, for if you did, you would see that you carry within your souls all manner of iniquity which only waits for an opportunity to develop itself! And when it finds a fit occasion, it will display its deadly nature and then you will mourn that you did not seek a new heart and a right spirit at the hands of Christ.

My second text asks, “And when you are spoiled, what will you do?” And I would earnestly answer it for any of you who have gone through this experience. Do not try to reestablish that righteousness of yours which has been so thoroughly spoiled, but look for something better! Quit the tent for a mansion! Flee from the curtains of self to the walls of salvation! Your own resolutions have failed you, therefore leave such a sandy foundation and build upon the Rock of Divine Strength! Go and confess your sins with deep contrition—ask the Lord Jesus to wash you in His precious blood—and then desire Truth in the inward parts and ask that in the hidden parts the Holy Spirit may make you to know wisdom. So shall it come to pass that you shall no longer build upon the sand, nor yet with wood and hay and stubble, but on the Rock with gold and silver and precious stones!

Another liability of human righteousness is one which I must not call a calamity, seeing it is the commencement of the greatest blessing. I mean when the Spirit of God comes to deal with human righteousness, by way of illumination and conviction. Here we can speak of what we know experimentally. How beautiful our righteousness is and how it flourishes like a comely flower till the Spirit of God blows upon it—and then it withers quite away, like the grass in the hot sun! The first lesson of the Holy Spirit to the heart is to lay bare its deceivableness and to uncover before us its loathsomeness, where we thought that everything was true and acceptable. What a different character you gave yourself, dear Friend, before the Spirit of God dealt with you! To what were you compelled to give yourself afterwards!

Truly, your beauty consumed away like a moth. You began to mourn over your holiest things, for you saw the sin which polluted them. And as for your transgressions, which you thought so little of, when the Spirit of God set them in a true light, you found them to be hideous and horrible offenses against the God of Love. Before you emblazoned your name in letters of gold, but when you learned the truth, you chose a black inscription and, with a heavy hand, you wrote out your own condemnation, feeling that you were bound to do so.

Now, it is a great mercy when the Spirit of God brings home the truth to the heart and makes a man see the deceptiveness of outward appearances. I pray that it may happen to you all if it has never done so. May your tents be spoiled until you see yourselves to be utterly undone—for you are so by nature whether you see it or not! I would ask all who are under conviction of sin to answer this question, “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” May you reply, “We know what we will do. We will flee away from self to Jesus! Our precious things are removed and our choice treasure is taken from us, therefore we take the Lord Jesus to be our All in All.”

If such is your resolve, you are fulfilling the end and design of the ever blessed Spirit who works in order to wean us, for then we turn to Jesus and seeks for that clothing which the matchless righteousness of Christ Jesus, alone, can afford. But there will come to all human righteousness one other time of spoiling if neither of those should happen which I have mentioned before. Remorse will come and that very probably in the hour of death, if not before. Apart from the Holy Spirit, conscience often does its work in a very terrible fashion and tears to pieces, before a man’s eyes, the curtains of righteousness which he had so laboriously woven.

Have you ever seen a sinner happy and contented, because he is selfdeluded? But all of a sudden he has found out that his lies and hypocrisy were known to God and would be all exposed and punished. At such a time, instead of turning to God, he has despaired and said, “I am lost, there is no hope for me,” and therefore he has plunged into deeper sin and become worse! And all the while, like the vulture at Prometheus’ liver— conscience has continued tearing away at his heart, eating into his very soul and drinking the blood of joy out of his life till he has been dried up by an anguish from which he could not escape! I have seen men die so— the consolations of the Gospel have been sounded into a deaf ear! They have lifted up their hands as though they would thrust the minister away!

When he talked of mercy, they replied that there was none for them. And when he spoke of cleansing, they declared that their sin was of more than scarlet hue and never could be washed away. Oh, how suddenly are their tents spoiled and their curtains in a moment! And when spoiled thus, what does a man do? What, but give himself up to that everlasting despair, which has, at last, overtaken him! While any man is yet alive I would exhort him to apply to Christ—though it were the last breath he breathed. I would still hold up the Redeemer before his expiring gaze! But when remorse has fully set in, this is seldom of any use. They cry, “Too late, too late!” They continue to refuse their Savior and pass away naked, poor and miserable to stand before God’s righteous bar to hear the sentence of their conscience confirmed forever by the mouth of the Eternal Judge!

In that dreadful day their overthrow will be terrible, indeed! God save us from this. I hope, dear Friends, that all of us know what it is to have seen all our tents spoiled of all the precious things in which our pride boasted itself—and that we have now become rich in the riches of the Lord Jesus and secure in the cleft of the Rock which was opened in His side. If we have done so, we shall not regret, but greatly rejoice, that our tents were suddenly spoiled and our curtains in a moment!

II. The words of our text are exceedingly applicable to THE SPOILING OF ALL EARTHLY COMFORTS. Sudden destruction to all our earthly comforts is common to all sorts of men. It may happen to the best, as well as to the worst. Did it not so occur to Job, who on a certain morning was amazed by messenger after messenger hastening to tell him that all his property was swept away? Last of all came one who told him that his entire family had been destroyed! Sudden sorrow happened, also, to rebellious Pharaoh as well as to pious Job, for at the dead of night he was awakened to bewail the firstborn of him that sat upon the throne and heard throughout all the land of Egypt a chorus of lamentations on account of a similar calamity which had happened to every household.

Neither the just nor the unjust can tell when tribulation will befall them! David returns from among the Philistines and he finds Ziklag burned with fire and his wives and his children carried away captive. Yet not to the righteous, only, are such trials, for Belshazzar feasts in his palace in Babylon and that same night he was slain! An arrow pierces the heart of wicked Ahab, but gracious Josiah fell in the same manner—with impartial feet does calamity come to the door of all kinds of men! As darts the hawk upon its prey, so does affliction fall upon the unsuspecting sons of Adam. As the earthquake all of a sudden overthrows a city, so does adversity shake the estate of mortals.

Sudden trial comes in various forms. Sometimes it is the loss of property as in the instance of Lot when the kings came and took him captive and all that he had. Then was he utterly spoiled! The same thing has happened in ordinary commerce, as in the case of Jehoshaphat when he made ships to go to Tarshish and they were broken at Eziongaber. His letters were opened one morning and the merchant, who thought himself rich as a prince, found that he had become a bankrupt! These are but common things in days of panic and convulsion.

Frequently the calamity comes in the form of the loss of one dear to us. So came it to the Shunammite, whose child had been such a comfort to her. He fell on a day that he went into the field unto the reapers and he said, “My head, my head,” and very soon the little gift from Heaven had left a childless mother to weep over his little lifeless form. So happened it to Jacob, who sent his darling son away with a kiss, but before many hours had passed, he saw his garment covered with blood and exclaimed, “An evil beast has devoured him! Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces.” You cannot be sure of child, or wife, or husband. The fondest love may be torn from your side and the dearest babe may be taken from your bosom. Here below nothing is certain but universal uncertainty. One way or another God knows how to bring the rod home to us and to make us smart till we cry out, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.”

Now, this might well be expected. Do we wonder when we are suddenly deprived of our earthly comforts? Are they not fleeting things? When they came to us, did we receive a lease with them, or were we promised that they should last forever? Jonah sat under his withered gourd wringing his hands and complaining of God, but if you and I had been there we might have said, “What ails you, Man? Are you surprised that gourds wither?” “I murmur,” he says, “because I have lost the shade which screened me from the sun.” “But, Man, is it not the nature of a gourd to die? It came up in a night! Do you marvel that it perished in a night? A worm at the root of a gourd surely is no novelty. O Prophet, be not angry with your God—this is what you should look for from such a growth.”

If our tents are spoiled, we should remember that they are tents and not fortresses. They are curtains and not bulwarks. The thief can readily enough enter and spoil the habitation which is made of such frail material. Do you wonder that your offspring die? Why so? Across your children’s brows, if you read aright there is written the word, “mortal.” Did you expect a mortal mother to bring forth an immortal son? Did you, a dying father, expect to be the parent of a daughter who would never see death? Your love is astonishing, but your reason is not! Your affection counts it strange, but your understanding judges it to be according to the frequent course of Nature.

Your children came to you and you received them into your home and heart with the knowledge that they were mortal and, therefore, you are not deceived. Bow, therefore, to the Divine will and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” You lament that you have lost your riches. Are you surprised at that? Do you keep birds? Do you wonder when they fly away? What are riches but birds of a golden feather? They take to themselves wings, we are told, and fly away! It is not the most marvelous thing in the world, if your boy has a tame bird, and he comes to you and says, “Father, my bird has taken wings and fled away.” “Dear child,” you say, “I always wondered that it did not do so before now.”

So may you say to the merchant who has lost his property in trading— the marvel is not that wealth departs but that it stays with any man, seeing it is the nature of winged things to fly away! Clouds dissolve, bubbles burst, snowflakes melt and even so do this world’s treasures waste away! Moreover, our earthly comforts were never given to us to be held forever by a Covenant of Salt. They are always loans and never gifts! All that we possess here below is God’s property! He has only loaned it out to us and what He lends, He has a right to take back again. We hold our possessions and our friends, not upon freehold, but upon a lease terminable at the Supreme Owner’s option! Do you wonder when the holding ceases? Do you know the parable of the wise Jewish woman? When her husband, the Rabbi, had gone out to teach, his disciples, certain neighbors in great sorrow, brought home to her the corpses of her only children, two sweet boys who had been drowned. She took them upstairs, laid them upon a bed and covered them with a sheet. She then waited in her deep affliction till her husband came home, grieving most of all for the sorrow which would overwhelm him. She stood at the door and mournfully said, “My husband, do you know that a great tribulation has happened unto me? A Friend had lent me a treasure and, while I have had it, it has been a great joy to me, but this day He has taken it back, again, and I know not what to do.”

“My Beloved,” said the Rabbi, “Speak not so! Can it be a sorrow to you to return that which you have borrowed? O daughter of Abraham, you cannot harbor dishonesty in your soul! If the treasure has been lent, be grateful to him who permitted you the loan and send it back with cheerfulness.” “Is this what you say?” she asked. “Come here.” Then she turned back the coverlet and he gazed upon the cold faces of his two children. And he said “You have spoken wisely, O Woman, for I understand that God has lent these children to me and that I must not complain because He has taken back His own.”

Don’t you see how natural it is that loans should be returned to their lender in due season? Say not, “I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath,” as though you were the chief or the only sufferer, for in this thing there has no trial happened to you but such as is common to men. Cry not in dismay, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!” for when war is raging, it is little surprising that tents should be spoiled! It is according to the nature of things that in a world which brings forth thorns and briars in all its furrows, some of the sharp points should pierce your flesh!

Once more, we live in a world that is full of thieves, and it is no wonder if our joys are stolen. Our Master has warned us that our habitations here below are not thief-proof. He forbids us, therefore, to lay up our treasure where thieves break through and steal. The mud houses of the East are very soon entered by burglars. They break a hole wherever they please and steal a man’s wealth while he sleeps. And this present life is of the same fashion. This world swarms with thieves such as false friends and deceivers, slanderers and cavilers, losses in business and crosses in our expectations, unkindness of enemies and fickleness of acquaintances and especially sickness and death! We must not marvel, therefore, if some thief or other should take away the dear delight which makes our tent so happy.

Beloved, since these calamities may be expected, let us be prepared for them. “How?” you ask. Why, by holding all earthly things loosely—by having them as though you had them not—by looking at them as fleeting and never expecting them to abide with you. Love the creature in the measure in which the creature may be loved and no more! Mortal things may only be loved in their proportion—never make them your gods, nor suffer your heart to live upon them or stay itself upon them—for if you do, you are preparing sorrow for yourself and, “When you are spoiled, what will you do?”

You will cry with Micah, “They have taken away my gods.” If you suffer your heart to be filled with earthly things while you have them, you will have your heart broken when they are taken away! Let us take care to make good use of our comforts while we possess them. Since they hastily fly by us, let us catch them on the wing and diligently employ them for God’s Glory. Let us be careful to place our chief treasure in Heaven, for, as old Swinnock says, “A worldling’s wealth lies in the earth. Therefore, like wares laid in low damp cellars, it corrupts and molds. But the godly man’s treasure is in Heaven and, like commodities laid up in high rooms, it continues sound and safe.”

Treasure in the skies is treasure, indeed! Where moth and rust and thief can reach is no fit place for us to store our treasures! Let us commit our all to the custody of God who is our All in All. Such a blessed thing is faith in God that if the Believer should lose everything he possesses here below, he would have small cause for sorrow so long as he kept his faith. If a rich proprietor with thousands of acres of land, in walking down the street were robbed of his handkerchief, he would not lie down in despair, nor even make a great noise over his loss. “Ah,” he would say, “they could only steal a mere trifle! They could not rob me of my parks and farms and yearly incomes.”

Believers invest their true wealth in a bank which never breaks. And as for their earthly substance, it is not theirs at all, but their Lord’s—and they desire only to employ it for His cause so that if He takes it away they are bound to look upon themselves as not losers—but as, in some measure, released from responsibility! And they may thank their Lord for such relief. Be sure you use this world as not abusing it and fix all your joy and love and hope and trust in the eternal God—and then, happen what may—you will be safe. “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”

But let me solemnly remind you that in times when we meet with sudden calamity, God is putting us to the test and trying the love and faith of those who profess to be His people. “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” You thought you loved God—do you love Him now? You said He was your Father, but that was when He kissed you! Is He your Father now that He chastens you? The ungodly kick against God—they can only rejoice in Him while He gives them sweet things. But His true children learn to kiss the rod! Can you believe in Jesus when distress is upon you and when need assails you as an armed man? You talked of your faith in summer weather—have you faith, now, in the long, wintry nights?

Can you trust the Lord when the fierce winds from the wilderness threaten to overturn your tent? Has the Holy Spirit given you the faith of God’s elect which can bear a strain? That faith which cannot endure trial is no faith at all! If the death of a child, or the loss of wealth, or being struck down by disappointment or sickness shall make you doubt your God, what will you do when you come to die? If, in running with footmen you are wearied, what will you do when you contend with horses? If these minor trials overwhelm you, what will you do in the last dread day when

all things pass away from your sight? This is a trying time for your heart— a testing time for your faith.

If all things are right within us when our tents are spoiled, we shall live closer to God than ever and thus we shall be gainers by our losses because they have increased our spirituality and our peace. It would be a blessed thing to be like the planet Venus, of which it is certain that the earth can never come between her and the sun. The world often hides our God from us and when our comforts are swept away there is all the less likelihood of its doing so. If our bereavements bring us into the clear and ever-abiding sunlight of the Lord’s own face, we may be thankful to lose that which before caused the eclipse—

*“Nearer, my God, to You!  
Nearer to You!  
What, though it is a cross  
That raises me,  
This, still, my cry shall be,  
Nearer to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee!”*

Blessed is he who is resolved with Job and, by God’s Grace, is enabled to abide by it, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” We should learn to give up everything that is dear to us in this present life and find our comfort in the hopes of the next world! So that, like David, when his darling child had been taken away, we may say, “I shall go to him. He shall not return to me.” Happy and blessed is the man who acts thus! He shall not be cast down in the cloudy and dark day. “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” Oh, you worldlings, what will you do in the time of trouble? How will you comfort your hearts in the day of visitation?

Most of you young people are full of fun and mirth and I am glad you have happy times. But the holidays of youth are not forever! Your tents will be spoiled, one of these days, as surely as you live—and what will you do then? All the joy which you can draw from this world’s wells will turn to brackish water before long and you will loathe it—what will you do, then? Nothing will remain of all this momentary mirth when the heyday of your youth is over and the evil days come! And the days draw near when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them. Why, then, are you so taken up with fickle, fleeting joys? I beseech you seek substantial happiness! Ask for eternal blessings! Draw near to God by Jesus Christ and seek unfading bliss in His abiding love.

III. In the third place there may come A SUDDEN SPOILING OF LIFE, ITSELF. In a moment, prostrated by disease and brought to Death’s door, frail man may well cry out, “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment!” It is by no means unusual for men to die very suddenly. One does not wish to suggest an unhappy thought, but this is so salutary a consideration that it ought never to be absent from us—we are but dust and may be dissolved in an instant by death! We are continually surprised that one and another have suddenly been called away— yet it is more strange that so many remain!—

*“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And fails if one is gone,  
Strange that a harp of a thousand strings Should keep in tune so long.”*

In this large congregation, Death’s work is very manifest to one who stands upon this central tower of observation! During the last few days we, as a Church and congregation, have lost several from our midst. I will not point out the seats which are, today occupied by others, where old friends have sat for many years. But so it is, that some have gone quite suddenly from us and their graves are scarcely filled in. Who will be next? It frequently happens that those who are apparently very healthy and strong are among the first to fall. Our friends who are continual invalids remain with us, some of them, many months and even many years after we have sorrowfully given them up.

Consumption keeps many for long months lingering slowly into everlasting life, while strong, hearty persons are in an instant taken away! It is therefore no new thing for men to die suddenly. Not one man or woman here has a guarantee that he or she shall live till tomorrow. It is almost a misuse of language to talk about life insurance, for we cannot insure our lives—they must forever remain uninsured as to their continuance here. If I could be a prophet, this morning, and point out one and another and say, “That man will be dead before next Sunday.” Or, “That woman will not live a week,” I should feel I had a very painful duty to discharge.

But is it not wise for us to reflect that it may happen to any one of us? There are no reasons by which we can prove that we shall escape the mighty Hunter for another day! We are ready enough to think of this for others, for all men think all men mortal but themselves—but practical wisdom would lead us to suggest to ourselves that we are mortal and that, perhaps, the death arrow which has just left the bow of God may be aimed at our hearts. The question is, “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” When all of a sudden the curtains of our tent shall tear in two and the tent pole shall be snapped and the body shall lie a desolate ruin, what will we do?

I will tell you what some of us know that we would do. We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! As poor, guilty sinners, we have fled to Christ for refuge and He is ours and we know that He will surely keep what we have committed to Him until that day! Therefore we are not afraid of all that the Spoiler can do. We are not afraid of you, O Death, for you are the porter that shall open the gates of immortality! And you, you worms, we are not afraid of you, for though you devour this body, yet you shall not destroy it, for in our flesh we shall see God! O Grave, we are not dismayed at your gloom, for what are you but a refining pot out of which this poor earthly body shall arise free from all corruption?

Time, we fear not your trials! Eternity, we dread not your terrors! Our soul shall dwell at ease, come what may! Glory be to the blessed name of the Lord Jesus, we shall rise because He has risen! We shall live because He lives and reign because He reigns! We are not afraid of the Spoiler! But

O, Worldling, when you are spoiled, what will you do? Rich men, your acres will be yours no longer—no parks for you to roam over, no fine trees to boast of, no ancestral halls in which to glorify yourselves! You will have nothing left—no barns, no ripening harvests, no noble horses or fattened sheep—you must leave them all and if these are your treasures, what will you do when God requires your soul of you?

Then the largeness of the amount invested will only make it all the harder to die and palaces and gardens will make the pang of separation yet more keen! You will find it a dreadful wrench to be torn away from that in which your heart so much delighted. “When you are spoiled, what will you do?” Your money bags will not ease your conscience. All the leases, title deeds and mortgages that you can heap upon yourself will not warm your dying heart into the life of hope! What will you do? Alas, what will you do? And you, you worldlings who have no wealth, but live for present pleasure—where, then, will be your wine cups and your dances? Where your draughts of mighty ale, your oaths and blasphemies?

Where, then, your midnight revelry and wantonness? When you shall appear before the Judge of all the earth, what will be left to you? When all these unhallowed pleasures are swept away, what remains? Yes, you lover of pleasure, make merry and rejoice today, but “when you are spoiled, what will you do?” With your children about you, rejoice in your home and live at ease without God but, “when you are spoiled, what will you do?” Despise religion if you will—and count it all a dream invented to make men sour and wretched—but when you are dying and your pulse is faint and failing, what will you do?

What can you do? Opportunities over and space for repentance nearly run out—what will you do? The thought perhaps, will seize you, then, “Too late, too late! I cannot enter now.” The voice which says, “Behold the Bridegroom comes,” will startle you in the midnight of your ignorance just as you are about to die—and then you will wring your hands in everlasting despair because you did not, in due time, seek Him who can save you from the wrath to come! Awake, I beseech you, your sluggish hearts, and look forward to your latter end! I pray that I may leave one or two solemn thoughts upon the minds of the careless. Better still, I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead them, now, to believe on the Lord Jesus to the saving of their souls! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1585 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

TRUTHFULNESS  
NO. 1585

DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“O Lord, are not Your eyes upon the truth?”  
Jeremiah 5:3.

THE allusion is not to doctrinal Truth of God, or truth in the abstract, but to practical truth as it should exist in the hearts and lives of men. It might be read, “Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” Or, “upon faithfulness?” The Lord bade them produce a single truthful man in all Jerusalem and Jeremiah answers that if truth were to be found, the Lord Himself best knew where it was, for His eyes were always upon it. In this chapter you must have noticed, when I was reading it, that we have a fearful description of the condition of things in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah. We have also a most melancholy set of pictures of untruthful men which are drawn to the life with a grimly graphic touch which strangely reminds me of the series of Hogarth’s sketches known as, “the Rake’s Progress.” They hold the mirror up not only to the life, but to the heart of the men of the times.

Jerusalem was rotten to the core—the nation was deceitful through and through. In the 27th verse we read, “As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.” They had schemes without number, plots without end and tricks without limit moving about in their minds like birds herded together in a little cage. What worse could be said? When a heart is untruthful and crooked—when uprightness has gone from it—then is it prepared to be the seed plot of every evil thing. Any crime is possible to a liar! He who is rotten with falsehood will tear at the touch of temptation. A man of bold, outspoken vice is far more hopeful than a sly, cunning hypocrite! These untruthful people began with acting untruthfully towards their fellow men. God challenges them to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see whether they could find a man that executed judgment and sought the truth.

He says that they were not even commonly honest towards those persons whose necessities generally plead for favor. “They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless and the right of the needy do they not judge.” They were not upright in cases where they should have been charitable. They even cheated the widow and the orphan! When a man has once become a rogue, all will be fish that comes to his net and he will as soon rob the fatherless as anybody else. Greed destroys common humanity. Cheating of men is a very common form of deceit, both in the open puffery of trade and the more quiet deceptions of daily life. Traders frequently think it useless to tell the honest truth, even, to one another and so society becomes a network of craft and falsehood. It is a dreadful thing when men are not to be trusted; when their word is but wind; when without its being to their advantage they would as soon lie as not.

God save us from that form of untruthfulness, since it leads on to something worse, for in the second verse it is said that these people were faithless even to their oaths! “They say, ‘Jehovah lives,’ but surely they swear falsely.” They dared to take that most sacred of all names upon their lips and call God to witness to a lie! He who has gone as far as falsehood will not always stop at perjury. That which makes our blood ran cold to think of may yet be perpetrated by us if we take the first steps in deceit. This being so—that they could perjure themselves—it is little wonder that they were not faithful to their marriage vows. I need not read the strong expression in which the Prophet sets forth the fornication and adultery which abounded in his day—when they did not hesitate to bring grief into their houses and the utmost sorrow and misery to their wives by indulging their passions—for he that is traitorous to God will soon be treacherous to all domestic ties.

What can we expect, even, when a man is irreligious but that he will soon be impure if he is not already? I have marked it often that when men who profess to be religious decline from the ways of God, it often happens that if you track them home—not to the home of their wife and children, but to their favorite haunts—you will discover a corruption of life of which the external observer little dreamed! Only Judgment Day will reveal how many hearths have been desolated, how many hearts have been broken by the cruel unfaithfulness of husbands who have crushed those whom they vowed to cherish! This is one of the meanest forms of falsehood— false to their marriage vows as well as to everything else! It is small wonder that they were false to the plain teachings of Providence, for it is written that “they have belied the Lord and said, It is not He.”

When God had been chastening, they said, “It is not God. It is bad luck: it is fate: time and chance happen unto all.” They would not see the hand of God! Do you wonder that when men have corrupt and crooked hearts they should not be able to see God’s plain and truthful proceedings or that when they do see them they deny them?” “There is no God,” they say, “Or if there is a God, He does not meddle with the things of daily life.” “It is cant and hypocrisy,” they say, “to talk about our troubles coming from God! He does not interfere with human affairs. The laws of matter, the principles of nature—these govern all things. God has set the world going like a clock and left it to its own wheels and pendulum! Or, better still, He has wound it up like a watch and put it under His pillow and has gone to sleep. How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

These men were liars, I say, and all who talk in their fashion are liars, too. These wretches hesitated not to lie against the eternal Light of that thrice blessed Providence which shines in all the lives of men—yes, shines like the daylight to men who are commonly honest and are willing to see. It needs no great learning to perceive the Presence of God all around us. The greatest need is an upright, candid mind. This being so, these men cast off God, Himself—the first step is to put Him out of the field of action and the next is to have done with Him altogether—to substitute other gods. According to the 19th verse, these people had forsaken God and served strange gods. Superstition follows on the heels of unbelief, for bad men are frequently among the most ardent votaries of superstition.

Cast off a pure God and you need a god of some sort and so every man manufactures a god for himself to his liking. The earthy mind of the heathen makes a god of mud. The man whose soul is bound up in his bags makes the golden calf his deity. The dreamy thinker evolves an airy nothing out of his own imagination. The free-thinker invents a god who has no justice and, consequently, takes no vengeance upon sin. Man looks for God and thinks he sees Him when he sees himself in a mirror! By nature every man is his own deity—he worships his own image. It is only the man that is pure in heart that can see God, for what the man is, that will his god be to him—but these men cast off God and set up superstitious beliefs of their own and, therefore, false gods were their choice.

And, worst of all, if there can possibly be worse, when a man once gives himself up to a deceitful heart, he gets to be a destroyer of others. Notice the 26th verse. “They lay wait, as he that sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men.” Not content with being lost, themselves, they became the servants of Satan to destroy others! Oh, it is a lamentable thing to think that there are persons whose lips drop moral plagues among youth whenever they speak—whose conduct and example are such that they might well be put in an everlasting quarantine and shut away like lepers, especially from youth, lest they should infect the rising race! I hope that I do not speak to anyone here who is a man-catcher—who sets traps to catch men, aiming to pervert, to corrupt, to mislead, to beguile. Such fiends in human form have surely reached the last stage of corruption when they not only sin, themselves, but are the creators of sin in others!

Look well at this picture of the progress of the deceitful. They begin with being dishonest to their fellow men and at last it comes to this—that they become Satan’s commissioned agents, trappers for the devil, fowlers who ensnare men as bird catchers take the winged fowl! This was the state of affairs in Jeremiah’s time. We have not, I trust, quite such a condition of things among us today, as a plague universally prevalent, but we have much of the disease of deceit in all quarters, high and low, and to what a head it may come, time, alone, can tell! The appeal of Jeremiah was that of a holy man to God. He says, in effect, “O Lord, are not Your eyes such that You can detect what is truth and what is deceit? You spy out the truth. That which is brought to You as worship, You can tell whether it is sincere or not. You can see the pretender’s face through his mask and read his heart through his outward profession. Your eyes spy out the facts which lie beneath the covering of appearances. You can discern between the righteous and the wicked.”

Yes, God is the detector of shams and counterfeits and by His infallible Judgment the precious shall be severed from the vile—“for the Lord is a God of judgment and by Him actions are weighed.” “Are not Your eyes upon the truth?” That is, “Do You not discover truthfulness wherever it exists?” The Prophet had bid them go through the streets and search for an honest man, but he, in effect, cries, “Lord, You know where he is if there is one yet remaining.” God has not to search with a lantern to find a truthful man, for, “the Lord knows them that are His.” Lot in Sodom is like a lone bird on the mountains, but the Lord perceived him. The truthful ones are often hidden from mankind, but the eyes of God are steadfastly fixed upon them, as it is written, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.”

The Lord can detect imposters, but He can also discover truthfulness and we may be sure He will do it. The Prophet also means that God approved of that which He discovered. “Are not Your eyes upon the truth?” You will not look upon hypocrisy—it is Your abhorrence and You will not turn Your eyes that way. Your eyes burn like fire to consume those that would impose upon You, but as for those that are sincere of heart, You love them and watch over them to do them good. They are never out of Your sight. They leave not Your Presence! They bask in Your smile. O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness, to approve of it, to help it, to defend it, to vindicate it even to the last?

Let this which has gone before stand for a preface. And now let us come to the practical instructions which our text should yield us.  
I. I think that there are four lessons and the first is THE UTTER FOLLY OF ALL PRETENCE. Hypocrisy is useless altogether, for God sees through it. You may, by great cleverness, delude your fellow men for a while, though you will find it a poor and difficult business. But you can never deceive God. It is not that you may deceive the Lord for a little time and then afterwards be discovered. No, you cannot mislead Him even for an instant. He reads us as we read a book. He sees through us as we see through a sheet of clear glass. The instantaneous imagination which flits across the mind like a stray bird leaving no track nor trace, God observes and knows it altogether.  
To pretend to be other than we are before God is a hideous madness. Surely, Satan, himself, must laugh in his sleeve at those who come before God with words of piety on their lips when there is no devotion in their hearts—it is the comedy of a tragic blasphemy! It is utterly useless. It is a waste of time and energy. It were infinitely better that you were doing something else than dress and paint and put on ornaments to go before God who sees you in your spiritual death to be nothing but naked corruption. May God grant that we may never play the fool in this way, for playing the fool it is—to hope to appear before Him otherwise than what we really are deep down in our hearts.  
Nor is it only useless, it is hilarious for any man to hope that he can stand better with God by speaking more softly than his heart would suggest, or by using words which his soul does not really enter into! It is, in reality, to be doing the reverse of what he thinks to do. You spoil your sacrifice if there is any tincture of the odious gall of hypocrisy about it. Oh, if the Pharisee did but know that when he made broad the borders of his garments, put on his phylactery and sounded a trumpet before him in the streets he was not pleasing God, but was actually provoking Him, surely he would have sense enough to mend his ways!  
Everything about you and me that is unreal, God hates, and hates it more in His own people than anywhere else! If in prayer we use expressions that really do not come from our hearts, or if in talking to our fellow men we stick feathers in our caps to be a little taller and finer than we really are, it is abhorrent in the sight of God! He would sooner have us come before Him in all the nakedness and shame of our first parents and stand there and confess our crimes than dress ourselves out in the fig leaves of formality and hypocrisy. Pretence is injurious to men as well as useless—it is not only an empty wind—but it is as the breath of pestilence.  
Moreover, pretense is deadening, for he that begins with tampering with truth will, as I have already shown you, go on from bad to worse. He may say at first, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” And yet, like a dog, he will go into all manner of filthiness before he has done. Let a man once begin to tamper with his conscience, to play tricks with words and especially to trifle with the solemnities of religion—and there is no telling what he will be or do! Oh, I charge my tongue, as I charge yours, never to use a word which is not true when speaking with God or for God, for falsehood before the Judge of all the earth is blasphemy! When we think of Him in our secret souls we must be careful not to allow a false idea, for it is dreadful, even, to think an untruth before God.  
Falsehood in common life must not be tolerated for a moment. Once begin to sail by the wind of policy and trickery and you must tack and then tack again and again—and as surely as you are alive, you will yet have to tack again! But if you have the motive force of truth within you as a steamboat has its own engine, then you can go straight in the teeth of wind and tempest. The man of truth is the true man. He is the man to honor God in life and death. He is the man to fear nothing and win everything. He is the man whom the Lord accepts, who feels that if the heavens fall it is not for him to prop them with a lie if that could make them stand!  
He is the man who is resolved to be before God and before man just what he is, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and throwing back every shutter of his soul that the Divine Eye may inspect all! “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, in whose spirit there is no guile.”  
This freedom from guile is a main ingredient of the blessedness. The conscience must be clear and honest or it will gather dust and defilement every day and the man will wax worse and worse. And there is this to be added—that falsehood and pretense before God are damnable! I cannot use a less forcible word than that. Pretence fatally condemns men if it is continued in. I have noticed in reference to conversions one noteworthy fact. I would not wish to assert as a general rule that which happens to be the result of my personal observation, but be the rule what it may, all the world over, this one thing is a statement of my own experience—I have constantly seen almost all sorts of people converted—great blasphemers, pleasure-seekers, thieves, drunkards, unchaste persons and hardened reprobates—but rarely have I seen a man converted who has been a thorough-paced liar.  
I might have been still more correct if I had said never to my knowledge have I seen a wily, crafty man of cunning become a disciple of Jesus! The heart which is crammed with craft and treachery seems as if it had passed out of the reach of Divine Grace. You remember that the ground which brought forth fruit when the sower went forth to sow is called “honest and good ground.” There was nothing good in it spiritually, but it was honest, true, sincere and, so far, “good.” Give me plain-spokenness and I have hope for a man. If a fellow can look you straight in the eyes, you can deal with him. An open-hearted sailor, honest as the noonday sun, puts on no imitation of religion, but is evidently a bad fellow, a very bad fellow and yet, when the Grace of God enables him to listen to the Gospel, how he sucks it in and with what heartiness he responds to it!  
How very different it is with that clever gentleman who always attends a place of worship and knows how to raise quibbles and to answer texts of Scripture—and to blunt the edge of any Truth of God that touches his conscience! You know him, do you not? He is a great sorrow to me. What a mischief-maker he is in all sorts of circles and what a fetcher and carrier of religious gossip! He slips in and out of Gospel services like a dog in a fair and nothing ever comes of his running about. He is not good enough to be good to himself! How can you get at him? He knows all you can tell him and yet knows nothing in truth. He is harder to handle than an eel, for he is all twists and turns. The man is shut up in armor! He is cased all over with his lying self-deceitfulness and the arrows of the Truth of God are blunted when they touch his harness. May none of you ever grow into the likes of him.  
I charge you, above all things, be true. If Baal is God, serve him, but say so and do it in broad daylight. If the devil is your master, do not disown him—but do not be one of those mean sneaks who will serve God on Sundays and the devil when it pays them better! Be not one who will profess to be a Christian to be respectable—and under the cover of that will indulge in the most disreputable vices. Such a man, though never out of the reach of the infinite Grace of God—I never meant to say that—is usually the kind of man that the election of God does not light upon and that the Grace of God seldom visits. Amidst a very large and wide observation I have noticed the fact which I have stated and, therefore, I bid all pretenders look to themselves lest their bands be made strong and their deathirons be riveted on their wrists before they know of it.  
I would say to young persons beginning life, whatever errors you fall into, whatever mistakes you make, yes, and into whatever transgressions you may wander, be true. Wear no cloak of hypocrisy! Profess not to be what you are not! Never dare to jeopardize your soul by a lie! Remember, no way to Hell is surer than the way of deceit, for it is written, “All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.” He that loves and makes a lie shall be cast away from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His power. May the Holy Spirit of Truth bless this warning as to the folly of making pretences and forging falsehoods before God.  
II. Our second lesson is THE GREAT VALUE OF TRUTHFULNESS. “O Lord, are not Your eyes upon truthfulness?” The great value of it is this— that it, alone, is regarded by God in matters of religion—His eyes are upon that which is truthful about us and all the rest is not worthy of His notice. For instance, suppose I say, “I repent.” The question is—Do I really and from my heart sorrow for sin? Is there a change in my mind with regard to sin so that what I once loved I now detest? Is it so?—for only that part of our repentance which is of the heart is accepted before God. Tears, sighs, groans—these are mere wind and water and go for nothing if the heart is not broken.  
The same holds good in reference to faith. A man may say, “I believe,” as thousands say their creed—“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth,” and so on. Ah, but do you trust in God with your whole heart? Are you truly and sincerely believing in God and God’s Word and God’s Son and God’s Gospel? If not, all your professed faith is useless! True faith the Lord accepts and smiles upon, but it is a real thing and dwells deeper down than the lips and the throat. As to love to Christ, you know how very easy it is to sing sweet hymns about love to Jesus and yet how few are living so as to prove their attachment to the Redeemer. We say—  
*“O love Divine, how sweet You are!  
When shall I find my willing heart  
All taken up by You?”*  
But are we knit to Jesus? Is it heart-work? Does our very soul cleave to Jesus? Do we follow after Him as the thirsty hart after the water brook, resolved to find Him and to abide by Him, or to die in the attempt?  
Lip-love is little better than hate in the esteem of Christ. Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Christ in your very soul tonight? If you do not, all talk about love is but a mockery of His name! Simon, son of Jonas, have you real practical love to Jesus? Your can sing, Simon, but can you, will you feed your Master’s sheep and so give evidence of your love? Simon, son of Jonas, you are very eager and fervent, but do you so intensely love Jesus as to care for His little ones and feed His lambs? This shall be the test of your love! This is coming to the point! The same Truth of God bears upon all the ordinances of religion. When we professed to worship God, how much praise was there in the song? As much as the heart made?  
There was no true praise of God in the noise of that set of pipes and pedals and keys and stops! I judge not those who find these noises helpful to devotion, but assuredly the sounds, themselves, are no part of Divine worship! God does not accept praise from inanimate machinery! What cares He about what noise the air makes when it passes through pipes and valves? Even our singing is no better—it is but the sound of air as it is passing through the throat. What is there in that? No, the Lord only regards heart-singing and the song of the soul is the amount and quantity of our song that was accepted of the Lord. As to prayer. “A large Prayer Meeting.” Yes, but the largeness of the number of attendants is not always a gauge of the quantity and power of prayer! The quantity of heart in the prayer decides its quality. The same is it with Baptism and with the Lord’s Supper. The test is, How far is this done as unto the Lord? How far does the soul enter into the meaning of the outward symbols and get at God in the use of them?  
A plunge in this baptistery is no better than a bath you may take in your own home! And the bread and wine on yonder table are no better than what you shall eat tomorrow at your own table unless your heart comes to the Baptism, rejoicing in being buried with Christ, and unless your heart comes to the Table that you may feast upon His flesh and drink His blood! Let this stand, therefore, as the great test and gauge of all religion! We have no lack of external religion in these days. There, fill a cauldron with it! Set the great pot upon the fire! It turns into steam—see how it flies away! And what is left? Ah, so little that you may search with a microscope to discover any solid residue! Those few grains at the bottom of the pot are, however, all that is real and all that will remain in the day of testing.  
Such is the stern fact, that God values the truthfulness and the sincerity of our actions, the heartiness and the depth of them. And He does not regard what we do unless the Truth of God appears in it in all its forms. This is equally true of all your private worship. That daily reading of the chapter is a very excellent thing, but do you read with your soul as well as with your eyes? That morning prayer and that evening prayer—those few minutes snatched in the middle of the day—these are good. I will not wish you to alter the regularity of your devotion, but still, it may all be

clockwork, godliness with no life in it! Oh, for one single groan from the heart! It may have more prayer in it than an army of collects and liturgies, though there may be prayer there, too, if the heart uses them before the living God with sincerity.  
The value of truthfulness will be seen because even in its lowest development, God regards it. I think I might call that its lowest development which is spoken of in the first verse of the chapter, “Go and see if there are any that seek truthfulness”—a man who feels that he is not all he wants to be, but yet he wishes to be truthful. The man who is here sought for is conscious of many faults. Yes, and he feels that sometimes he is not perfectly candid and transparent and, therefore, he hates himself and watches the deceitful tendencies of his heart and zealously seeks to be true. Oh, my dear Friend, if you really are on the right tack. If you are trying to be truthful. If you are laboring to be quite honest before God. If you can say, “I need genuine conversion and real faith in Christ. I cannot put up with shams and hollow professions,” then God accepts even that seeking after truth which is in your soul! May He keep you to that search by His Divine Spirit till you come out into the clear, noonday light of the blessed Truth of God as it is in Jesus.  
It is evident that truth is regarded by God with acceptance and with pleasure wherever He sees it in the soul. My Friend, you cannot pray in public as you would dearly like to do, but the few words you utter are hot from your heart. You cannot pray long, even in private, but your groan is sincere. In secret you sigh, “Oh, that!” And, “Ah!” And, “Would that!” You mean those short prayers. There is no sham in such cries of the heart! Your very soul goes in them and God is pleased with them. I would sooner have a little diamond than a block of granite—and the Lord would sooner have the least morsel of truthfulness than the largest mass of pretentious, ostentatious religion! How far, dear Friend, are you anxious to be right with God? Will you confess that you have sinned and pray to have your sin blotted out by the Lord who sees it all?  
How far do you wish that God should know all about you? How far are you glad that there is a God? How far are you anxious to get into the very light of God through Jesus Christ? For, just so far as you truthfully wish to be like the true and living God, so far are you acceptable with the Most High! Oh, my dear Brother, Sister, you may have only one talent. You may be very poor and very obscure and, to the Church of God, you may be almost unknown. But if your soul goes up and down these streets crying to God to bless your fellow men. If you speak only what you feel and if you walk before the Lord with tenderness and brokenness of spirit, striving always to be true, He accepts and blesses you! If you are resting on Jesus Christ, alone, and on His precious blood, though your faith is feeble, it is true and God will bless you and save you—and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels!  
III. Thirdly and very briefly, let us learn THE INFLUENCE OF TRUTHFUL MEN. The influence of really truthful men is too wonderful to be overlooked. First, it is so great with God that one of them can save a city from destruction! Jerusalem was full of every evil and God said, “Shall I not punish such a people as this?” And yet He also said, “If there is any that executes judgment and seeks truth, I will pardon it.” He will save a city for the sake of one man! A parallel case is that in which the Lord was ready to pardon Sodom if but 10 righteous had been found there. No doubt many a state has been preserved by the godly remnant in it whom the majority would have exterminated had it been in their power! Hence the value of good men in bad localities.  
When you, my dear Friend, go into a hamlet or village where there is no religion, do not be so very sorry at your position, for God may have great ends to be served by you. You are a lump of salt and we do not want to keep the salt locked up by itself in the storeroom. Where should the salt be put? Why, where the corruption is likely to come—to preserve what is good—and to keep away that which is evil! I believe that every now and then the Lord puts His hands into the saltbox of the Tabernacle and takes away some that do not wish to go, but He says, “You mast go for the benefit of mankind. I have need of salt over there and over there.” In the happy Church of which you are a member you would like always to remain, but you must go, or else be useless—which is your choice?  
When the Gospel chariot needs horses, will you forever stand in the stall? Are the oxen today as in the days of Job, to be plowing and the asses to be feeding beside them forever? Let us not complain of being used, or of being placed where we can be used! All light must not be stored up in the sun—scatter it over earth’s poor lands that need it lest all the trees of the field die in perpetual night. Surely you would not have all waters in the sea—let them be exhaled and let them return in silvery drops upon the soil to fertilize it. It must be so—God blesses us to make us blessings! One good man can benefit a whole district. Ask of God that you may be so sincere, so truthful that He may bless those round about you for your sake.  
This influence is such that it never was attributed to any man on account of his riches. God never saved a city because there was a millionaire in it—it may be He has done the reverse! I never heard of any city being saved because there was a learned man in it, or an eloquent man in it, or because there was some great architect in it. No, no, no! The Lord is no respecter of persons and He sees not as man sees. Sincerity before God is approved—true reliance upon Christ the Lord is accepted—and for this He blesses us and others through us. And, mark you one other thing, dear Friend. If you are upright before God and you should happen to fall among people that despise you and reject you, it is a sad thing to have to say, but it is true and a proof of the great influence of truthful men—your word, when you speak for God, shall be like fire and those round about you shall be wood and it shall devour them!  
If you are not a savor of life to life to men, you will be a savor of death to death to them. And, mark this, if the Christian Church sends missionaries, as I trust it yet may be awakened to do in such numbers as it ought to send them—and if they are rejected—we are not to conclude that, therefore, they have had no influence whatever. But, solemn and dreadful as it is, it is a fact that the preaching of the Gospel shall be a testimony against the nations and this shall fulfill the eternal purpose of the Lord! This all proves how strong is the influence of a truthful man. He is never a “chip in the porridge—there is a flavor in him.  
He that is sincerely right towards God is an efficient operating cause to which effects will be given. He cannot be a mere name or nullity—he must produce results by his influence. He has force and that force will, according to those he comes in contact with, turn to blessings or else involve dread responsibility on those who resist it! Go, I pray you, then, dear Friends, and live with God and then be not afraid to live with men. Whoever they may be, God will make you to have power over them and power with Himself on their behalf.  
IV. To close. Let me urge upon you, in the fourth place, the last lesson, namely—THE NECESSITY AND THE MEANS OF OUR BEING TRUE AND SINCERE BEFORE HIM WHOSE EYES BEHOLD TRUTHFULNESS. My first argument is this—these times require it. This is an age of tricks and policies. Oh, the puffs—the lying puffs—you meet with everywhere in books and innumerable broadsides. Everybody who goes abroad has need to carry a discount table with him to arrive at the truth of statements that are made. Be you, therefore, the more true! At the present moment there is going through this city of ours a lying influence of the worst kind on the behalf of Popery. I do not refer to the honest Catholic priest who comes bravely before us in his true colors, but I refer to those who would be Protestant ministers who are beguiling the people and leading them gradually away from the doctrines of the Reformation and the Gospel of Christ.  
The land swarms with Jesuitical churchmen who look towards Canterbury but row towards Rome! Everywhere in society you meet with this disguised influence! Are there not hospitals not far from here that are simply houses for proselytizing? Are there not sisterhoods which are more for the making of Romanists than they are for the healing of the sick? Why, we are surrounded with the givers of bribes of all kinds, whose one design is to buy the people from the Gospel! Is there a house but what these sisters and brothers will enter, if they possibly can, with gifts and so called charities, trying to buy the souls of the poor that they may plunge them into the darkness which surrounds themselves? The net is coming closer to us than ever and we cannot help feeling its meshes!  
The Truth of God is the way to cut the net! The Truth of God is a straight, honest, sharp-bladed sword and you have only to use it well and away go the meshes of deceit! They may compass sea and land and make their proselytes if they will, but we will preach the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God and we will pray that all who love it shall live it and be truthful and be straight, whoever may be dark and mysterious! I would scorn to make a convert to my persuasion by the concealment of anything that I believe, or by the putting it in a light that was not clear, or by bribery and scheming! If men cannot be saved by truth, they certainly cannot be saved by lies and tricks and policies. Let us be true, then, Brothers and Sisters, all of us, and we may not question the result.  
Meet the Prince of Darkness with the Light of God! He cannot stand against it. Our times require our sincerity. So does our God also require it. I have already spoken to this and I need not repeat the solemn strain. So do our souls require it. Our eternal welfare demands it. Oh, there must be no mistake about our being true before God, for when it comes to dying work, nothing will stand us, then, but sincerity! When he comes to the light of the judgment-bar, where will the hypocrite appear? Ah, Judas, come and kiss your Master, again! Betray Him again if you dare! See how the traitor flies! He cannot bear the Light of God, nor can men who are like he is! May you never have one drop of Judas’ blood within your veins. God take it away if it is there.  
It is an awful thing to live untruthfully. It is a sort of minor Hell to go about and feel that you have not spoken the straight thing in every company. You spoke against a certain person very bitterly when he was not present to defend himself and now you have to meet him and to fake admiration of him in the presence of those who heard your former tirade! You are in an awkward position—a worm in a ring of fire could not wriggle more painfully! I thank God that I have learned, always, to say to a man what I think of him and I do not find that I make enemies by doing so. No, those to whom I have said the harshest things are some of my best friends this day! I am sure that there is no plain path, no easy path, like that of downright truthfulness towards our fellow men and there is no right path for eternity like that or downright honesty before the living God!  
May His Spirit work this excellence in us, for He is the great Author of truth in the inward parts. We are all crooked from birth. We go astray, speaking lies from our childhood! One of the first things that a child does is to speak what is not true and parents, sometimes, teach their children to be false by laughing at their little deceits. Yes, and they will tell their children what is not true as a kind of sportive childish recreation. But this will not do! We are all inclined to shuffle with God. It is hard work to bring us up to confession of sin at the first and to make us pull off our pretty, cheating righteousness. We like to wear a rag or two of our own as long as we can. That base money of our own merit—those counterfeit farthings of supposed excellence—we do not like giving them up.  
It is hard to get the last penny out of us and make us bankrupts in the court of Heaven and yet to this we must surely come. When we do wrong, do we not feel a tendency to think that it was not so very wrong in us? The same offense in anybody else is horrible and we go off to a neighbor to report what has been done—but in ourselves it is a venial error not worth a censure! We hold the scales of justice, as we think, with blind eyes, but we just wink a little beneath the handkerchief and spy out an excuse for ourselves. We must get away from all this false judging and yet we never shall unless the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth and Light—shall create in us a new heart and a right spirit. He mast keep us true, too, or we shall go aside like a broken bone.  
This is the sum of the matter—we must come to God as poor, weak, helpless sinners! We must trust Christ to help us and look to the Divine Spirit to purge and cleanse us and make us truthful! And then all will be well. Let this, then, be our prayer—“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” The Lord grant His blessing to these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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DECIDED UNGODLINESS  
NO. 2655

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 31, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 20, 1882.

**“They have refused to return.”  
Jeremiah 5:3.**

THERE is, in the heart of every one of us, the primary evil of sin. We have all transgressed against the Lord. So far, so bad, but that natural sin of ours may be greatly increased by a refusal to turn from it. It is bad enough to have violated God’s righteous Law, but to refuse to repent and to continue presumptuously in our iniquity must greatly increase our guilt in the sight of God. This guilt may be still further increased if we refuse to return unto the Lord when we are earnestly and affectionately invited to yield submission to Him. If gracious terms of peace are presented to us and matchless promises of blessing are made to us on condition that we return—and if we are often warned, often entreated, often threatened and yet we still refuse to return, then we continue to pile sin upon sin, till we make our first transgression to be incredibly great.

If I were now to preach to men as simply sinners, it would be a weighty message for me to have to tell them that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But, alas, I have to preach to impenitent sinners, to those who, as our text puts it, “have refused to return,” yes, and to some who have given that refusal with great deliberation, after having been long entreated and persuaded to turn from the error of their ways. Some have been addressed in such tender, pleading language as this, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” Or this—“Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” If we have heard such language as that and yet have persisted in refusing to return, we have heaped guilt upon guilt—and the wrath of God will be in proportion to our sin!

I. My first objective, at this time, is to try to find out who are the persons to whom our text refers. And, to do so, I ask this question, WHO HAVE REFUSED TO RETURN? Perhaps I am addressing some persons who say, “You speak of those who have refused to return, who are they? We have done no such thing.” Listen and let conscience be at work while I am answering the question.

First, there are some who have refused to return and who have said as much. Perhaps not many of you, who are in this House of Prayer, have gone as far as that, but certainly many people in the great world have actually declared that they will not yield to God. Pharaoh said, “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice?” And there are many who talk in the same fashion today. You may cry to them, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” But they will not turn, they would rather die. They will sooner burn than turn! They will rather perish in their iniquities than be pardoned after repenting of their sins! And some even accompany their refusal with many a jest and gibe—they sneer at the majesty of Divine Mercy and ridicule that which is their only hope of safety! Concerning sinners of this type, the Lord says, “They have refused to return.”

Others there are who have promised to return, but they have spoken falsely. They have uttered fair words and pretty speeches, but there the matter has ended. When the Lord has said, “Go work today in My vineyard,” they have promptly answered, “Yes, we will go,” but they have not gone. In a very emphatic sense, “they have refused to return,” because they have promised to do so and then have not done it. He who says, “I will repent,” and then does not turn from his evil ways, is certainly no better than the man who said that he would not repent! As a matter of fact, he is even worse, for there is an honesty of outspokenness about the other man who says, “I will not,” while there is the falseness of gross hypocrisy in the one who says, “I go, Sir,” but who does not go. I fear I have a large number of this order of persons in my congregation—they have never flatly refused the Gospel invitation, as some have openly done, yet they have practically refused it.

There is many a man who has said to the preacher, by his actions if not in words, what Felix said to Paul, “Go your way for this time. When I have a convenient season, I will call for you.” But the convenient season has not yet arrived and, in all probability it never will, for they have no more idea of receiving the Gospel message today then they had 10 years ago! With all their friendly appearance and flattering words, they must be put down among those who “have refused to return.” I am sure that when I say this, I do but speak the words of truth and justice.

There are some others who “have refused to return” and who have tried to palliate their offense, and quiet their conscience by offering something else to God instead of really returning to Him. They will not turn from sin, but they will “take the sacrament,” as they call the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. They will not leave their lusts, but they will go to a place of worship. They will not cease from their wicked ways, but they will go on giving to various charities. They will not leave off lying, or committing other offenses against God, but they will assume a pious appearance, they will sing a hymn, they will spend half an hour in reading the Scriptures and a form of prayer, though such an occupation is a great burden to them—but all that is utterly useless! The Lord has said that He will have mercy—not sacrifice. He desires us to turn from our wicked ways and to return to Him. And if we will not, any sacrifices that we may bring to Him will be but vain oblations and God will put them away from Him as things that are abhorred and detestable in His sight.

Solomon tells us of three things that are an abomination unto the Lord, “the sacrifice of the wicked,” “the way of the wicked” and even “the thoughts of the wicked.” We may do, or say, or give anything we like, but nothing will please God except our turning from our sin and trusting in the atoning Sacrifice of His dear Son. We may pray till our knees grow hard as iron and weep our eyes away till their sockets are empty, but we shall never obtain the great blessing of salvation while we link our arm with sin and go on delighting in iniquity! Alas, the Lord still has to say of many who make some sort of profession of being religious, “they have refused to return.” They are willing to do almost anything except that. They will repeat the creed, be confirmed, “take the sacrament,” go to chapel, go to church, go anywhere you like, but they will not leave their sin—they will not turn from their evil ways! They will be content to put upon themselves all manner of external religiousness, but they will not be cleansed from their iniquity.

There are others who, practically, “have refused to return” because they have only returned in part. They have given up some forms of sin, but their heart is not right in the sight of God. Yet a man cannot truly turn in part—he must turn altogether, or not at all. If I am walking along a certain road, I cannot send one of my legs backward and the other one forward and, in like manner, I cannot send half my soul in one direction and the other half another way, though a great many try to do so! They will give up the grosser sins to which they have been accustomed, but the smaller sins, the more respectable sort of sins, these they will keep on committing. Yet God is not pleased by their changing the form of their guilt. You say that you do not worship Baal but, if you bow down to Ashtaroth, or any other false god, you are an idolater! And if there is any sin to which you cling, you are a sinner in God’s sight!

You read, sometimes, a dreadful story of a man being entangled in machinery. Perhaps it was only one cog of a wheel that caught a corner of his coat, but it gradually drew him in between the works and tore him, limb from limb, till he was utterly destroyed. Oh, if that piece of cloth could have but given way so that man’s life might have been spared! But it did not and though he was only held by the tiniest part of his garment, yet that was sufficient to drag him in where the death-dealing wheels revolved. And it is just so with sin—you cannot get in between the wheels of iniquity and say, “I shall go just so far, but no farther.” No, if you once get in there, you will be ground to pieces as certainly as you are now alive! There is no way of escape but to turn yourself right away from the evil thing that God hates. There must be no union between our heart and that which God abhors! We must have a clean bill of divorcement separating us, once and for all, from the love of sin!

“Well,” says one, “I have given up strong drink. I am no longer a drunkard.” That is well, but you may go to Hell as a sober man. “I have given up Sabbath-breaking,” says another. I am very glad to hear it, my Friend, but you may perish by dishonesty. “Oh, but I am no thief! I am as honest as the day!” Yes, that may be true, and yet you may perish through pride. “But I am not proud,” you say. But you may go to Perdition through your lust, or even through your self-righteousness—any one sin harbored and indulged in by the soul will be the means of your everlasting ruin! Any single poison may suffice to kill a man—he need not take 50 different drugs—one will be enough to destroy him. So, if there is but one sin that is loved, that one sin will be as deadly poison to the soul! And as long as you cling to even one sin, I lay this charge at your door, that you “have refused to return.” God grant that you may not continue any longer in this fatal folly and guilt!

I will only mention one more class of those who “have refused to return.” It is those who return to God only in appearance, yet not in heart. What a very long way a man may go towards being a Christian and yet miss the mark! He may give up all outward sin, such as his fellow men condemn, and yet he may be lost. Very solemnly would I say to you, my Friend, that you may even be a professed disciple of Christ, but so was Judas. You may preach—so did Judas. You may work miracles—so did Judas. And you may stay with Christ under much opposition and persecution—so did Judas. It was only at a certain point, when the glitter of the pieces of silver was too much for him, that he at last betrayed his Lord and Master. Many covetous persons are the most respectable people we know—yet covetousness is idolatry. They are not likely to give way to sinful lusts—that form of iniquity is too expensive for them. They are too stingy to spend anything on themselves. They are not, generally, the men who drink to excess and waste their substance in riotous living. Oh, no— they are in the shop from early morning till late at night. Look how they work in their shirtsleeves, doing all they can to make money and, perhaps, doing it all honestly. But, still, covetousness is the master-thought with them, and to be rich is the end and aim of their whole life! That is the one thing for which they are striving. If it is covetousness that remains in the soul, there may be great outward reformations even through that very covetousness, for one sin will often sweep away another. There are very many sins that are like sharks that swallow up other devouring monsters. A man may devote himself to some one evil in such a way that he denies himself all the rest—and yet that one will bore such a hole in the vessel of his life that the water will get in and sink it just as surely as if there had been a thousand augers doing their desperate work.

So, you see, dear Friends, that there are many, many persons who “have refused to return” to God. And in telling you about them, I have answered my first question.

II. Here is a second one. WHAT DOES THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN TO GOD UNVEIL?  
Well, I think that it shows, first, that there is, in the heart of such a person, an intense love of sin. The man not only sins, but he loves to sin and, therefore, he will not return to the Lord. The paths of sin are pleasant to him so, if you cry to him, “Return, return, return,” he heeds you not because he loves both the way and the wages of iniquity.  
This refusal to return also unveils a great lack of love to God. The prodigal son did, at last, return home because, with all his failings and wickedness, he remembered his father and his father’s house—and there was some sort of love still lingering in his heart, so he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” But many have no such love in their souls and, consequently, the word, “Return,” has no power over them. They love their sin, but they love not God, so “they have refused to return.”  
In many people, there can be no doubt whatever that this refusal to return unveils a disbelief in God—perhaps not a disbelief in the existence of God so much as a denial of the evil of sin. These refusers of God’s mercy say to themselves, “Sin is not half as bad as God makes it out to be, and it will not bring such consequences as He threatens.” When we read to them what the Apostle says about those who “obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power,” they do not believe that such a sentence as that will ever be executed upon them, so they harden their faces like flints and go on in their sin— and absolutely refuse to return unto the Lord. Even when He tells them that unless they turn to Him, He will shut them out of Heaven, they seem to fancy that it does not matter much. Heaven is no very wonderful and desirable place, after all, so they dream and again they harden their hearts and continue in their evil ways. There is, in the heart of every unconverted man, a real atheism—he would be ashamed to be called an atheist, yet he acts like one, and he is one practically. He may not be such a fool as to say with his mouth, “There is no God,” but in his heart he is all the while saying, “No God for me! I wish there were none. I would gladly escape from the belief even in His existence.”  
But, oh, this is a dreadful thing, for a man to love sin and not to love God—and not even believe that God speaks the truth! Yet there is a worse evil. This refusal to return is really a despising of God. It is as if a man said, “I will not submit to Him! I defy Him to do His worst! Let Him smite me if He can. I am not afraid of His Hell and I do not need His Heaven. I would sooner have the pleasures of sin for a season than dwell with God and behold the glory of Christ to all eternity.” Perhaps you think that I am putting the matter too strongly, but I am not. I am only speaking the truth and I wish to speak it in love to the souls of those of you who are refusing to return unto the Lord. You have not that reverence and fear of God which He deserves from you, otherwise you would turn at His reproof and He would pour out His Spirit upon you.  
Yet once more, I am afraid that this refusal to return shows that there is, in your heart, a secret resolve to continue in sin. If you “have refused to return,” and done so for years, I fear that you are fixed in your evil course and that your mind is made up to remain as you are. I would to God that you would think a little of what the end of such a life must be! As you read of the eternal doom of others, you may hear the Lord saying to you, “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” There is no way of salvation for a man who perseveres in the way of evil. Then, “Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways,” for only by turning from sin, and unto God, can you find salvation! Yet, alas, many have resolved not to turn unto the Lord.  
There are some who regard their refusal to return as a trifling matter. They trifle with everything. Heaven and Hell seem to them to be of no more worth than a boy’s tennis racket and balls—their soul appears to be, at least in their estimation—the merest trifle. I verily believe that some people think more of their fingernails than they do of their souls, and there is many a man who spends more on the blacking of his boots than he does on the cleansing of his soul from sin. Thus are these allimportant things despised by those who “have refused to return.” They make mirth about those matters which have been upon God’s heart from all eternity and, whereas He has given His well-beloved Son to be the Savior of sinners, many sinners act as if salvation were not worth the having, or as if it were merely a thing to be talked about for a while and then to be forgotten forever. O Sirs, surely, these are the mischiefs of the heart which the refusal to return manifestly sets before you!  
III. I must not say more upon this point, for I want to answer a third question. WHAT IS IT THAT DEEPENS THE SIN OF REFUSING TO RETURN?  
Well, first, it is when correction does not lead to repentance. Let me read the sentences that precede our text—“You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.” This passage may be applied to any of you who have been very ill and made promises of repentance, all of which you have forgotten. It may also be pressed home upon the consciences of some of you who, perhaps through your own fault, have been thrown out of a situation and cast adrift in the world. You have been corrected by poverty and, possibly, you have also been stricken by affliction, but all that has not touched your heart—you “have refused to return.” I have known some who have lost child after child, and friend after friend. Those bereavements have been God’s method of correcting them, so as to bring them to their senses, yet they have not turned to Him. No, they have even grown all the harder the more they have been chastened! They have stood out, like Pharaoh, against God’s sternest plagues, and still have said, “Who is Jehovah that we should obey His voice?” If they have not said so in words, they have said it in their acts, which have spoken louder than words.  
This refusal to return also leads to deepening sin when conscience is violated. If I were to put the question to any one of you who have not turned to God, “Ought you not to repent of sin and trust the Savior?” I feel sure that your answer would be, “Of course I ought to! Do you think that I am so ignorant as not to know that it is right to forsake sin and to follow that which is good and holy?” Then, understand, if you know this, yet do it not, your doom will be terrible, according to our Lord’s words, “That servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” It is an awful thing, a dreadful thing, to know what you ought to do—to feel that it is right that you should do it—and yet remain stubborn and disobedient!  
All this adds greatly to a man’s guilt in refusing to return unto the Lord. And so it does when he knows that it would be the best thing for him. I have often heard a man say, “Oh, yes, Sir, I know that if I repented of sin, if I believed in Jesus, if I became right with God, I should be much happier than I am now. Indeed, I cannot rest as I am, I need to find something better.” Then why do you not find it? You cannot have peace with God all the while that you keep your sin—then why do you not give them up? Why not turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart? When you know that it would be for your present and eternal good. When you know that you would be happier and holier, and yet you continue as you are, who shall be found to plead for you? Where is the advocate, in Heaven or on earth, who will take up the cause of a man who knows the right and yet will not do it—who is well aware that turning to God will save him—and yet acts in direct opposition to his own highest interests? It seems incredible that anyone should be so foolish, yet multitudes are!  
It greatly adds to a man’s sin, also, if this refusal to return to the Lord has been long continued, and I am afraid, in the case of some here—and, oh, how tenderly would I grasp their hands if I could, and ask them whether it is not so—that this refusal has gone on for many years! Is it not so, my dear Friend? You had a tender conscience in your childhood and you have not quite lost it. You have often been moved to tears under earnest, faithful preaching and, tonight, you hardly know how to sit still. You are ready to cry out to me, “Leave off urging me thus, for I cannot bear it!” And do you expect that God will spare you for another 10 years, or another 20 years? You cannot tell that He will. You have no right to think that He will and, if He does, will you fling the sins of those additional years on to the heap of your past and present iniquities? Will you make the millstone of your guilt bigger and yet bigger until, at last, it sinks you into the lowest Hell?  
Take heed, I pray you! It is a great blessing to turn to God in youth, for early piety often becomes eminent piety—but it is terrible to be living year after year without God, without Christ and without hope in the world. Turn unto the Lord speedily, I pray you! Let the time past suffice for you to have refused the mercy of your God and now, this very hour, I charge you, before you dare to go from under this roof, turn unto your God and seek and find pardon and salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son!  
There is one other thing which sometimes makes this refusal to return to God become even greater sin, and that is, when there is some evil reason at the bottom of it. I cannot pry into the hearts of my hearers, but I did know a man, once, and he was very fair to look upon—and I often wondered why he did not become a decided Christian. He was respected by all who knew him until they found out his awful secret—he had another family in addition to his own family at home. How could he turn unto God when he was living in sin? I have known others who seemed to be sure of salvation, but they were drinking in private—I mean women as well as men—how could they turn to God when they were secretly indulging in excess? Perhaps it is a very mean and contemptible thing that is keeping you from the Savior. You would turn to God, but you have an old friend who would laugh at you if you became a Christian. Possibly, it is your own father who would despise you, or, perhaps, dear wife, it is your husband who would oppress you if you gave yourself up to the Lord. But shall any of these be allowed to ruin your souls?  
They may laugh you into Hell, but they cannot laugh you out again! Men may put cruel pressure upon you till your fear of them drives you away from God, but it would be well if your fear of them could be slain by a greater fear, for it is infinitely better to dread the wrath of God than to fear the anger of man! For what can man do, after all, even if he should kill the body? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus upon this matter, “I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.” Be not such cowards as to be lost forever through indulging your cowardice. Pluck up courage enough to seek your own salvation, for “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Oh, flee, flee from the wrath to come! Whatever the ribald crowd may say, what will it matter to you in the tremendous day when you stand before the Great White Throne? How can you, then, escape from the wrath of the Lamb if you do not fly to Him now that you are exposed to the wrath of ungodly men?  
IV. Now I must close with my last question. WHAT IS THE REAL REASON OF THIS REFUSAL TO RETURN?  
Well, first, it may be ignorance. I hope it is, for then Christ can pray, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Notice how the Prophet put it—“Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.” He hoped that it was downright ignorance that kept some of them from yielding their hearts to God, but he said that he would go and try the rich ones—“I will get me unto the great men, and will speak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God.” But he fared no better there! “These have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds.” It is still very much the same—rich and poor alike refuse to return unto the Lord their God.  
Then, next, while there are some who are kept away from Christ through ignorance, there are many others who fail to come to Him through self-conceit. Perhaps—though it is but a choice of evils—it is better not to know the way of salvation than to know it, and yet not to walk in it. Some poor soul says, “I cannot come to Christ, for I do not know the way.” HE is the way! Trust Him and you have already come to Him! But some great man says, “I do not want to go to Christ. I am good enough, I have always been religious.” Ah, poor deluded creature! You are defying God by setting up your own righteousness in the place of Christ’s righteousness—and so your “sacraments” and your hearing of sermons, and your few miserable good works are to stand instead of yonder amazing Sacrifice upon the Cross where there hangs the Son of God in agonies and blood? You set up your filthy rags to compete with the spotless robe of His matchless righteousness? This is an atrocity which, even if you had committed no other sin, would sink you to the lowest Hell!  
But, to tell you the real reason of this refusal to return, I must say that men do not turn to Christ because they do not want to be made holy. An eminent man of God said, “To some sinners, the Gospel comes as a threat from God that it will make them holy.” Is it not a dreadful thing, that men should actually turn what is the greatest of all blessings—the being made holy—into a thing of which they are afraid? They do not want to be true! They do not want to be good! They do not want to be right in God’s sight! They prefer their own ways, they choose to follow their own devices. That is the top and bottom of the mischief! Now I have laid my finger upon the very core of the evil. If you willed to be saved, you would be saved—if you really desired to be made holy, you would be made holy! It is because your heart’s longings still go after that which is evil that, therefore, you do not turn unto the Lord! O mighty Spirit of God, change the very nature of men and bring them to desire the holiness which they now despise, for then will You work it in them and they shall be saved!  
The fact is and this is the last reason for refusing to return, there is, in most men, a preference for present joy above future blessing. “Heaven” they say—“well, Heaven—Heaven—we do not know where it is. It is a long way off and we cannot tell when we shall get there. But here is an opportunity of spending an evening in pleasurable sin and we prefer that! ‘A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.’” O foolish men! Your poor little bird in the hand is not worth one of the birds in the Paradise of God!  
Others cry, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” What? Are you no better than the brute beasts that perish—the cattle in the pasture fattening for the slaughter? What? Has God given us immortal souls and yet are we never to look beyond the present life? Has He adapted us to live with Him at His right hand and yet is the dim horizon of this little life to shut in all that we care to know? Is it so that when you are in your coffin, you will have had your all? “I have no fear,” says one. But have you any hope, Sir? That is the point, for many a man has so drugged his soul with the opiate of self-deception that fear, which was meant to be like a watchman, has been lulled into deadly slumber! So listen again—Have you any hope? “No,” you answer. Then you are in a desperate condition, but why are you without hope? Because you are without God! I would not change places with you even to get rid of all fear as you have done, for I have a good hope that, through Divine Grace, though my spirit must be parted for a while from this flesh, yet it will never be divided from Christ, my Lord, and it shall be my delight to be—  
*“Far from a world of grief and sin  
With God eternally shut in.”*  
God bless you, dear Friend! Believe in Jesus and you live at once! Believe in Him this moment and this moment you are saved! Trust Christ now, as soon as this word reaches your ears, and your sin is forgiven, you are justified and accepted and you may go your way, a sinner saved—saved to all eternity! God give you that blessed privilege, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HEBREWS 2.**

Verse 1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. It is well to give heed to what you are now hearing, but it is also important to give heed to what you have heard. Oh, how much have we heard, but have forgotten! How much have we heard which we still remember, but do not practice! Let us, therefore, listen to the words of the Apostle here—“We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip”—as it were, slipping through our fingers and flowing down the stream of time to be carried away into the ocean of oblivion!

2. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward. See, Brothers and Sisters, the punishment for disobeying the word spoken by angels was death. What, then, must be the penalty of neglecting the great salvation worked by the Divine Redeemer, Himself? He who does not give earnest heed to the Gospel treats with disdain the Lord Jesus Christ and he will have to answer for that sin when the King shall sit upon the Throne of Judgment. Trifle not, therefore, with that salvation which cost Christ so much and which He, Himself, brings to you with bleeding hands. And, oh, if you have hitherto trifled with it, and let it slip, may you now be brought to a better mind, lest haply, despising Christ, the “just recompense of reward” should come upon you! And what will that be? I know of no punishment that can be too severe for the man who treats with contempt the Son of God and tramples on His blood—and every individual who hears the Gospel and yet does not receive Christ as his Savior—is committing that atrocious crime.

3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? If we neglect that salvation, is there any other way by which we can be rescued from destruction? Is there any other door of escape if we pass that one by? No, there is none.

3, 4. Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? This Gospel of ours is stamped with the seal of God! He has set His mark upon it to attest its genuineness and authority. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were the seal that the Gospel was no invention of man, but that it was, indeed, the message of God. Gifts of healing, gifts of tongues, gifts of miracles of divers kinds, were God’s solemn declaration to man, “This is the Gospel. This is My Gospel which I send to you; therefore, refuse it not.”

5. For unto the angels He has not put the world to come in subjection, whereof we speak. We have no angelic preachers. We sometimes speak of “the seraphic doctor,” but no seraph ever was a preacher of the Gospel of the Grace of God—that honor has been reserved for a lower order of beings!

6. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? God speaks to men by men. He has made them to be the choice and chosen instruments of His wondrous works of Grace upon earth. Oh, what a solemn thing it is to be a preacher of the everlasting Gospel! It is an office so high that an angel might covet it, but one that is so responsible that even an angel might tremble to undertake it! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us who preach, not merely to a few, but to many of our fellow creatures, that we may be the means, in the hand of God, of blessing to our hearers!

7, 8. You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet. It was so with Adam in his measure. Before he fell through his disobedience, all the animals which God had made were inferior to him and acknowledged him as their lord and master. It is infinitely more so in that second Adam who has restored to humanity its lost dignity and, in His own Person, has again elevated man to the head of creation—“You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”

8. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. Man does not yet rule the world. Wild beasts defy him. Storms vanquish him. There are a thousand things not at present submissive to his control.

9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man. Thus lifting man back into the place where he first stood so far as this matter of dominion is concerned.

10. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Is it not amazing that the Christ, who is the Head over all things, could not be perfected for this work of ruling, or for the work of saving, except by sufferings? He stooped to conquer! Not because there was any sin in Him, but that He might be a sympathetic Ruler over His people, He must experience sufferings like those of His subjects. And that He might be a mighty Savior, He must be, Himself, compassed with infirmity, that He might “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” Brothers and Sisters, do you expect to be made perfect without sufferings? It will never be so with

you— *“The path of sorrow, and that path alone, Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*  
We shall never be fit for the Heavenly Canaan unless we first pass  
through the wilderness! There are certain things about us which require  
this, so thus it must be.  
11. For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of  
one. One family. One by nature with Christ our glorious Head. 11. For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Oh, this  
blessed condescension of Christ! We are often ashamed of ourselves.  
Alas, we are sometimes so base as to be ashamed of Him—but He is  
never ashamed to call us brethren.  
12. Saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of  
the church will I sing praise unto You. Christ, the center of the celestial choirs, is also the center of all the bands of true singers that are yet here below.  
13. And again, I will put my trust in Him. This is our Lord Jesus Christ putting His trust in the Father, overcoming by faith, even as we do. Oh, what a marvelous oneness there is, here, between Christ and His people! Well might the Apostle say that “both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.”  
13, 14. And again, Behold I and the children which God has given Me. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. We know what it is to be partakers of flesh and blood. We often wish that we did not. It is the flesh that drags us down. It is the flesh that brings us a thousand sorrows. I have a converted soul, but an unconverted body. Christ has healed my soul, but He has left my body, to a large extent, still in bondage and, therefore, it still has to suffer. But the Lord will redeem even that! The redemption of the body is the adoption and that is to come at the day of the Resurrection. But think of Christ, who was a partaker of the Eternal Godhead, condescending to make Himself a partaker of flesh and blood—the Godhead linked with materialism! The Infinite, an Infant! The Eternal prepared to die and actually dying! Oh, wondrous mystery, this union of Deity with humanity in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord! Why did He become a partaker of flesh and blood and die upon the Cross? Listen— 14. That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. That, through dying, He might overthrow Satan’s power for all who trust Him!  
15-18. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted. Glory be to His holy name forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587, 527, 521, 522.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
END OF VOLUME 45 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #38 New Park Street Pulpit 1

STORMING THE BATTLEMENTS  
NO. 38

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Go up upon her walls and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord’s.” Jeremiah 5:10.**

WE have been talking very freely during this last week of “glorious victories,” of “brilliant successes,” of “sieges” and of “stormings.” We little know what the dread reality is of which we boast. Could our eyes once behold the storming of a city, the sacking of a town, the pillage of the soldiery, the barbarous deeds of fury when the blood is up and long delay has maddened souls—could we see the fields saturated with blood and soaked with gore—could we spend one hour among the corpses and the dying. Or if we could only let the din of battle and the noise of the guns reach our ears, we would not so much rejoice if we had anything of fellow feeling for others as well as for ourselves. The death of an enemy is to me a cause of regret as well as the death of a friend. Are not all my brethren? And does not Jesus tell me so? Are we not all made of one flesh? And has not God “made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth”? Let us, then, when we hear of slaughtered enemies and of thousands that have fallen, cease to rejoice in their death! It would betray a spirit utterly inconsistent with the Christian religion, more akin to Mohammedanism, or to the fierce doctrines of Buddha—but not in the least to be brought into compatibility with the truths of the Gospel of the glorious God. And yet with all that, far be it from me to check any gladness which this nation may experience, now that it hopes that the incubus of war may at last be removed. Clap your hands, O Britons! Rejoice, you sons of Albion! There is hope that your swords may yet be sheathed, that your men shall not be mown down as grass before the scythe, that the desolation of your hearths shall now be stayed. There is hope at last that the tyrant shall be humbled and that peace shall be restored! With this view of it, let our hearts leap for joy and let us sing unto God who has gotten us the victory! Let us now rejoice that earth’s wounds may be staunched—that her blood need not flow any longer and that peace may be established! We trust upon a lasting footing. This, I think, should be the Christian view of it. We should rejoice with the hope of better things. But we should lament over the awful death and terrible carnage—the extent of which we know not yet—but which history shall write among the black things. My earnest prayer is that our brave soldiers may honor themselves as much by moderation in victory as by endurance of privation and valor in attack. I have nothing more to say upon that subject whatever. I am now about to turn to a different kind of siege, another kind of sacking of cities.

Jerusalem had sinned against God. She had rebelled against the Most High, had set up for herself false gods and bowed before them. And when God threatened her with chastisement, she built around herself strong battlements and bastions. She said, “I am safe and secure. What though Jehovah has gone away, I will trust in the gods of nations. Though the Temple is cast down, yet we will rely upon these bulwarks and strong fortifications that we have erected.” “Ah,” said God, “Jerusalem, I will punish you. You are My chosen one, therefore will I chastise you. I will gather together mighty men and will speak unto them. I will bid them come unto you and they shall visit you for these things. My soul shall be avenged on such a nation as this.” And He calls together the Chaldeans and Babylonians and says to those fierce men who speak in uncouth language, “Go up upon her walls and destroy. But make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” Thus God used wicked men to be His scourge to chastise a still more wicked nation who were yet the objects of His affection and love!

This morning I shall take my text and address it in four ways to different classes of men. First I think this may be spoken by God of His Church. “Go up against her,” says He to her enemies, “take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” This may also be spoken to many a Christian. God often bids troubles and enemies go up against Christians to take away their battlements that are not the Lord’s. This, also, may be spoken to the young convert who is trusting in himself and has not yet been brought low. God says to doubts and fears and convictions and to the Law, “Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” And this also shall be spoken, at last, to the impertinent sinner, who, putting his trust in his own strength—he hopes by joining hand with hand to go unpunished—God shall say, at last, to His angels, “Go up against her.” He will, however, in the last case, alter the next phrase—“make a full end; take away her battlements. For they are not the Lord’s.”

I. First, then, I shall regard this text as spoken concerning THE CHURCH. God frequently says to the Church’s enemies, “Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” God’s Church is very fond of building walls which her God has not sanctioned. She is not content to trust in the arm of God, but she will add thereto some extraneous help which God utterly abhors. “Beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth—is Mount Zion upon the sides of the north, the city of the great king. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, even so is God round about His people, from henceforth, forevermore.” But His people are not content with God’s being round about them—they seek some other protection. The Church has very often gone to king Jareb for help, or to the world for aid. And then God has said to her enemies, “Go up against her, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s. She shall not have them. I am her battlement. She is to have none other.”

1. The first I may mention is this. The Church of God has sometimes sought to make the government its battlements. There was an ancient Church in Rome, a holy and pious Church of God whose members worshipped and bowed down before the God of Israel. But there was a certain wily monarch called Constantine who believed that should he turn Christian he should thus secure the empire more firmly to himself and put down sundry other commanders who were helped by the priests. In order to gain his own ends and promote his own honor, he pretends to see a vision in the skies and professes to become a Christian. He makes himself the head of the Church and leader of the faithful. The Church fell into his arms and then State and Church became allied. What was the consequence of the Church of Rome becoming allied with the State? Why she has become a corrupt mass of impurity—such a disgrace to the world that the sooner the last vestige of her shall be swept away, the better! This was because she built up bulwarks that are not the Lord’s and God has said to her enemies, “Go up upon her walls.” Yes, her apostasy is now so great that doubtless the Judge of all the earth shall make a “full end” of her and the prophecy of the Apocalypse shall be fulfilled— “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”

There are true Protestant churches standing now that have made unholy alliances with governments. Christ testified, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” and yet they have crouched at the feet of kings and monarchs. They have obtained State endowments and grants. And so they have become high and mighty and honorable and they laugh at those pure Churches who will not buckle and commit fornication with the kings of the earth, but who stand out for the royal supremacy of the Savior and look only to Christ as the Head of the Church! They apply to us the epithets of “schismatics,” “dissenters,” and such-like. But I believe that God shall yet say of every State church, whether it be the Church of England, Ireland, Scotland or of anywhere else, “Go up upon her walls and destroy. But make not a full end,” for there are thousands of pious men in her midst, “take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” Even now we see a stir throughout the world to take away these battlements. The holy and pious men in the Church of England have multiplied amazingly during the last few years. It is pleasing to see the great improvement in the Establishment. I think no class of Christians have made more speedy advances in reformation than they have. They have a stirring in their midst and are saying, “Why should we be under the government any longer?” There are many clergymen who have said, “We have no wish whatever for this union—we would be glad to get away from all State control.” I wonder why they do not do it and follow their convictions? They are saying, “take away her battlements, they are not the Lord’s.” And if they do not take them away, themselves, we are advancing by slow degrees and, by the aid of Heaven, we will take away their battlements for them one of these fine days and they will wake and find that church taxes and tithes have ceased. They will find that they must stand or fall themselves—that God’s Church is strong enough to stand, herself, without government. It will be a happy day for the Church of England—God bless her!

I love her—when those battlements are taken down, when the last stone of State patronage is thrown down, when the unneeded help of kings and princes shall be refused—then she will come out a glorious church—like a sheep from the washing! She will be the honor of our land and we who now stand aloof from her will be far more likely to fall into her bosom, for her articles are the very marrow of Truth and many of her sons are the excellent of the earth. Oh, angel, soon blow your trumpet of war and give the command—“Go up upon her walls, make not a full end.” She is one of My Churches, “take away her battlements. They are not the Lord’s.” The Lord has nothing to do with such a battlement, He hates it altogether—State alliance is obnoxious to the God of Israel. And when kings shall become real nursing fathers, they will, in another mode, afford the gold of Sheba and the free will offering of their piety.

2. But there are other churches that are making battlements for themselves. These are to be found among us as well as other denominations. There are churches who make battlements out of the wealth of their members. It is a respectable congregation, a most respectable church—the members are, most of them, wealthy. They say within themselves, “We are a strong and wealthy church. Nothing can hurt us. We stand fast.” You will find wherever that idea possesses the mind, Prayer Meetings will be ill attended. They do not think it necessary to pray much to keep up the cause. “If a five pound note is needed,” says a brother, “we can give it.” They do not think it necessary to have a preacher to bring together the multitude—they are strong enough in themselves! They are a glorious corporation of quiet personages. They like to hear a drawing room preacher. They would think it beneath their dignity to enjoy anything which the populace could understand. That would be a degradation to their high and honorable position! We know some churches now—it would be invidious to point the finger at them—where wealth and rank are reckoned to be the first thing.

Now, we do love to have wealth and rank in our own midst—we always thank God when He has brought among us men who can do something for the cause of Truth. We bless God when we see Zaccheus, who had abundance of gold and silver, giving some of his gifts to the poor of the Lord’s family. We like to see the princes and kings bringing presents and bowing before the King of all the earth. But if any Church bows before the golden calf, there will go forth the mandate, “Go up upon her and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” And down the church will come! God shall humble it. He will bring it down from its high position. He will say, “Though you sit on the rocks and build your house among the stars of Heaven, even there will I pluck you down and this right hand shall reach you.” God will not have His Church relying on man and putting trust in princes. “Cursed shall be such a one,” He says. “He shall be like a shrub in the desert, he shall not see when good comes; his leaf shall wither and he shall bring forth no fruit unto perfection.”

3. There are some other churches relying upon learning and erudition. The learning of their ministers seems to be a great fort, bastion and castle. They say, for instance, “Why have these uneducated and unrefined preachers? Of what use are they? We like men of sound argument, men who give a large amount of Biblical criticism, who can decide this, that, and the other.” They rely upon their minister. He is their tower of strength. He is their all in all. He happens to be a learned man. They say, “What is the use for anyone to oppose him? See the amount of his learning! Why his enemies would be cut in pieces because he is so mighty and learned!”

Never let it be said that I have despised learning or true knowledge. Let us have as much as we can. We thank God when men of learning are brought into the Church, when God renders then useful. But the church nowadays is beginning to trust too much to learning, relying too much on philosophy and upon the understanding of man instead of the Word of God! I do believe a large proportion of professing Christians have their faith in the word of man and not in the Word of God! They say, “Suchand-Such a Divine said so. So-and-So beautifully explained that passage and it must be right.” But whatever church shall do this, God will say, “Go up upon her walls and destroy; make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.”

4. But I think that the worst battlement the churches now have is an earthwork of great and extreme caution. It is held to be improper that certain obnoxious Truths in the Bible should be preached! Sundry reasons are given why they should be withheld. One is because it tends to discourage men from coming to Christ. Another is because certain persons will be offended on account of these rough edges of the Gospel. Some would say, “O keep them back! You need not preach such-and-such a Doctrine. Why preach Distinguishing Grace? Why Divine Sovereignty? Why Election? Why Perseverance? Why Effectual Calling—these are calculated to offend the people—they cannot endure such Truths of God!” If you tell them about the love of Christ and the vast mercy of God and such like it will always be pleasing and satisfying. But you must never preach deep searching Law-work. You must not be cutting at the heart and sending the lancet into the soul—that would be dangerous!” Hence most churches are shielding themselves behind an ignominious bulwark of extreme caution. You never hear their ministers spoken against. They are quite safe behind the screen. You will be very much puzzled to tell what are the real doctrinal views of our modern Divines. I believe you will pick up in some poor humble chapel more doctrinal knowledge in half an hour than in some of your larger chapels in half a century!

God’s Church must be brought once more to rely upon the pure Truth, upon the simple Gospel, the unalloyed Doctrines of the Grace of God. O may this Church never have any bulwark but the promises of God! May He be her strength and shield! May His Aegis be over our head and be our constant guard! May we never depart from the simplicity of the faith! And whether men hear, or whether they forbear, may we say—

*“Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my soul with treacherous art—  
I’ll call them vanities and lies  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*

II. We shall now address the text to THE CHRISTIAN—THE REAL CHILD OF GOD. The true Believer, also, has a proneness to do as the Church does—to build up sundry “battlements,” which “are not the Lord’s” and to put his hope, his confidence and his affection in something else besides the Word of the God of Israel.

1. The first thing, dearly Beloved, whereof we often make a fortress wherein to hide, is the love of the creature. The Christians’ happiness should be in God and God, alone. He should be able to say, “All my springs are in You. From You and You, alone, I always draw my bliss.” Christ in His Person, His Grace, His offices, His mercy, ought to be our only joy and our glory should be that “Christ is all.” But Beloved, we are too much inclined by nature to hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that hold no water! There is a drop or two of comfort somewhere in the bottom of the leaky pitcher and until it is dried up we do not believe it is broken at all. We trust in that sooner than in the fountain of living waters. Now whenever any of us foolishly make a battlement of the creature, God will say to afflictions—“Go up against her: take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” There is a father—he has a son. That son is as dear to him as his own flesh and blood. Let him take heed lest that child become too much his darling, lest he sets him in the place of the Most High God! Let him take heed lest he makes an idol of him for as sure as ever he does, God, by affliction, will say to the enemy, “Go up against him: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” There is a husband. He dotes upon his wife, as he should do. The Scripture tells us that a man cannot love his wife too much—“Husbands love you wives, as Christ also loves the Church”—and that is infinitely. Yet this man has proceeded to a foolish fondness and idolatry. God says, “Go up against him and destroy; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” We fix our love and affection on some dear friend of ours and there is our hope and trust. God says, “What? Though you take counsel together, you have not taken counsel of Me and, therefore, I will take away your trust. What? Though you have walked in piety, you have not walked with Me as you should. Go up against her, O Death! Go against her, O Affliction! Take away that battlement, it is not the Lord’s. You shall live on Me—you shall not feed, like Ephraim, on the wind. You shall lean on My arm. You shall not trust in the staff of these broken reeds. You shall set your affections on things above and not on things on earth. For I will blast the joy of earth. I will send a blight upon your fair harvest. I will make the clouds obscure your sun and you shall cry unto me, ‘O God, You are my trust, my sun, my hope, my All.’”

Oh, what a mercy it is that He does not make a “full end,” Beloved! It may sometimes seem to be an end, but it is not a full end. There may be at times an end of our hopes, an end of our faith, an end of our confidence—but it is not a full end. There is a little hope left. There is just a drop of oil in the cruse—there is the handful of meal in the barrel—it is not yet the full end. Though He has taken away many joys and blasted many hopes. Though many of our fair flowers have been blighted, He has left something. One star will twinkle in the sky, one faint lamp glimmers from yonder distant cottage—you are not quite lost, O wanderer of the night. He has not made a full end. But He may do so unless we come to Him!

2. Once more. Many of us are too prone to make battlements out of our past experience and to rely upon that instead of confiding in Jesus Christ. There is a sort of self-complacency which reviews the past and says, “there I fought Apollyon. There I climbed the Hill Difficulty. There I waded through the Slough of Despond.” The next thought is, “And what a fine fellow I am! I have done all this. Why, there is nothing can hurt me. No, no! If I have done all this, I can do everything else that is to be accomplished. Am I not a great soldier? Shall any make me afraid? No. I have confidence in my own prowess, for my own arm has won many a victory. Surely I shall never be moved.” Such a man cannot but think lightly of the present. He does not need communion with Christ every day. No, he lives on the past. He does not care to have further manifestations of Jesus. He does not need fresh evidence. He looks at the old musty evidences. He makes past Grace the bread of his soul, instead of using it as a seasoning to sweeten his meal. What does God say whenever His people do not need Him, but live on what they used to have of Him and are content with the love He once gave them? “Ah, I will take away your battlements.” He calls out to doubts and fears—”Go up upon his walls and destroy; take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.”

3. Then, again, we sometimes get to trusting too much to evidence and good works. Ralph Erskine did not say amiss when he remarked, “I have got more hurt by my good works than my bad ones.” That seems something like Antinomianism, but it is true. We find it so by experience. “My bad works,” said Erskine, “always drove me to the Savior for mercy. My good works often kept me from Him and I began to trust in myself.” Is it not so with us? We often get a pleasing opinion of ourselves—we are preaching so many times a week, we attend so many Prayer Meetings. We are doing good in the Sunday school. We are valuable deacons, important members of the Church—we are giving away so much in charity. And we say, “Surely I am a child of God—I must be. I am an heir of Heaven. Look at me! See what robes I wear! Have I not, indeed, a righteousness about me that proves me to be a child of God?” Then we begin to trust in ourselves and say, “Surely I cannot be moved, my mountain stands firm and fast.” Do you know what is the usual rule of Heaven when we thus boast? Why the command is given to the foe—“Go up against him; make not a full end: take away his battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” And what is the consequence? Why, perhaps God allows us to fall into sin and down goes self-sufficiency! Many a Christian owes his falls to a presumptuous confidence in his Graces. I conceive that no outward sin is more abhorred by God than this most wicked sin of reliance on ourselves. May none of you ever learn your own weakness by reading a black book of your own backslidings.

More to be desired is the other method of God when He sends the light of the Spirit into the heart and exposes our corruption. Satan comes roaring there, conscience begins calling out, “Man you are not perfect.” All the corruptions burst up like a volcano that had slept for a little moment. We are taken into the dark chambers of imagery. We look at ourselves and say, “Where are my battlements gone?” We go to the hilltop and see the battlements are all gone. We go by the side of the city—they are all departed. Then we go again to Christ and say—

*“I, the chief of sinners am,  
Jesus died for me.  
Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to your Cross I cling.”*

Heaven smiles again, for now the heart is right and the soul is in the most fitting position. Take care of your Graces, Christians!

III. Now to bring the text to the young CONVERT, to the man in that state of our religious history which we call conversion to God. All men by nature build battlements for themselves to hide behind. Our father Adam gave us as a portion of our inheritance when we were born—high battlements—very high ones! And we are so fond of them that it is hard to part from them. There are different lines of them—multiplied walls of fortifications. And when Christ comes to storm the heart, to carry the city by storm, to take it for Himself, there is a tearing down of all these different walls which protect the city.

1. In the forefront of the city of Mansoul frowns the wall of carelessness—an erection of Satanic masonry. It is made of black granite and mortals cannot injure it. Bring Law, like a huge pickaxe, to break it—you cannot knock a single chip off. Fire your shells at it—send against it all the hot cannonballs that any of the ten great mortars of the Commandments can fire and you cannot move it in the least. Bring the great battering ram of powerful preaching against it. Speak with a voice that might wake the dead and almost make Satan tremble—the man sits careless and hardened. At last a gracious God cries out—“Take away her battlements, they are not the Lord’s.” And at a glance, down crumbles the battlement! The careless man becomes tender-hearted, the soul that was hard as iron has become soft as wax. The man who once could laugh at Gospel warnings and despise the preaching of the minister now sits down and trembles at every word. The Lord is in the whirlwind—now He is in the fire, yes, He is in the still small voice. Everything is now heard, for God has taken away the first battlement—the battlement of a hard heart and a careless life. Some of you have got as far as that—God has taken that away. I know many of you by the tears that glisten on your cheeks—those precious diamonds of Heaven testify that you are not careless!

2. The first wall is surmounted, but the city is not yet taken—the Christian minister, under the hand of God, has to storm the next wall— that is the wall of self-righteousness. Many poor sermons get their brains knocked out in the attack. Many of them are bayoneted by prejudice in trying to storm that bastion. Thousands of good sermons are spent all in vain in trying to make it totter and shake, especially among you good moral people, children of pious parents and godly relations. How strong that wall is with you! It does not seem to be made of separate stones, but it is all one great solid rock. But you are guilty—you are depraved—you are fallen. Yes, you believe it and you pay a compliment to Scripture in so doing. But you do not feel it. You are the humble ones that stoop down—as you must because you cannot sit upright. But you are not the humble ones who stoop willingly and feel that you are less than nothing. You say so. You call yourself a beggar, but you know that you are “rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” in your own opinion. How hard it is to storm this wall! It must be carried at the point of the bayonet of faithful warning. There is no taking it except by boldly climbing up with the shout of, “By Grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God!” We have to use very rough words to get your self-righteousness down. Yes, and when we think it is nearly overthrown, it is soon piled up again in the night. The devil appears and miners are soon out to repair all the breaches. We thought we had carried you by storm and proved you to be lost and ruined ones. But you take heart and say, “I am not as bad as I seem. I think I am yet very good.” We have, by the Grace of God, to destroy that wall before we can get at your hearts.

3. Thus the double rampart is passed, but another still opposes our progress—Christ’s warriors know it by the name of self-sufficiency. “Ah,” says the man, “I see I am a lost and ruined sinner—my hope has deceived me. But I have another wall. I can make myself better. I can build and repair.” So he begins piling up the wall and sits down behind it. He makes the Covenant of Grace into a Covenant of Works. He thinks faith is a kind of work and that we are saved by it. He imagines we are to believe and repent and that we thus earn salvation. He denies that faith and repentance are God’s gifts, only, and sits down behind his selfsufficiency, thinking, “I can do all that,”

Oh, blessed day when God directs His shots against that! It know I hugged that old idea a long while with my “cans,” “cans,” “cans.” But I found my “cans” would hold no water and all I put in ran out. There came an Election sermon. But that did not please me. There came a Law sermon showing me my powerlessness. But I did not believe it. I thought it was the whim of some old experimental Christian, some dogma of ancient times that would not suit men now. Then there came another sermon, concerning death and sin. But I did not believe I was dead, for I knew I was alive enough and could repent and set myself right by-andby. Then there came a strong exhortation sermon. But I felt I could set my house in order when I liked, that I could do it next Tuesday week as well as I could do it at once. So did I continually trust in my selfsufficiency. At last, however, when God really brought me to myself, He sent one great shot which shivered it all and, lo, I found myself utterly defenseless! I thought I was more than mighty angels and could accomplish all things. Then I found myself less than nothing. So, also, every truly convicted sinner finds that repentance and faith must come from God, that reliance must be placed alone on the Most High! And instead of looking to himself, he is forced to cast himself at the feet of Sovereign Mercy. I trust, with many of you, that two of the walls have been broken down. And now, may God in His Grace break down the other and say to his ministers, “Go up upon their walls: take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.”

Perhaps there are some here who have had their battlements taken away, lately, and they think God is about to destroy them. You think you will perish, that you have no goodness, no hope, no help—nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Now hear you the last words, “make not a full end.” God would make a “full end” of you if He did not take away your battlements, for you would then die inside the walls of self-sufficiency. But He says, “make not a full end.” Rely, then, upon His power and Grace, for He will not destroy you!

IV. Now, lastly, I must take this passage as it respects the UNGODLY AND THE SINNER AT LAST. How many there shall be at the Last Great Day who will sit down very comfortably behind certain battlements that they have built! There is one man—a monarch—“I am irresponsible,” he says. “Who shall ever bring anything to my charge? I am an autocrat—I give no account of my matters.” Oh, he will find out at last that God is Master of emperors and Judge of princes when his battlements shall be taken away! Another says, “Cannot I do as I like with my own? What if God did make me, I shall not serve Him. I shall follow my own will. I have in my own nature everything that is good and I shall do as my nature dictates. I shall trust in that and if there is a higher power, He will exonerate me because I only followed my nature.” But he will find his hopes to be visionary and his “reason” to be foolish when God shall say, “The soul that sins, it shall die”—and when His thundering voice shall pronounce the sentence—“Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire.”

Again, there is a company of men joined hand in hand and they think they will resist the Eternal. Yes, they have a plan for subverting the Kingdom of Christ! They say, “We are wise and mighty. We have fortified ourselves. We have made a covenant with death and a league with Hell,” Ah, they little think what will become of their battlements at the Last Great Day when they shall see them crumble and fall. With what fear and alarm will they then cry—“Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall on us!”? What will they do when God’s wrath goes forth as a fire in the day of His fierce anger, when He shall melt their hopes and make them pass away, when He shall blast all their joys and compel them to stand naked before His Presence? Then I picture to myself, in the Day of Judgment, a band of men who have said on earth, “We will trust in God’s mercy. We do not believe in these religions at all—God is merciful and we will trust in mercy.” Now suppose—it is impossible because their delusion will be dissipated at death—but suppose them, in the dread day of account, to be crouching in the fortress of uncovenanted mercy. The Judge opens His eyes upon their city and says, “Angels! Go up upon their walls—make a full end—take away their battlements, they are not the Lord’s.” Then the angels go and demolish every stone of the bulwarks. They utterly cut off all hope of mercy. Each time they lay on the blow, they cry, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! You are saved by Grace through faith, but you trusted in naked mercy, you shall not have it, but you shall have naked justice and nothing else.”

Then there is another party who have built a castle of rites and ceremonies. On one side they have a huge piece of granite called, “Baptism,” and on another they have, “The Lord’s Supper.” And in the middle, they have, “Confirmation.” They think what a glorious castle they have built! “We lost?—We paid tithe of mint, cummin and anise. We paid tithes of all we possessed. We know that Grace is in ceremonies.” Out comes the Almighty and with one Word blasts their castle, simply saying, “Take away their battlements, for they are not the Lord’s.” Ungodly men and women! What will you do at last without battlements, without a rock to hide yourselves, without a wall behind which to conceal yourselves, when the storm of the Terrible One shall be as a blast against the wall? How shall you stand when your hopes shall melt like airy dreams, like visions of the night that pass away when one awakes? What will you do when He despises your image and when all your hopes are utterly gone?

The Christian man can go away with the reflection that his battlements can never be taken away because they ARE the Lord’s. We rely upon the electing love of Jehovah—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We trust in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the Everlasting Son. We depend wholly upon the merits, blood and righteousness of Jehovah—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. We are confiding in the Holy Spirit. We confess that we are nothing of ourselves—that it is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. We do not acknowledge one scrap of the creature in our salvation nor one atom of self. We rely entirely upon Covenant love, upon Covenant mercy, Covenant oaths, Covenant faithfulness, Covenant immutability and, resting on these, we know our battlements cannot be taken away! Oh, Christian! Surrounded by these walls, we may laugh at all your foes! Can the devil touch us now? He shall only look upon us and despair. Can doubts and fears take away our battlements? No—they stand fast and firm and our poor fears are but as straws dashed against the wall by the wind. For, “though we believe not, yet He abides faithful”—and not all the temptations of a sinful world, or our own carnal hearts can separate us from the Savior’s love! We have a city, the walls of which are mighty, the foundations of which are eternal. We have a God who says, “I the Lord do keep her and do water her every moment, lest any hurt her. I will keep her day and night.” Trust here, Christian—salvation shall God appoint for walls and bulwarks! And surrounded by these, you may smile at all your foes. But take heed you add nothing to them, for if you do, the message will be, “Take away the battlements, they are not the Lord’s.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #220 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

GOD’S BARRIERS AGAINST MAN’S SIN  
NO. 220

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Fear you not Me? says the LORD: will you not tremble at My presence, which has placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can**

**they not prevail; though they roar,  
yet can they not pass over it? But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone.” Jeremiah 5:22, 23.**

THE majesty of God, as displayed in creation and Providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to His commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah so clearly manifest in the works of His hands should constrain us, His creatures, to fear His name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before His Throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous is entirely submissive to the behests of God. That when He says, “Hitherto shall you come, but no further,” it dares not encroach—“the pride of its waves is stayed.” When we know that God bridles the tempest, though “nature rocks beneath His tread,” and curbs the boisterous storm—He ought to be feared—verily, He is a God before whom it is no dishonor for us to bow ourselves in the very dust.

The contemplation of the marvelous works which He does upon “the great and wide sea,” where He tosses the waves to and fro and yet keeps them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our most devout emotions and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great are You, O Lord God! Greatly are You to be praised. Let the world which You have made and all that is therein, declare Your glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding as fairly to view the tokens of God’s omnipotent power and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast and if not, only let reason do her office and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced.

Let your eyes behold the stars. God alone can tell their numbers, yet He calls them all by names—by Him they are marshaled in their spheres and travel through the aerial universe just as He gives them charge. They are all His servants who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like slaves obey His will. And you know that the great pulse of the ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under His control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of His, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while

declaring His glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honorable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse and our glory is a shame.

Alas then, the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of trouble? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of His deeptoned thunder and sees with alarm the shafts of His lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous and I and my people are wicked.” But like he, when “the rain and the hail and the thunders have ceased,” when the plagues are removed, then they sin more and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceedingly sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just.

We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened. Thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom you rebelled, it might be pardonable. If He were a man like yourselves, you might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness. But since He is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about Him, the God to whom all nature is obedient and whose high behests are obeyed both in Heaven and in Hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot portray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvelously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the Prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—“Fear you not Me? says the Lord—will you not tremble at My presence?”

But while it is a lesson, I do not think it is the lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty, the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of His own people. “The sea,” says He, “obeys Me. It never breaks its boundary. It never leaps from its channel. It obeys Me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to Me. The sea obeys Me from shore to shore, without reluctance and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to Me, in the voices of the pebbles, ‘O Lord, we are obedient to You, for You are our Master.’ But My people,” says God, “are a revolting and a rebellious people. They go astray from Me.”

And is it not, my Brethren, a marvelous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, except man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who makes the deep to be hoary, sins not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master’s decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light are easily directed by the very wish of God. Clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot. “He makes the clouds His chariot”—and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God wills. In Heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practiced by man—at least in Heaven there is a cheerful obedience. And in Hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception—he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text and this I shall endeavor to dilate upon. Let us read it again. “Fear you not Me? says the Lord: will you not tremble at My presence?” Now here is the essence of the matter— “Which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone.” “The sea,” says God, “is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand.” It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. “The sea obeys Me and has for its only check the sand and yet,” says He, “My people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people and scarcely can My commands, My promises, My love, My judgment, My Providence or My Word restrain them from sin.”

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. The sea is restrained by a belt of sand. But we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from Him.

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient except man. But man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea without any stupendous effort of Divine power more than He ordinarily puts out in nature. He can not thus make man obedient to His will.

Now, my Brethren, let us look back into history and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy. He has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which

he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life. His God will walk with him and make him His friend. Moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels and with the Lord, the Master of angels. And yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die.

One would think it was enough—to promise reward for obedience and punishment for sin—but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt. It is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a Prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees Him coming with ten thousand of His saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another Prophet is raised up, and cries, “Yet a little while and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water.” Do men cease from sin? No—profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before.

Man rushes on to his destruction. The deluge comes and destroys all but a favored few. The new family goes out to people the earth—will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little and you shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse forever and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father’s curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of Heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God’s wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences and diseases?

She still goes on in the same manner. At this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand. We admire the beautiful poetic fact. But man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed—he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

“But what of this fact?”—you say—“We know it is true, we do not doubt it.” Stay awhile. I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them—saints and sinners.

First of all, you Saints, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly—“The sea is bound by sand. But I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of His restraints keep me from sin.” Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon His people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O Heir of Heaven, you can look back to eternity and see your name in life’s fair Book of Life. You can sing of electing love. You believe that a Covenant was made with Christ in your behalf and that your salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed His name as the Representative of all the elect. You believe that on Calvary your sins were all atoned for. You have in your soul the conviction that your sins, past, present and to come were all numbered on the Scapegoat’s head of old and carried away forever. You believe that neither death nor Hell can ever divide you from your Savior’s breast. You know that there is laid up for you a crown of life which fades not away and your expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in your hands, with crowns of gold on your head and streets of gold beneath your feet, you shall be happy forever.

You believe yourself to be one of the favored of Heaven, a special object of Divine solicitation. You think that all things work together for your good, yes, you are persuaded that everything in Providence has a special regard to you and to your favored Brethren. I ask you, O Saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep you from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of your heart, would you not be restrained from sin by this? Is not your sin exceedingly sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah, sin has reached its climax when it dares to sin against such love as this! O Christian, your affection to your Lord and Master should restrain you from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of your heart, of your heart even now, for still you have evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping you from unholiness?

The sins of yesterday rise to your memory now. Oh, look back on them. Do they not tell you that you do sin most ungratefully? O Saint, did you not yesterday use your Master’s name in vain and not your Master’s only, but your Father’s name? Had you not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Were you not petulant when girded with favors that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Were you not, when God has forgiven you ten thousand talents, angry with your neighbor, who owed you a hundred pence? Ah, Christian, you are not yet free from sin, nor will you be until you have washed your garments in death’s black stream and then you

shall be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the Throne—but not till then. I ask you, O Saint, viewing your sins as sins against love and mercy, against Covenant promises, Covenant oaths, Covenant engagements, yes, and Covenant fulfillments— is not your sin a desperate thing and are not you yourself a rebellious and revolting being seeing that you can not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as your soul acknowledges?

Next, notice that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God’s Word given him by way of warning. Its pages he is accustomed to read. He reads there that if he break the statutes and keep not the Commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God’s Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin. He finds a Samson shorn of his locks and with his eyes put out. He sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out—that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God’s own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept you dare to sin. Oh, are you not a rebellious creature and may you not this morning humble yourself at the thought of the greatness of your iniquity?

Again—the saint sins against his own experience. When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him. He has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers suchand-such a transgression. It appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh, it made his Master withdraw His presence and hide His face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin exceedingly sinful.

But every time you sin, O gray-headed Saint, you sin with a vengeance, for you have had all through your life so much proof of what sin has been to you. You have not been deceived about it, for you have felt its bitterness in your heart—and when you sip the accursed draught you are infatuated indeed, because you sin against experience. Yes, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints—and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will. But because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God—who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts—and yet they still break forth. Verily you are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all His children with Providence in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine Providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practice before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust—we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity—how we reveled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice and we looked down—our brain reeled, we could not stand. And do we not remember how just then some striking Providence came in our way and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the Church for violating the rules of propriety.

Ah, strange things happen to some of us. Strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a Providence which on some sad and solemn occasion to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdling of His Providence, how many times you have offended. And let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though He has afflicted you, you have sinned. Though He has given you chastisement, you have sinned. Though He has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh, how corrupt your hearts are and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, Beloved, that the ordinances of God’s House are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary. He girds us by the remembrance of our holy Baptism. And all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce. Yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, Beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men because He has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honor of God and against the gratitude we owe Him, the saints of God have dared to sin! And they must confess before Him that they are rebellious and have revolted from Him. Bow down your heads with shame while you consider your ways and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that He has kept you when your feet were making haste to Hell, where you would have gone, but for His preserving grace. Shall not this longsuffering of your God, this

tender compassion, be your theme every day—  
*“While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures?”*

Will you not pray that God should not cast you away, nor take His Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature and though you have revolted against Him? This is for the saints.

And now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to sinners! Sinner, I have solemn things to say to you this morning. Lend me for a few minutes your very closest attention. I will speak to you as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in your ear. I have asked my God that I may so speak to you, O Sinner—if I win not your heart may I at least be free from your blood. And if I am not able to convince you of your sin, I may at any rate make you without excuse in that day “when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.” Come, then, Sinner—in the first place, I bid you consider your guilt. You have heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God and restrained within its channel by simple sand. And you, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, you are a rebel against God.

The sea obeys Him, you do not. Consider, I beseech you how many restraints God has put on you—He has not checked your lusts with sand but with cliffs. And yet you have burst through every bound in the violence of your transgressions. Perhaps He has checked your soul by the remembrance of your guilt. You have this morning felt yourself a despiser of God. Or if not a despiser, you are a mere hearer and have no part nor lot in this matter. Do you not remember your sins in the face of your mother’s counsels and your father’s strong admonitions? Do they never check you? Do you never think you see a mother’s tears coming after you? Have you never heard a father’s prayer for you? When you have been spending your nights in dissipation and have gone home late to your bed, have you never thought you have seen your father’s spirit at your bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child?

Consider what you have learned, child. Baptized with a mother’s tears—almost immersed in them. You were early taught to know something of God. Then you went from your mother’s knees, to those of a pious teacher. You were trained in a Sunday-School, or at any rate you were taught to read the Bible. You know the threats of God—it is no new tale to you when I warn you that sinners must be condemned. It is no new story when I tell you that saints shall wear the starry crown. You knows all that. Consider, then, how great is your guilt. You have sinned against light and knowledge. You are not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but you are a sinner before high Heaven in the full light of day. You have not sinned ignorantly—you have done it when you knew better. And when you come to be judged, you shall have an additional doom—because you knew your duty—but you did it not. I charge that home upon you, I charge it solemnly upon your conscience—is it true, or is it not?

Some of you have had other things. Don’t you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife and you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget—sickness had got strong hold of you and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned. Not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks. You thought you would be among them, yourself, soon. Methinks I see you—you turned your face to the wall and you cried—“O God, if You will save my life I will give myself to You!” Perhaps it was an accident. You did fear that death was very near, the terrors of death laid hold of you and you did cry, “Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make.”

But did you perform that vow? No, you have sinned against God. Your broken vows have gone before you to judgment. Do you think it a little thing to make a promise to your fellow creature and break it? It may be so in your estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But do you think it a little thing to promise to your Maker and to break your promise? That is no light penalty—sinning against the Almighty God. It will cost you your soul, Man, and your soul’s blood forever if you go on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if you pay not, vow not. For God shall visit those vows upon you in the day when He makes inquisition for blood and destroys your soul. You have been guarded thus—remember that you have had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill you—your broken bones were healed. You did not die. When the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon you—here you are still. Your life is spared.

Oh, my dear Hearers, some of you are the worst. You have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness how earnestly I have longed for you all in the heart of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server and kept back part of the Truth of God, much more honor would I have received from men than I have received. But I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives? But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness!

Do you think it a little thing to sin against God’s Ambassador? It is no little sin—every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hope for you— but you have gone back to the ways of perdition. I have cried, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Woe unto you Bethsaida. It were better for you that you had been Tyre and Sidon than that you should have been left in

the midst of privileges, if you should perish at last! Woe unto you Hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If you perish beneath our warnings, you shall perish in a horrible manner!

“Woe unto you, Capernaum! You are exalted unto Heaven, but you shall be cast down to Hell.” Woe unto you, young woman! You have had a pious mother and you have had many warnings. Woe unto you, young man! You have been a profligate youth, you have been brought to this house of prayer from your infancy and you are sitting there even now— often does your conscience prick you—often your heart has told you that you are wrong. And yet you are still unchanged! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! And yet will I cry unto my God that He would avert that woe and pardon you. That He would not let you die, but bring you unto Himself lest now you perish in your sins. You Sinners! God has a controversy with you. He tames the sea, but you will not be tamed. Nothing but His marvelous Grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies and judgments—and still you sin.

Oh, my Hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others. For when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of Hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that Hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, you do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, to God, “I did not know this would be the pay for my labor.” When you did sow tares, you could not expect that you should reap wheat. You knew “that they who sow carnal things shall reap carnal things.” You are sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that you will reap salvation. For you know that “He who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin when God puts Hell before you! What? Sin when He has given out His threat? Sin? While Sinai is thundering, while Hell is blazing? That is to sin, indeed. But how many of you, my dear Hearers, have sinned like this? I would to God that He would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them His salvation. I cannot, with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of His Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Has He done so? Has He blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say from this time forth you will mend your ways?

Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best and they are convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God says that the sea can be tamed with sand, but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Do you think you can do that which God says is impossible? Do you suppose yourself stronger than God Almighty? What? Can you change your own heart, when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of Heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech you, do not try to do it with your own strength. I am glad you know your guilt. But O, do not increase that guilt by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of your own resolutions. Go and tell God that you know your sin and confess it before Him and ask Him to create in you a clean heart and renew in you a right spirit. Tell Him you know that you are rebellious and you are sure that you always will be, unless He changes your heart. And I beseech you, rest not satisfied until you have a new heart.

My Hearer, be not content with Baptism. Be not content with the Lord’s Supper. Be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday. Be not content with leaving off drunkenness. Be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that and be damned. It is a new heart and a right spirit you want! Begin with that and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Think, my Hearer! You may varnish and gild yourself, but you can never change yourself. You may moralize, but you can never spiritualize your heart. Think! You are this morning lost and think of this—you can do nothing whatever to save yourself. Let that thought rise in your soul and lay you very low. And when you go to God, cry, “O Lord, do what I cannot do—save me, O my God—for Your mercy’s sake.”

My dear Hearers, have I spoken harshly to you or will you rather take it in love? You who have sinned thus terribly against God, do you feel it? Well, I have no grace to offer to you, I have no Christ to offer to you but I have Christ to preach to you. Oh, what shall I say? This—you are a sinner. “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.” Are you a sinner? Then He came to save you. Oh, joyful sound! I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to you. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart that I am allowed again to tell you—“It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Let me tell you that when He came into this world He was nailed to the Cross and that there He expired in desperate grief and agony and there He shrieked, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” There the blood ran from His hands and feet and because He suffered He is able to forgive. Sinner, do you believe that? You are black in sin—do you believe, in the face of your vileness, that Christ’s blood can make you clean? What do you say, Sinner? God has convinced you of your sin—are you willing to be saved in God’s way this morning? If you are willing, you shall be saved.

It is written—Whosoever will, let him come.”  
Are you thirsty this morning? Come here and drink. Are you hungry?  
Come and eat. Are you dying? Come and live. My Master bids me tell you,  
all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven. All you who know your  
transgressions, He bids me tell you this—“I, even I, am He that blots out  
your transgressions, for My name’s sake.” Have you been an adulterer,  
have you been a whoremonger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a  
swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation—“Whosoever will, let  
him come.” I find no exception in this—“Him that comes I will in nowise  
cast out.” Do you know your guilt? Then I do not ask you what your guilt  
is. Though you are the vilest creature, again, I tell you, if you know your  
guilt, Christ will forgive you. Believe it and you are saved!  
And now—will you go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept  
this morning. No wonder. The wonder is that we do not all weep until we  
find ourselves saved! You will go away tomorrow to your farms and to your  
merchandize, to your shops and to your offices. And the impression that  
may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass away like  
the morning cloud. My Hearers, I would not weep—though you should call  
me all the names you can think of—but I will weep because you will not  
weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will you be damned? Is it a pleasant  
thing to revolt in the flames of Hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your  
death! What? Is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor  
to stand and be the scorn of God’s universe? Do you say you shall not  
die? You will put it off a little while?  
Sinner, you will never have a more convenient season. If today is inconvenient, tomorrow will be more so. Put it off today, wipe away the tears  
from your eyes and the day may come when you would give a million  
worlds for a tear—but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has  
had a soft heart. It has passed away and in later years he has said, “Oh  
that I could but shed a tear!” O God! Make Your Word like a hammer this  
morning that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! You who know your  
sins—as God’s Ambassador—I beseech you, “be you reconciled unto God.”  
“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His  
wrath is kindled but a little.”  
Remember, once lost, you are lost forever. But if you are once saved,  
you are certainly saved forever. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you  
shall be saved,” said Paul of old. Jesus Himself has said “He that believes  
and is baptized shall be saved but he that believes not shall be damned.” I  
will not finish with a curse. “He that believes shall be saved.” God give you  
all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus’ sake! Amen and  
amen!

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THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN  
NO. 880

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”  
Jeremiah 5:24.**

SUCH are the climate and soil of Palestine, that all agricultural operations are most manifestly dependent upon the periodical rainfall. Hence the people speak of the weather and the crops with a more immediate reference to God than is usual with us. It is said that the common expressions of the peasantry are such as quite strike travelers with their apparently devout recognition of the Almighty agency. Certainly we may account for a very large number of what may be called the agricultural promises of the Old Testament from the fact that little of the food of the people was gained by manufacture or commerce. The whole population depended upon the field and the field upon the rain.

Palestine is the very opposite of Egypt, which is so well irrigated by its river. And it is equally different from our own land, in which seasons of comparative drought may yet prove to be years of plenty. In Palestine, the agriculturalist must have the rain. He must receive the first rain soon after the corn is put into the ground, otherwise it will rot or be blown away with the dust as his fields become turned into a kind of impalpable powder by the summer’s sun. He must have the latter rain just before the time of harvest, otherwise the ears lacking the moisture that should fill them out, will become thin and lean, barely worth the ingathering—in fact, they will yield no flour for the food of man. The farmer depends entirely upon the early and the latter rain, and if these do not fall pretty plenteously in their season, a time of famine will ensue.

Although our climate does not so immediately remind us of our dependence upon God, yet it would be well if we remembered from where all our blessings come and look up to the hand from which our daily bread is distributed. In these herbless miles of pavement and these dreary wildernesses of brick, we scarcely perceive the lapse of the seasons. In vain for us the violet of spring sheds its perfume, or the last rose of summer blushes with beauty—seed time and harvest come and go all unobserved—yet are citizens and merchants as much dependent upon the fruit of the field as the young lads who reap and mow.  
Therefore let us lift up our eyes to the Lord who gives rain and in so doing drops bread from Heaven! When He gives seasons favorable for the harvest, let us thank Him for it. And if at any time He restrains the blessings of the elements and loads the air with blight and mildew, let us fear and tremble before Him and humble ourselves before His chastening hand—

*“The harvest-song we would repeat,  
You give us the finest wheat.  
The joys of harvest we have known,  
The praise, O Lord, is all Your own.”*

Gratitude for Providential mercies is not, however, the subject of this morning’s discourse. I intend to use the text rather in a spiritual sense.

As it is in the outward world, so is it in the inward. As it is in the physical, so is it in the spiritual—man is a microcosm, a little world—and all weather and seasons find their image in him. The earth is dependent upon the rain shower from Heaven—so are the souls of men. And so are their holy works dependent upon the Grace shower which comes from the great Father of light, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. A famine would surely follow in the East if the rain were withheld—so would spiritual disasters of the worse kind be sure to ensue if the Grace of God were restrained. We shall consider this great Truth of God in its bearing upon two important matters—first, as it respects the work of God which we carry on outside us. And, secondly, as it respects the work of God as it is carried on within us.

I. First, then, THE WORK OF GOD AS IT IS CARRIED ON OUTSIDE US. It is necessary, whenever any holy enterprise is commenced, that it should be early watered by the helpful Spirit of God. Nothing begins well unless it begins in God. It cannot take root, it cannot spring up in hopefulness unless the Holy Spirit shall descend upon it. It will wither like the grass upon the housetops if the celestial dew of the morning falls not early upon it. The like Grace is equally necessary after years of growth. There is urgent need of the latter rain, the shower of revival, in which the old work shall be freshened and the first verdure shall be restored. Without this latter rain, the period of harvest which is the end aimed at will be disappointing.

My Brothers and Sisters, members of this Church, it will make my discourse more practical if I apply it to the Church of which we are members. You who are members of other Churches can readily, in a like case, apply the Truth to your spiritual homes. Years ago we were diminished and brought low. Dark was the hour and pale were the faces. The numbers who gathered for sacred worship in connection with this Church might almost be counted upon the fingers. Our Zion was all but utterly forsaken.

Yet there was a living band of men whose hearts the Lord had touched, who ceased not to pray day and night that He would be pleased to remember us. To these entreaties Heaven sent a gracious answer and now for these 16 years God has been pleased to look in mercy upon us as a Church and congregation and in continued prosperity we have rejoiced day by day. Many of you are the fruits, this day, of the blessing which came to us in the first years of the early rain. How soon the congregation was multiplied! Place after place was found to be too small for us—still the blessing of God was with us and multitudes thronged to hear the Word of God!

Blessed be His name, we had not only hearers, but we had converts! We heard on every side the cry of repenting sinners and multitudes said, “What must we do to be saved?” Our Church grew exceedingly, so that we realized the blessing of the Apostolic times—“The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” We were as wet as Gideon’s fleece with the dew of Heaven! And what prayers we then put up! Have we not been present, some of us, in Prayer Meetings when we were all moved by the breath of God’s Spirit, as the growing wheat is moved by the wind? How often were our souls within us bowed to the very dust in admiring wonder to see how the Lord worked!

As we saw the crowds, we stood still and cried in amazement, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” Then, being baptized of the Holy Spirit, we walked together in holy unity of love, in earnestness of endeavor, in the generosity which spared no expense for Christ. We shared in the love which thought no evil, in the zeal which dared all things, in the courage that defied opposition! Our Graces flourished and our communion was sweet and unbroken. And now, as pastor of this Church, having seen what God has done for us, I can gratefully add, “the Lord has not withdrawn His hand, lo, these well-near 16 years, from our midst.”

Conversions have never become less numerous. There has been, so far as I can judge, little or no flagging in the earnestness of your endeavors, and though more might have been done, and should have been done, yet still for what has been done let God have all the praise! But my fear is—a fear which haunts me often, a fear which springs, I trust, out of zeal for God’s Glory—lest having had the early rain we should become contented to forego the latter rain. But ah, this must not be! Any Church that dreams that it is established by the lapse of years and can stand alone because of its acquired strength. Any Church that imagines that prayer need not be so humble and vehement. Any Church that conceives that its ministry has in it a natural power which guarantees its efficiency. Any Church that dreams that its membership has become so influential that it can support its own work. The hour of peril is come and the day of its downfall is near at hand of any Church that relies in any respect upon an arm of flesh!

Let not the Church say, “We have done enough.” Let it not boast that it has reached the Ultima Thule of industry and liberality. The end of progress is come when we have reached self-contentment! When we glory in the multitude of goods laid up for many years, we are already naked and poor and miserable! I, therefore, beseech my Brothers and Sisters joined with me in Church fellowship here, earnestly to entreat that we now may have the latter rain as we before received the early rain! May renewed Grace be to us a token that the God who blessed us in the past has not turned away from doing us good.

We have the unconverted in our midst. They sit by our side in these pews—we need Divine Grace for these. A number of our hearers who were unconverted 15 years ago are still with us but yet not of us! Alas, in that space of time a large number have passed into eternity unsaved. The crowds still gather to listen to the Word and we need, still, the blessing upon the preacher in delivering, and the people in hearing the Truth of God. We cannot do without it! O members of this Church, let no man take our crown! The crown of this Church has been the souls converted unto God by the Holy Spirit in this place! Let us struggle to retain this crown! Let us incessantly pray that instead of losing this glory we may increase in it to the Glory of God!

I know not how to speak to you for the very reason that I need to speak infinitely better than I can. For it seems to me that if God should leave us, our own sadness and our own shame will be the least part of the evil. Those who have watched our growth and been encouraged in similar efforts will be discouraged and the kingdom of the Master will in that measure decline. Others of His servants will hang their harps upon the willows and return to that dull, dead, cold monotony, long so common to our churches. My Brethren, you began the battle well! You rushed to the encounter and swept all before you! Servants of the living God! The day is hot and long, the struggle still continues! The enemy still holds the ground—can you keep your line, can you stand in your phalanx, can you endure to the end and march on with still greater ardor to the fray until the field is won and the shout goes up that the King eternal, immortal, has won the victory? Thus in connection with any one Church.

The same is true in connection with any sphere of labor in which any individual among us may happen to be engaged. I will trust that every Believer here has found something to do for his Lord and Master. In commencing any Christian work, novelty greatly assists enthusiasm and it is very natural that under first impulses the beginner should achieve an easy success. The difficulty of the Christian is very seldom the commencement of the work. The true labor lies in the perseverance which alone can win the victory. I address some Christians here who have now been for years occupied with a service which the Holy Spirit laid upon them. I would remind them of the early rain of their youthful labors, the moisture of which still lingers on their memories, although it has been succeeded by long years of drought.

Brothers, be encouraged! A latter rain is yet possible. Seek it! That you need it so much is a cause for sorrow, but if you really feel your need of it, be glad that the Lord works in you such sacred desires. If you did not feel a need for more Divine Grace it would be a reason for alarm. But to be conscious that all that God did by you in the past has not qualified you to do anything without Him now—to feel that you lean entirely upon His strength now, as much as ever—is to be in a condition in which it shall be right and proper for God to bless you abundantly.

Wait upon Him, then, for the latter rain. Ask that if He has given you a little of blessing in past years, He would return and give you 10 times as much now, even now, so that, at the last, if you have sown in tears, you may come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! Alas, the danger of every Christian worker is that of falling into routine and selfsufficiency. We are most apt to do what we have been accustomed to do and to do it half asleep. One of the hardest tasks in all the world is to keep the Christian awake on the enchanted ground. The tendencies of this present time and of all times, is to put us to sleep! The life, the power of our public services and private devotion speedily evaporates. We pray as in a dream and praise and preach like sleepwalkers!

May God be pleased to stir us up, to awaken and quicken us by sending us the latter rain to refresh His weary heritage. Thus much upon the first point.

II. Let us turn to the second, which will more concern each one of us and come closer home to our hearts. Spirit of God, help us in dispensing Your Truth! We shall apply the text to OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WITHIN US. Here note, first, that usually the spiritual life, as soon as it is commenced, experiences a former rain, or a delightful visitation of Divine Grace. Suffer me to speak to your memories for a little while. You remember when you were converted to God. Some of us remember the day and the hour and the very spot, to a yard! Others cannot remember, but they need not, therefore, be discouraged, for if they are alive unto God, it is a small matter about when they were born. They may rest assured, if their faith is resting upon Christ, alone, it is well with them whether their conversion was gradual or sudden.

But I say, many of you remember when you were converted, or thereabouts. Now, was not the period after you had believed in Jesus the happiest that you ever spent? Yes, though there have been times of joy since then, yet in some respects must not that period bear the palm? So blessed was our first conversion, to some of us, that those first days are as green and fragrant in our memories as if they were but yesterday! They are as fresh and fair as if they had but just budded in the garden of time. Other days, like withered flowers, are no longer sweet and lovely to gaze upon, but these are as well-bedewed with the freshness of the morning as though they were of the present rather than the past.

What bliss it was to feel that we were saved! Our hearts danced at the very thought of full salvation. The only fear was that it was too good to be true! Our faith was exceedingly strong—Christ upon the Cross was always in our view. We had no experience, then, to set in the place of Christ—no sanctification to mix up with His righteousness in our justification. Our belief in Jesus was very simple and childlike, and consequently was very comforting and we were very, very happy. Oh, how blessed prayer was, then! Then we did really talk with God! Then we did not need to whip ourselves up to our closets to pray—we only wished we could stay upon our knees all day long and talk our hearts out to God!

We little cared, then, whether the place of worship was hot or cold. Whether we were seated or standing. We cared only for the Gospel! We would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon! It did not matter what was the style of the preacher—if he were eloquent, we did not hear him for his eloquence—we loved the Gospel too well to care about oratory! If a plain-speaking man told us of our Master and His love, we liked it all the better for his plainness of speech so long as we could but see our Master! To hear anyone talk of a precious Christ, and of pardon bought with blood, and of full and free salvation was Heaven to us!

If, in those days we had to suffer anything for Jesus, we only regretted we could not suffer more. We did not run out of the way of reproaches in those days, but were almost prepared to court them for His dear name’s sake—

*“What peaceful hours we then enjoyed,*

**How sweet their memory still** !”  
That was the early rain. The seed had just been sown and the Master, to make it take deeper root and spring up faster into the green blade, gave us the sacred shower of His loving Presence. There was much tender wisdom in this gentleness, for the new-born soul is very weak at first. Looking back to those days, we can clearly see what helpless infants we were. In knowledge we were very babes to whom many things could not be revealed because we could not have borne them. We fancied that our souls’ battle was over, that we were out of gunshot of the devil and doubt— whereas the fight was just commencing—a fight never to cease until death and Heaven reveal the victory!

The Lord was pleased to restrain the enemy from tormenting us because we could not, then, have fought it out with him. The great and good Lord tempered the wind to the shorn lamb. He covered the little bird with His feathers. He carried the baby in His arms. He watered the tender plants and set a hedge about them in love. The Great Farmer knew how much our tender and week roots required the dew of Heaven and therefore He liberally provided it. Moreover, many of us, before our conversion, passed through fire and through water—conviction of sin frowned on us by the year together. We laid in Doubting Castle and were beaten with the crab tree club of despair, fearing lest we were reprobates and past hope.

It was tenderly wise on our Lord’s part that when we came out at last and rejoiced in a crucified Savior, we should enjoy a time of repose—for our bones were broken, our moisture was turned into the drought of summer and we were ready to die. It was kindness on God’s part when our terrors had aggravated our weakness and depression of spirits, that He should give us a time of great delight, when the love of our espousals would make us forget our fears. Besides, our Master at that time gave us the early rain, as it were, to give our young plant a start in commencing our heavenly growth—a growth to which we might look back in later years. How often have we been refreshed, since then, in our times of sorrow, by remembering the months past when the candle of the Lord shone round about our head!

Those early, happy days! Could it have all been a delusion? Was it all a mistake? What? When our sinful companions were all given up? When our darling lusts were all torn away? When the right eye was plucked out and the right arm cut off? Could it all have been a sham? When the head was leaned upon the Savior’s bosom and the promise was so sweet—was it all excitement? No, our memory says it was not so—it was real, it was true! And He that gave us thus the foretaste, certainly has not changed—

*“His love in times past forbids us to think,*

*He’ll leave us at last in trouble to sink.”*  
I do not give much for the faith which lives on past experiences, for the precious faith of God’s elect feeds on fresh manna day by day. But, at the same time, there are dark and dreary moments when past experience serves us well.

Beloved Christian, if you are now this day in the dark, pluck a torch from the altars of yesterday with which to kindle the lights of today! The faithful Promiser was with you, then. You had His love to cheer you, then—go to Him yet once more and you shall receive the latter rain of renewed Grace from Him who gives Grace upon Grace! Before I leave this point, let me say one word of encouragement to any who are seeking my Lord and Master. I trust some of you are doing so. You have long been hearers of the Word of God, but you are not converted yet, and perhaps you are sad because, after much seeking, you have not been found by Him.

Let me assure you, when you have found the Lord, your waiting will be richly recompensed. I would have lingered at His door for 80 years if He would for a recompense give me but the one kiss of His lips. I would gladly lie at His pool of mercy, yes, a whole natural life, if but at the last my crimson sins might be washed away and my soul be made whiter than snow. “Oh, but,” you say, “if He comes not soon, I shall die of despair before His coming!” But He will bring such cordials to you, such wines on the lees well refined, that your despair shall take wings and fly away! And instead of the black raven of doubt, you shall receive the dove of consolation bringing the olive branch of peace in her mouth!

Hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance. If you would have the early rain soon, do not wait any longer. Obey the Gospel precept at once, for simple obedience will bring the early rain at once. That precept is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Oh, the hundreds of times I have proclaimed this to you and others have proclaimed it in your ears, also, and yet you will not yield your hearts to it! You continue, still, to say, “I feel,” or, “I do not feel,” “I am,” or “I am not.” You have 50,000 excuses why you should not comply with the Master’s message. No comfort, however, can be yours, till, sink or swim, you cast yourself on Christ! If you will but trust Christ to save you, you shall be saved at this very hour!

Now shall the burden of your guilt fall from your shoulders and your peace be like a river and you shall go on your way rejoicing that you are saved! O why will you not obey this? May the Holy Spirit constrain you! May you now do what I am sure, if God has chosen you, you will have to do before long, namely, have done with yourself and close in with Christ! Have done with feelings or need of feelings! Have done with your works, bad or good! Have done with self and all that grows out of self and come to that Cross where hangs a bleeding Savior, the world’s only hope! O that you could say, “My hope is there alone”! It shall be well with you if you will now cast yourself upon Him. You shall then have a happy season, such as only Believers know.

It is very usual in the life of Grace for the soul to receive in later years, a second very remarkable visitation of the Holy Spirit, which may be compared to the latter rain. As I told you, the latter rain was sent to plump out the wheat and make it full and mature, ready for the after-harvest ripening. So there is a time of special Grace granted to saints, to prepare them for Heaven, to make them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. To some, this is given in the form of what has very commonly, and I think correctly, been called a second conversion. “When you are converted, strengthen your Brethren,” was Christ’s remark to Peter, who was even then a converted man.

My Brothers and Sisters, there is a point in Grace as much above the ordinary Christian, as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling. Believe me, the life of Divine Grace is no dead level, it is not a low country, a vast flat. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians who live in the valleys, like the poor Swiss of the Valais, who live in the midst of the mist, where fever has its lair and the frame is languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are forever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ and tossed to and fro. But there are other Believers, who, by God’s Grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion. Their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft.

They are like the strong mountaineer who has trod the virgin snow, who has breathed the fresh, free air of the Alpine regions and therefore his sinews are braced and limbs are vigorous. These are they who do great exploits, being mighty men, men of renown. The saints who dwell on high in the clear atmosphere of faith are rejoicing Christians, holy and devout men, doing service for the Master all over the world and everywhere conquerors through Him that loved them. And I desire—oh, how earnestly I desire you to be such men and women! My craving is that all of you, my Beloved, who have been watered by the former rain, may also be refreshed by a more than ordinary latter rain which shall make you more than ordinary Christians—bringing you beyond the blade period and the ear period—into the full corn in the ear!

The great policy of Satan of late with the Church has been this—not so much to attack her with open infidelity—for really all the infidelity there is in England does not materially affect Churches worthy of the name except to an almost infinitesimal extent. There is a deal more made of skepticism in certain quarters than there is any need for. Skeptics seldom get among our Christian people. At least I do not meet with them in my enquiries, nor do I see them associating with Christians of my association. The plan Satan seems to have adopted is not that of attacking our doctrine, but that of preventing, as far as he can, our raising in our midst a race of eminent and advanced Christians. Pharaoh said, “Destroy the male children.” Satan seems to say, “Stop the male children from fulfilling their growth.”

We are well enough in our way after the common run of manhood. We believe in Christ. We love Him and contribute something to His cause, We preach and we pray. We are a respectable sort of people, but we do not grow to maturity or attain “unto the first three.” We have in this age but few giants in Divine Grace who rise head and shoulders above the common height—men to lead us on in deeds of heroism and efforts of unstaggering faith. After all, the work of the Christian Church, though it must be done by all, often owes its being done to single individuals of remarkable Grace. In this degenerate time we are very much in need of what Israel had in the days of the Judges—there were raised up among them leaders who judged Israel and were the terror of her foes.

Oh, if the Church, today, had in her midst a race of heroes! If only our missionary operations could be attended with the holy chivalry which marked the Church in the early days! If only we could have back Apostles and martyrs, or even such as Carey and Judson, what wonders would be worked! We have fallen upon a race of dwarfs and are content, to a great extent, to have it so. There was once in London a club of small men whose qualification for membership lay in their not exceeding five feet in height. These dwarfs held, or pretended to hold, the opinion that they were nearer the perfection of manhood than others, for they argued that primeval men had been far more gigantic than the present race and consequently the way of progress was to grow less and less, and that the human race, as it perfected itself, would become as diminutive as themselves.

Such a club of Christians might be established in London and without any difficulty might attain to an enormously numerous membership—for the notion is common that our dwarfish Christianity is, after all, the standard! And many even imagine that nobler Christians are enthusiasts, fanatical and hot-blooded—while we are cool because we are wise and indifferent—because we are intelligent. We must get rid of all this nonsense! The fact is, the most of us are vastly inferior to the early Christians, who, as I take it, were persecuted because they were thoroughly Christians and we are not persecuted because we hardly are Christians at all! They were so earnest in the propagation of the Redeemer’s kingdom, that they became the nuisance of the age in which they lived.

They would not let errors alone. They had not conceived the opinion that they were to hold the Truth of God and leave other people to hold error without trying to intrude their opinions upon them. They preached Christ Jesus right and left and delivered their testimony against every sin. They denounced the idols and cried out against superstition until the world, fearful of being turned upside down, demanded of them, “Is that what you mean? Then we will burn you, lock you up in prison and exterminate you.” To which the Church replied, “We will accept the challenge and will not depart from our resolve to conquer the world for Christ.” At last the fire in the Christian Church burned out the persecution of an ungodly world.

But we are so gentle and quiet. We do not use strong language about other people’s opinions, but let men go to Hell out of charity to them! We are not at all fanatical and for all we do to disturb him, the old manslayer has a very comfortable time of it! We would not wish to save any sinner who does not particularly wish to be saved! If persons choose to attend our ministry, we shall be pleased to say a word to them in a mild way, but we do not speak with tears streaming down our cheeks, groaning and agonizing with God for them. Neither would we thrust our opinions upon them, though we know they are being lost for lack of the knowledge of Christ crucified! May God send the latter rain to His Church—to me and to you—and may we begin to bestir ourselves and seek after the highest form of earnestness for the kingdom of King Jesus! May the days come in which we shall no longer have to complain that we sow much and reap little, but may we receive a hundredfold reward through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Very feebly, but still with the most earnest intentions, I have endeavored to excite in you an ambition after a higher life and the setting up of a higher standard. Seek to love your Master more. Pray to be filled with His Spirit. Do not be mere trades people who are Christian, but be Christians everywhere—not plated goods, but solid metal. Be servants of Jesus Christ, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do. Serve Him with both your hands and all your heart. Get your manhood strung to the utmost tension and throw its whole force into your Redeemer’s service. Live while you live! Drivel not away your existence upon baser ends, but count the Glory of Christ to be the only object worthy of your manhood’s strength— the spread of the Truth of God the only pursuit worthy of your mental powers—spend and be spent in your Master’s service.

I must draw to a close by noticing that the text speaks of a third thing. There is the former rain and the latter rain and then he says, “He reserves for us the appointed weeks of harvest.” Yes, if we shall get this latter rain—and may we have it!—it will then be time to be looking forward to our harvest. Consider well that the harvest begins in the field, though it ends in the garner. Going to Heaven begins upon earth, and as the text tell us of weeks, so may I add that going to Glory is often a long work. I believe God takes months and years in getting in His sheaves. We call it dying, do we not? But it is not dying I am talking of now—that is but the work of an instant—I refer to going Home, and that is a longer process.

When the sickle cuts away the wheat from the earth, the harvest is begun. The grain is not garnered yet, but still that is separated from earth and that is half the harvest. Even so in the process of getting a soul to Heaven, it must be detached from the earth where it grew. The sickle has cut many of our earth-bonds already for some of us and no doubt the gash at the time has been very deep and sharp—but how could we, as God’s wheat, be carried into the garner without first of all being separated from the earth? How could our immortal spirits enter into the everlasting rest without first of all being dissociated from everything in which we tried to find a rest below? It is a sign of getting near to Heaven when we gradually bid adieu to those things that we hoped at one time to dwell with forever—when the almost idolized comforts are readily resigned—when absorbing aims and engrossing objects are thrust back into the rear ranks and the things eternal fill the foreground of our souls.

It is a glorious thing to become indifferent to the visible and only earnest about the invisible. We are like a balloon while it is tied to the earth— it cannot mount. Even so our ascent to Heaven is delayed by a thousand detaining cords and bands and the process of setting us free is cutting the ropes one by one. Some of you are conscious of getting older and weaker— God is evidently loosening the ties of earth. You have already more relatives in Heaven than on earth. If you count over the names of dear companions on earth, they make but a slender list. But count over the names of dear saints which have gone before and with whom you have had fellowship, and then the roll is long. Be thankful that you have so many ties upward and so few bonds to earth! Prepare to mount to the majority! The wheat may well rejoice for the sharp cuts of the sickle because it is the sign of going home to the garner.

After the wheat is cut it stands in shocks, shocks of corn fully ripe, not growing out of the earth, but merely standing on it. The shock is quite disconnected from the soil. How happy is the state of a Christian when he is in the world but is not linked to it! His ripeness drops here and there a grain into the soil, for he is still ready to do good, but he has no longer any vital connection with anything below. He is waiting to be in Heaven. Here comes the wagon. The corn is put into it and with shouts it is carried home. Soon will our heavenly Father send His chariot and we who have been ripened by the latter rain and separated from earth by His Spirit’s sickle, shall be borne in the chariot of triumph amidst the shouts of the angels and the songs of thrice blessed spirits, up to the eternal garner!

Oh, how it overcomes one to think that we shall be there forever! Here we are like the wheat that is under the snow, or bitten by the frost, or nibbled by the sheep—subject to blight and blast and mildew—but up there we shall be as the wheat in the garner beyond the reach of danger! We shall be our Lord and Master’s everlasting portion, the dear reward of all His sufferings and griefs which were His plowings and sowings for us. Shall it always be so? Shall our heads always wear the starry crown? Shall our hands always strike celestial harp strings? Oh, yes! It must be so, for we have believed in Jesus and faith in Jesus secures a portion among the blessed!

Pluck up courage, you faint-hearted ones! And gathering courage, gather also strong desire! Pray for your own maturity and perfection. Seek this day, in earnest, secret prayer the latter rain because you know it shall have the best results. It shall not be wasted drops, but it shall fall to be repaid by you in increasing faith, love and holiness and heavenliness— that Christ’s wheat, when gathered in, may be worthy of the labor He has spent upon it. May God bless you, dear Brothers and Sisters and lead you on from strength to strength.

And if any of you, my Hearers, are not Christians, may the Lord, the Spirit, lead you to the Cross of Jesus Christ, and His shall be the Glory.  
*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Colossians 3.*  
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A BLAST OF THE TRUMPET AGAINST FALSE PEACE  
NO. 301

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 26, 1860, **BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”  
Jeremiah 6:14.**

MINISTERS are fearfully guilty if they intentionally build up men in a false peace. I cannot imagine any man more greatly guilty of blood than he who plays jackal to the lion of Hell by pandering to the depraved tastes of vain, rebellious man. The physician who should pamper a man in his disease—who should feed his cancer, or inject continual poison into the system—while at the same time he promised sound health and long life—such a physician would not be one half so hideous a monster of cruelty as the professed minister of Christ who should bid his people take comfort, when, instead thereof, he ought to be crying, “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion—be troubled, you careless ones.”

The work of the ministry is no child’s play. It is a labor which might fill an angel’s hands—did fill the Savior’s heart. Much prayer we need that we may be kept honest and much grace that we may not mislead the souls whom we are bound to guide. The pilot who should pretend to steer a ship toward its proper haven, but who should meanwhile occupy himself below with boring holes in her keel that she might sink, would not be a worse traitor than the man who takes the helm of a Church—professes to be steering it towards Christ—while all the while ruining it by diluting the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, concealing unpalatable truths and lulling men into security with soft and flattering words.

We might sooner pardon the assassin who stretches forth his hand under the guise of friendship and then stabs us to the heart, than we could forgive the man who comes towards us with smooth words, telling us that he is God’s ambassador, but all the while foments rebellion in ours hearts and pacifies us while we are living in revolt against the majesty of Heaven. In the great day when Jehovah shall launch His thunderbolts, methinks He will reserve one more dread and terrible than the rest for some arch-traitor to the Cross of Christ, who has not only destroyed himself, but led others into Hell.

The motive with these false prophets is an abominable one. Jeremiah tells us it was an evil covetousness. They preached smooth things because the people would have it so, because they thus brought grist to their own mill and glory to their own names. Their design was abominable and without doubt their end shall be desperate—cast away with the refuse of mankind. These who professed to be the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, shall be esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.

But, my dear Hearers, it is a lamentable fact that without any hireling shepherd to cry, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace,” men will cry that for themselves. They need not the siren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance. We are too ready to say, “I am rich and increased in goods,” when at the same time we are naked and poor and miserable. Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them—hush forever every false and tempting voice—they will themselves, impelled by their own pride, run to an evil conceit and make themselves at ease, though God Himself is in arms against them.

My solemn business this morning shall be, and O may God help me in it, drag forth to the light some of you who have been pacifying your own consciences and have been crying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” It is no uncommon thing with me to meet with people who say, “Well, I am happy enough. My conscience never troubles me. I believe if I were to die I should go to Heaven as well as anybody else.” I know that those men are living in the commission of glaring acts of sin and I am sure they could not prove their innocence even before the bar of man. Yet will these men look you in the face and tell you that they are not at all disturbed at the prospect of dying. They laugh at death as though it were but a scene in a comedy and joke at the grave as if they could leap in and out of it at their pleasure.

Well, gentlemen, I will take you at your word, though I don’t believe you. I will suppose you have this peace and I will endeavor to account for it on certain grounds which may render it somewhat more difficult for you to remain in it. I do pray that God the Holy Spirit may destroy these foundations and pull up these bulwarks of yours and make you feel uneasy in your consciences and troubled in your minds. For unease is the road to ease and disquiet in the soul is the road to the true quiet. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace and happy shall I be if I can hurl a fire-brand into your hearts this morning. Or, like Samson, to turn at least some little foxes loose into the standing corn of your selfconceit and set your heart in a blaze.

1. The first person I shall have to deal with this morning, is the man who has peace because he spends his life in a ceaseless round of gaiety and frivolity. You have scarcely come from one place of amusement before you enter another. You are always planning some excursion and dividing the day between one entertainment and another. You know that you are never happy except you are in what you call gay society, where the frivolous conversation will prevent you from hearing the voice of your conscience. In the morning you will be asleep while God’s sun is shining, but at night you will be spending precious time in some place of foolish, if not lascivious mirth.

Like Saul, the deserted king, you have an unquiet spirit and therefore you call for music and it has its charms, doubtless, charms not only to soothe the stubborn breast, but to still a stubborn conscience. But while its notes are carrying you upwards towards Heaven, in some grand composition of a master author, I beseech you never to forget that your sins are carrying you down to Hell. If the harp should fail you, then you call for Nabal’s feast. There shall be a sheep shearing and you shall be drunk with wine, until your souls becomes as stolid as a stone. And then you wonder that you have peace.

What wonder! Surely any man would have peace when his heart has become as hard as a stone. What weathers shall it feel? What tempests shall move the stubborn heart of granite rock? You sear your consciences and then marvel that they feel not. Perhaps, too, when both wine and the viol fail you, you will call for the dance and the daughter of Herodias shall please Herod, even though John the Baptist’s head should pay its deadly price. Well, well, if you go from one of these scenes to another, I am at no loss to solve the riddle that there should be with you, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

And now sit for your portraits and I will paint you to the life. A company of idolaters are gathered together around an hideous image. There sits the blood-delighting Moloch. He is heated hot. The fire blazes in his brazen center and a child is about to be put into his arms to be burnt to ashes. The mother and father are present when the offspring of their own loins is to be immolated. The little one shrieks with terror. Its little body begins to consume in this desperate heat. Will not the parents hear the cry of their own flesh and listen to the wailings of the fruit of their own hearts?  
Ah, no, the priests of Moloch will prevent the appeal of nature! Sounding their drums and blowing their trumpets with all their might they drown the cries of this poor immolated victim. It is what you are doing! Your soul is the victim to Satan! It is being destroyed now. And if you would but listen to its cries—if you would give yourself a little quiet—you might hear your poor soul shrieking, “Oh, do not destroy me! Put not away from me the hope of mercy—damn me not—send me not down to Hell.” These are shrieks that might penetrate your spirit and startle you into wisdom. But no, you beat your drums and sound your trumpets and you have your dance and your merriment, that the noise of your poor soul may be hushed.

Ah, Sirs! There will be a day when you will have to hear your spirit speak. When your cups are empty and not a drop of water can be given to your burning tongue—when your music has ceased and the doleful “Miserere” of wailing souls shall be your Black Sanctus—when you shall be launched forever into a place where merriment and mirth are strangers—then you will hear the cries of your soul, but hear too late. Then shall each voice be as a dagger sticking in your souls. When your conscience shall hear, “Remember, you had your day of mercy. You had your day of the proclamation of the Gospel, but you did reject it.” Then you will wish, but wish in vain, for thunders to come and drown that still small voice, which shall be more terrible in the ears than even the rumbling of the earthquake or the fury of the storm.

Oh that you would be wise and not fritter away your souls for gaiety. Poor Sirs, poor Sirs! There are nobler things for souls to do than to kill time—a soul immortal spending all its powers on these frivolities. Well might Young say of it, it resembles oceans into tempests tossed, to waft a feather or to drown a fly. These things are beneath you. They do no honor to you. Oh that you would begin to live! What a price you are paying for your mirth—eternal torment for an hour of jollity—separation from God for a brief day or two of sin! Be wise, men, I beseech you. Open your eyes and look about you. Be not forever madmen. Dance not forever on this precipice, but stop and think. O Spirit of the loving God! Stop the frivolous and dart a burning thought into his soul that will not let him rest until he has tasted the solid joy, the lasting pleasure which none but Zion’s children know.

2. Well, now I turn to another class of men. Finding that amusement at last has lost all its zest. Having drained the cup of worldly pleasure till they find first satiety and then disgust lying at the bottom, they want some stronger stimulus. And Satan who has drugged them once, has stronger opiates than mere merriment for the man who chooses to use them. If the frivolity of this world will not suffice to rock a soul to sleep, he has a yet more hellish cradle for the soul. He will take you up to his own breast and bid you suck from there his own devilish and Satanic nature that you may then be still and calm. I mean that he will lead you to imbibe infidel notions and when this is fully accomplished, you can have “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

When I hear a man saying, “Well, I am peaceful enough, because I am not fool enough to believe in the existence of a God, or in a world to come. I cannot imagine that this old story book of yours—this Bible—is true.” I feel two thoughts within my soul—first, a disgust of the man for his dishonesty—and secondly, a pity for the sad disquietude that needs such dishonesty to cover it. Do not suspect the man of being honest. There are two sorts of infidels. One sort are such fools that they know they never could distinguish themselves by anything that was right—so they try and get a little fictitious glory by pretending to believe and defend a lie.

There are another set of men who are unquiet in their consciences. They do not like the Bible because it does not like them. It will not let them be comfortable in their sins, it is such an uneasy book to them. They did put their heads upon it once, but it was like a pillow stuffed with thorns, so they have one with it and they would be very glad if they could actually prove it to be untrue, which they know they cannot. I say then, I at once despise his falsehood and pity the uneasiness of his conscience that could drive him to such a paltry shift as this to cover his terrors from the eyes of others. The more the man brags, the more I feel he does not mean it. The louder he is in his blasphemies, the more he curses. The better he argues, the more sure I am that he is not sincere, except in his desire to stifle the groans of his uneasy spirit.

Ah, you remind me with your fine arguments, of the Chinese soldiers. When they go out to battle, they carry on their arm a shield with hideous monsters depicted upon it and making the loudest noise they can, they imagine their opponents will run away instantly, alarmed by these amazing manifestations. And so you arm yourself with blasphemies and come out to attack God’s ministers and think we will run away because of your sophistries. No, we smile upon them contemptuously. Once, we are told, the Chinese hung across their harbor, when the English were coming to attack them, a string of tigers’ heads. They said—“These barbarians will never dare to pass these ferocious heads.” So do these men hang a string of old, worn-out blasphemies and impieties and then they imagine that conscience will not be able to attack them and that God Himself will let them live at peace.

Ah Sir, you shall find the red-hot bullets of Divine justice too many and too terrible for your sophisms. When you shall fall under the arm of the Eternal God, vain will be your logic then. Dashed to shivers, you will believe in the Omnipotence, when you are made to feel it. You will know His justice when it is too late to escape from its terror. Oh, be wise, cast away these daydreams. Cease to shut your soul out of Heaven. Be wise, turn unto God whom you have abused. For “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man.” He is ready to forgive you, ready to receive you and Christ is ready to wash your blasphemy away. Now, today, if grace enables you, you may be an accepted child of that God whom you have hated and pressed to the bosom of that Jehovah whose very existence you have dared to deny.

God bless these words to you—if they have seemed hard, they were only meant to come home to your conscience. An affectionate heart has led me to utter them. Oh, do not do this evil thing. Suck not in these infidel notions. Destroy not your soul for the sake of seeming to be wise. Stop not the voice of your conscience by those arguments which you know in your inmost soul are not true—which you only repeat in order to keep up a semblance of consistency.

3. I shall come now to a third class of men. These are people not particularly addicted to gaiety, nor especially given to infidel notions. But they are a sort of folk who are careless and determined to let well enough alone. Their motto is, “Let tomorrow take care of the things of itself. Let us live while we live. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” If their conscience cries out at all, they bid it lie still. When the minister disturbs them, instead of listening to what he says and so being brought into a state of real peace, they cry, “Hush! Be quiet! There is time enough yet. I will not disturb myself with these childish fears—be still, Sir and lie down.”

Ah, and you have been doing this for years, have you? Whenever you have heard an earnest, powerful sermon, you have gone home and labored to get rid of it. A tear has stolen down your cheek now and then and you have despised yourself for it. “Oh,” you say, “it is not manly for me to think of these things.” There have been a few twitches at times which you could not help, but the moment after you have your heart like a flint, impenetrably hard and stony. Well Sir, I will give you a picture of yourself. There is a foolish farmer yonder in his house. It is the dead of night—the burglars are breaking in—men who will neither spare his life nor his treasure. There is a dog down below chained in the yard, it barks and barks and howls again. “I cannot be quiet,” says the farmer, “my dog makes too much noise.”

Another howl and yet another yell. He creeps out of bed, gets his loaded gun, opens the window, fires it and kills the dog. “Ah, it is all right now,” he mutters. He goes to bed, lies down and quietly rests. “No hurt will come,” he says, “now. For I have made that dog quiet.” Ah, but would that he could have listened to the warning of the faithful creature. Before long he shall feel the knife and rue his fatal folly. So you, when God is warning you—when your faithful conscience is doing its best to save you—you try to kill your only friend, while Satan and Sin are stealing up to the bedside of your slothfulness and are ready to destroy your soul forever and ever.

What should we think of the sailor at sea who should seek to kill all the stormy petrels, that there might be an end to all storms? Would you not say, “Poor foolish man! Why those birds are sent by a kind Providence to warn him of the tempest. Why needs he injure them? They cause not the tumult. It is the raging sea.” So it is not your conscience that is guilty of the disturbance in your heart—it is your sin—and your conscience, acting true to its character, as God’s index in your soul, tells you that all is wrong. Would that you would arise and take the warning and fly to Jesus while the hour of mercy lasts.

To use another picture. A man sees his enemy before him. By the light of his candle he marks his insidious approach. His enemy looks fierce and black upon him and is seeking his life. The man puts out the candle and then exclaims, “I am now quite at peace.” This is what you do. Conscience is the candle of the Lord, it shows you your enemy. You try to put it out by saying, “Peace, peace.” Put the enemy out, Sir! Put the enemy out! God give you grace to thrust sin out! Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you to thrust your lusts out of doors! Then let the candle burn. And the more brightly its light shall shine, the better for your soul, now and hereafter.

Oh, up you sleepers, you gaggers of conscience, what is wrong with you? Why are you sleeping when death is hastening on, when eternity is near, when the Great White Throne is even now coming on the clouds of Heaven when the trumpet of the resurrection is now being set to the mouth of the archangel—why do you sleep? Why will you slumber? Oh that the voice of Jehovah might speak and make you wake, that you may escape from the wrath to come!

4. A fourth set of men have a kind of peace that is the result of resolutions which they have made, but which they will never carry into effect. “Oh,” says one, “I am quite easy enough in my mind, for when I have got a little more money I shall retire from business and then I shall begin to think about eternal things.” Ah, but I would remind you that when you were an apprentice, you said you would reform when you became a journeyman. And when you were a journeyman, you used to say you would give good heed when you became a master.

But up to now these bills have never been paid when they became due. They have, every one of them, been dishonored as yet and take my word for it, this new accommodation bill will be dishonored, too. So you think to stifle conscience by what you will do by-and-by. Ah, but will that by-and-by ever come? And should it come, what reason is there to expect that you will then be any more ready than you are now? Hearts grow harder, sin grows stronger, vice becomes more deeply rooted by the lapse of years. You will find it certainly no easier to turn to God then than now. Now it is impossible for you, apart from Divine Grace. Then it shall be quite as impossible and if I might say so, there shall be more difficulties in the way then than even there are now.

What do you think is the value of these promises which you have made in the court of Heaven? Will God take your word again and again and again, when you have broken it just as often as you have given it? Not long ago you were lying on your bed with fever and if you lived you vowed you would repent. Have you repented? And yet you are fool enough to believe that you will repent by-and-by and on the strength of this promise, which is not worth a single straw, you are crying to yourself “peace, peace when there is no peace.”

A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the countryman in Aesop’s fable. He sat down by a flowing river, saying, “If this steam continues to flow as it does now for a little while it will empty itself and then I shall walk over dry shod.” Ah, but the stream was just as deep when he had waited day after day as it was before. And so shall it be with you. You remind me by your procrastination of the ludicrous position of a man who should sit upon a lofty branch of some tree with a saw in his hand, cutting away the branch on which he was sitting. This is what you are doing. Your delay is cutting away your branch of life. No doubt you intend to cover the well when the child is drowned and to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. These birds in the hand you are losing, because their may be some better hour, some better bird in the bush. You are thus getting a little quiet, but oh, at what a fatal cost!

Paul was troublesome to you and so you played the part of Felix and said, “Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Conscience was unquiet, so you stopped his mouth with this sop for Cerberus. And you have gone to your bed with this lie under your pillow, with this falsehood in your right hand—that you will be better by-and-by. Ah, Sir, let me tell you once and for all—you live to grow worse and worse. While you are procrastinating, time is not staying, nor is Satan resting. While you are saying, “Let things abide,” things are not abiding, but they are hastening on. You are ripening for the dread harvest. The sickle is being sharpened that shall cut you down, and the fire is even now blazing into which your spirit shall be cast forever.

5. Now I turn to another class of men, in order that I may miss none here who are saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” I do not doubt but that many of the people of London enjoy peace in their hearts because they are ignorant of the things of God. It would positively alarm many of our sober orthodox Christians if they could once have an idea of the utter ignorance of spiritual things that reigns throughout this land. Some of us, when moving about here and there, in all classes of society, have often been led to remark, that there is less known of the truths of religion than of any science, however mysterious that science may be.

Take as a lamentable instance, the ordinary effusions of the secular press and who can avoid remarking the ignorance they manifest as to true religion. Let the papers speak on politics, it is a matter they understand and their ability is astonishing. But once let them touch religion and our Sunday-School children could convict them of absolute ignorance. The statements they put forth are so crude, so remote from the fact, that we are led to imagine that the presentation of a four-penny testament to special correspondents should be one of the first efforts of our societies for spreading the Gospel among the heathen.

As to theology, some of our great writers seem to be as little versed in it as a horse or a cow. Go among all ranks and classes of men and since the day we gave up our catechism and old Dr. Watts’ and the Assemblies ceased to be used, people have not a clear idea of what is meant by the Gospel of Christ. I have frequently heard it asserted, by those who have judged the modern pulpit without severity, that if a man attended a course of thirteen lectures on geology, he would get a pretty clear idea of the system. But you must hear not merely thirteen sermons, but thirteen hundred sermons and you would not have a clear idea of the system of divinity that was meant to be taught. I believe that to a large extent that has been true.

But a great change which has passed over the pulpit within the last two years and is a cause of the greatest thankfulness to God and we believe will be a blessing to the Church and to the world at large is that ministers preach more boldly than they did. There is more evangelical doctrine, I believe, preached in London, on any one Sunday, than there was in a month before. But still there is in many quarters a profound ignorance as to the things of Christ.

Our old Puritans—what masters they were in divinity! They knew the difference between the old covenant and the new. They did not mingle works and grace together. They penetrated into the recesses of Gospel Truth. They were always studying the Scriptures and meditating on them both by day and night. They shed a light upon the villages in which they preached, until you might have found in those days as profound theologians working upon stone heaps, as you can find in colleges and universities now-a-days. How few discern the spirituality of the Law, the glory of the atonement, the perfection of justification, the beauty of sanctification and the preciousness of real union to Christ. I do not marvel that we have a multitude of men who are mere professors and mere formalists, who are nevertheless quite as comfortable in their minds as though they were possessors of vital godliness and really walked in the true fear of God.

There was not—I speak of things that were—there was not in the pulpit a little while ago, a discernment between things that differ. There was not a separating between the precious and the vile. The grand cardinal points of the Gospel, if not denied, were ignored. We began to think that the thinkers would overwhelm the Believers, that intellectuality and philosophy would overthrow the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. It is not so now. I do, therefore, hope, that as the Gospel shall be more fully preached, that as the words of Jesus shall be better understood, that as the things of the kingdom of Heaven shall be set in a clearer light, this stronghold of a false peace—namely, ignorance of Gospel doctrines—shall be battered to its foundations and the foundation stones themselves dug up and cast away forever.

If you have a peace that is grounded on ignorance, get rid of it. Ignorance is a thing, remember, that you are accountable for. You are not accountable for the exercise of your judgment to man, but you are accountable for it to God. There is no such thing as toleration of your sentiments with Jehovah. I have no right to judge you. I am your fellow creature. No State has any right to dictate what religion I will believe. But nevertheless, there is a true Gospel and there are thousands of false ones. God has given you judgment—use it. Search the Scriptures and remember that if you neglect the Word of God and remain ignorant, your sins of ignorance will be sins of willful ignorance and therefore ignorance shall be no excuse. There is the Bible, you have it in your houses. You can read it. God the Holy Spirit will instruct you in its meaning. And if you remain ignorant, charge it no more on the minister. Charge it on no one but yourself and make it no cloak for your sin.

6. I now pass to another and more dangerous form of this false peace. I may have missed some of you probably. I shall come closer home to you now. Alas, alas, let us weep and weep again, for there is a plague among us. There are members of our Churches who are saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” It is the part of candor to admit that with all the exercise of judgment and the most rigorous discipline, we cannot keep our Churches free from hypocrisy.

I have had to hear, to the very breaking of my heart, stories of men and women who have believed the doctrines of election and other truths of the Gospel and have made them a sort of cover for the most frightful iniquity. I could, without uncharitableness, point to Churches that are hotbeds of hypocrisy, because men are taught that it is the belief of a certain set of sentiments that will save them and not warned that this is all in vain without a real living faith in Christ. The preacher does as good as say, if not in so many words—“If you are orthodox, if you believe what I tell you, you are saved. If you for a moment turn aside from that line which I have chalked out for you, I cannot be accountable for you. But if you will give me your whole heart and believe precisely what I say, whether it is Scripture or not, then you are a saved man.”

And we know persons of that cast who can have their shop open on a Sunday and then go to enjoy what they call a savory sermon in the evening. Men who mix up with drunkards and yet say they are God’s elect. Men who live as others live and yet they come before you and with brazen impudence tell you that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is true they have had a deep experience, as they say. God save us from such a muddy experience as that! They have had, they say, a great manifestation of the depravity of their hearts, but still they are the precious children of God. Precious, indeed! Dear at any price that any man should give for them. If they are precious to anybody, I am sure I wish they were taken to their own place, for they are not precious to anyone here below and they are not of the slightest use to either religion or morality.

Oh, I do not know of a more thoroughly damnable delusion than for a man to get a conceit into his head that he is a child of God and yet live in sin—to talk to you about grace, while he is living in sovereign lust—to stand up and make himself the arbiter of what is the Truth of God, while he himself despises the precept of God and tramples the commandment under foot. Hard was Paul on such men in his time—when he said their damnation is just—he spoke a most righteous sentence. Surely, the devil gloats over men of this kind. A Calvinist I am, but John Calvin never taught immoral doctrine. A more consistent expositor of Scripture than that great reformer I believe never lived, but his doctrine is not the Hyper-Calvinism of these modern times—it is as diametrically opposed to it as light to darkness.

There is not a word in any of his writings that would justify any man in going on in iniquity that grace might abound. If you do not hate sin, it is all the same what doctrine you may believe. You may go to perdition as rapidly with High-Calvinistic doctrine as with any other. You are just as surely destroyed in an orthodox as in a heterodox Church unless your life manifests that you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

7. I have but one other class of persons to describe and then I shall have done when I have addressed a few solemn sentences of warning to you all. There remains yet another class of beings who surpass all these in their utter indifference to everything that might arouse them. They are men that are given up by God, justly given up. They have passed the boundary of His longsuffering. He has said, “My Spirit shall no more strive with them.” “Ephraim is given unto idols, let him alone.” As a judicial punishment for their impenitence, God has given them up to pride and hardness of heart. I will not say that there is such an one here—God grant there may not be such a man—but there have been such to whom there has been given a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned because they received not the Gospel of Christ.

Brought up by a holy mother, they perhaps learned the Gospel when they were almost in the cradle. Trained by the example of a holy father, they went aside to wantonness and brought a mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Nevertheless, conscience still pursued them. At the funeral of that mother, the young man paused and asked himself the question, “Have I killed her! Have I brought her here?” He went home— was sober for a day, was tempted by a companion and became as bad as ever. Another warning came. He was seized with sickness. He lay in the jaws of the grave. He woke up—he lived and lived as vilely as he had lived before. Often did he hear his mother’s voice—though she was in the grave, she being dead yet spoke to him.

He put the Bible on the top shelf—hid it away. Still, sometimes a text he had learned in infancy used to thrust itself in on his mind. One night as he was going to some haunt of vice, something arrested him, conscience seemed to say to him, “Remember all that you have learned of her.” He stood still, bit his lip a moment, considered, weighed chances. At last he said, “I will go if I am lost.” He went and from that moment it has often been a source of wonder to him that he has never thought of his mother nor of the Bible. He hears a sermon, which he does not heed. It is all the same to him. He is never troubled. He says, “I don’t know how it is. I am glad of it. I am as easy now and as frolicsome as ever a young fellow could be.”

Oh, I tremble to explain this quietude. But it may be—God grant I may not be a true prophet—it may be that God has thrown the reins on your neck and said, “Let him go, let him go, I will warn him no more. He shall be filled with his own ways. He shall go the length of his chain. I will never stop him.” Mark—if it is so, your damnation is as sure as if you were in the pit now. O may God grant that I may not have such a hearer here. But that dread thought may well make you search yourselves, for it may be so. There is that possibility. Search and look and God grant that you may no more say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

Now for these last few solemn words. I will not be guilty this morning of speaking any smooth falsehoods to you. I would be faithful with each man—as I believe I shall have to face you all at God’s great day—even though you heard me but once in your lives. Well, then, let me tell you that if you have a peace today which enables you to be at peace with your sins as well as with God, that peace is a false peace. Unless you hate sin of every sort, with all your heart, you are not a child of God, you are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You will not be perfect. I cannot expect you will live without sin, but if you are a Christian you will hate the very sin into which you have been betrayed and hate yourself because you should have grieved your Savior thus. But if you love sin, the love of the Father is not in you. Be you who you may, or what you may—minister, deacon, elder, professor, or non-professor—the love of sin is utterly inconsistent with the love of Christ. Take that home and remember it.

Another solemn thought. If you are at peace today through a belief that you are righteous in yourself, you are not at peace with God. If you are wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness and saying, “I am as good as other people. I have kept God’s Law and have no need for mercy,” you are not at peace with God. You are treasuring up in your impenitent heart wrath against the day of wrath. And you will as surely be lost if you trust to your good works, as if you had trusted to your sins. There is a clean path to Hell as well as a dirty one. There is as sure a road to perdition along the highway of morality, as down the slough of vice. Take heed that you build on nothing else but Christ. For if you do, your house will tumble about your ears, when most you need its protection.

And, yet again, my Hearer, if you are out of Christ, however profound may be your peace, it is a false one. For out of Christ there is no true peace to the conscience and no reconciliation to God. Ask yourself this question, “Do I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart? Is He my only trust, the simple, solitary rock of my refuge?” If not, as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. And dying as you are, out of Christ, you will be shut out of Heaven. Where God and bliss are found, your soul can never come.

And now, finally, let me beseech you, if you are at peace in your own mind this morning, weigh your peace thus—“Will my peace stand me on a sick bed?” There are many that are peaceful enough when they are well, but when their bones begin to ache and their flesh is sore vexed, then they find they want something more substantial than this dreamy quietness into which their souls had fallen. If a little sickness makes you shake, if the thought that your heart is affected, or that you may drop down dead in a fit on a sudden—if that startles you, then put that question of Jeremy to yourself, “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, what will you do when you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein you had trusted they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? If sickness makes you shake what will destruction make you do?”

Then again, put the question in another light. If your peace is good for anything, it is one that will bear you up in a dying hour. Are you ready to go home to your bed now—to lie there and never rise again? For remember, that which will not stand a dying bed will never stand the day of judgment. If my hope begins to quiver, even when the skeleton hand of Death begins to touch me, how will it shake, “When God’s right arm is nerved for war and thunders clothe His cloudy ear”? If death makes me startle, what will the glory of God do? How shall I shrink into nothing and fly away from Him in despair! Then often put to yourself this question, “Will my peace last me when the heavens are in a blaze and when the trembling universe stands to be judged?”

Oh my dear Hearers, I know I have spoken feebly to you this morning. Not as I could have wished—but I do entreat you—if what I have said is not an idle dream, if it is not a mere myth of my imagination—if it is true—lay it to heart and may God enable you to prepare to meet Him. Do not be wrapping yourselves up and slumbering and sleeping. Awake, you Sleepers, awake! Oh, that I had a trumpet voice to warn you! Oh, while you are dying, while you are sinking into perdition, may I not cry to you? May not these eyes weep for you? I cannot be extravagant here, I am acquitted of being enthusiastic or fanatical on such a matter as this. Take heart, I beseech you, the realities of eternity. Do not forever waste your time.

“Oh, turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Listen, now, to the words of the Gospel, which are sent to you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” For “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” while the solemn sentence remains, “He that believes not shall be damned.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2748 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

REST AS A TEST  
NO. 2748

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 13, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1879.

**“Ask for the old path, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls.”  
Jeremiah 6:16.**

A VERY short time ago, I gave you, in print, [See The Sword and the Trowel,  
March, 1879, “Incidents of Travel Clustering Round a Text”—contact Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena, TX, www.pilgrimpublications.com for availability and prices.] a sermon upon this text

which, I daresay many of you well remember. I am not now going to pursue the same line of thought as I then followed. I have taken this text again, not to preach from all its words so much as from one single Truth of God which is clear in it, namely, that you may judge which is the old path and which is the good way in which you ought to walk, by this test—if you are in the old path, the good way—you find rest for your soul. You may, therefore, judge of your position at the present moment and test the quality of your religion—for there are many false faiths, erroneous creeds, man-made religions and evil spirits that have gone out into the world. But you may try them all by this test if you are, indeed, in the old path, the good way—in God’s own way—you find rest for your soul!

I need not have taken the same text again, for this Truth is clearly taught in many other passages of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in that memorable soul-saving invitation of His, says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” From these words it is clear that if I have really come to Christ, He has given me rest. And if I have, in very deed, taken His yoke upon me and learned of Him, I have found a still further rest. But if I neither have rest given to me, nor have a rest which I find, I am led to the conclusion that I have not come to Christ and am not wearing His easy yoke. Is not that clear reasoning and should we not thus judge ourselves by what is so manifestly true?

Moreover, we have not only the words of Christ to support us in this reasoning, but we know that it is the distinguishing feature of His Gospel that it does give this rest of heart. The types and sacrifices under the Law never gave any permanent rest, for, although he who brought a sinoffering found peace for the moment, by-and-by he had to bring another sacrifice. The great Day of Atonement, when it was duly observed with all its holy pomp and ceremony, brought a blessing on the people, but there had to be another Day of Atonement the next year. Now, if the consciences of those who presented the various victims had been cleansed from dead works, there would have been no need that there should be a further remembrance made of sin. But none of these things could make the comers thereunto perfect—rest of conscience was not possible under the shadows—it is only to be found in the Substance. Every morning had its bleeding lamb and every evening had another bleeding lamb—blood was perpetually being shed—

*“Fresh blood as constant as the day,*

*Was on their altar spilt”—*  
but our Lord Jesus Christ has this testimony for His Glory alone, “this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God,” for all His sacrificial work was done!

In the Atonement of Christ, there is a real and effectual expiation which there was not in all the types of the Law of God—and the man who has once received that expiation is forever absolved before the Judgment Seat of God from all his sin. Having believed in Jesus, he sees in his Savior’s Sacrifice a full Atonement for the whole of his guiltiness and realizes that he is delivered from it! And, therefore, he has peace and rest of heart, for Jesus makes us perfect in the things that appertain to the conscience. Walking in the Light of God as He is in the Light, His blood cleanses us from all sin and we understand what Paul meant when he wrote, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

If you have not found rest of heart, dear Friend, you have missed that blessing which is peculiar to the Gospel dispensation. If you have not found in Christ perfect quiet for your soul, you put Him on a level with Moses and you seem to make out that you will need either another sacrifice, or another something to make you clear of guilt in the sight of God. This would be casting Christ down from His priestly throne and robbing Him of the brightest jewel in His crown—and this we must never do! So, if we have found the right way and are walking in it, we must have rest for our soul, for this is the peculiar mark of it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the parable of the prodigal son, pictured to us the result of returning to God in the right way. I need scarcely quote our Savior’s words, for you are probably all familiar with them. That younger son had no rest while he joined himself to a citizen of the far country who sent him into his fields to feed his swine. He hungered and he thirsted all the while he was there—but he had no sooner come home and confessed his faults in his father’s ear, and received his father’s kisses and words of welcome, than where do we see him? Toiling to gain acceptance with his father? Working in his father’s fields until he has earned the right to be again called a son? No, but received with music and dancing, in the best room of his father’s house, to be fed upon the daintiest fare that his father’s household could afford, and to be welcomed back to his father’s heart, to go no more out forever! Well, now, if you have never heard any music and dancing—if your soul has never partaken of the fatted calf—if the Father’s kiss has never breathed peace to your troubled spirit, then, I think you cannot have come home to the great Father, for, had you done so, there would have been peace in your heart and conscience!

Further, we find that this rest which is spoken of in the text has come to those who have trodden the good old way. There are plenty of instances in the Word of God, but one will suffice us as a specimen of many more. How restful is the Apostle Paul even amid much that might perplex him! When he is writing his letters, he seems as if he wrote poetry rather than prose when he begins to touch upon the condition of a justified man. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You know that there are many other passages to the same effect which I need not quote, all of which prove that he had true peace of heart. Think, too, of his behavior under trying circumstances—what wonderful calmness he exhibited in times of trial! Before Nero, the cruel lion, on board ship when the vessel was driven upon the rocks, or in the prison where he and Silas sang the praises of God at midnight—wherever you find him—even when he becomes “such an one as Paul the Aged” and he needs his cloak, for the Mamertine Prison is cold, still he is always calm, quiet, happy, peaceful!

Yet I need not quote the case of the Apostle Paul—there are multitudes of Christian men and women alive who are equally witnesses that the good old way is the way of peace! They are disturbed, sometimes, yet their heart is not troubled. I know, perhaps, as well as anyone here, what deep depression of spirit means—and what it is to feel myself sinking lower and lower—yet, at the worst, when I reach the lowest depths, I have an inward peace which no pain or depression of spirit can in the least disturb! Trusting in Jesus Christ, my Savior, there is still a blessed quietness in the deep caverns of my soul though, upon the surface, a rough tempest may be raging and there may be but little apparent calm. Many of you also know that it is so with you. If you have come to terms with God, through Jesus Christ, the great Reconciler, then there is for you, “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which, “shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

I. This, then, is the kind of plumb line that we are going to use to see whether our soul is upright, whether the foundation of our spiritual building is well and truly laid—IF WE ARE REALLY IN THE GOOD OLD WAY, WE HAVE FOUND REST UNTO OUR SOULS.

This rule proves the rightness of the way of salvation by Grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ, for, if you examine all the ways that are opposed to this, you will find that they bring no rest whatever. All the other ways are only different forms of seeking salvation by our own works. The Roman Catholic church has embodied to the very full the doctrine of salvation by works with which, indeed, is our great quarrel—the same that Martin Luther took up. The Papists would have it that works justify a sinner, but Luther rightly maintained, according to the teaching of Scripture, that faith alone justifies in the sight of God.

Well, now, according to this way of justification by works, they tell us that a man is accounted just before God because of his good works, especially such as his attendances at the various ceremonies of the church, his reception of “sacraments” and the like. But I am bold enough to say that no one in the church of Rome has ever or ever could have, legitimately, any rest of heart through his own good deeds, either living or dying! I have purposely added the word, “dying,” because I want you to note what is the highest state of blessing to which the best Catholics hope to attain at death. When I was in Rome I stood in the church of St. John Lateran and I saw there a notice that there was to be “a mass for the repose of the soul of his eminence, Cardinal Wiseman.” “Well,” I thought to myself, “if there ever was a man who served his church well, and who was distinguished, not only as a saint, but as a prince of the church, surely this was the man—yet when the cardinal dies, he goes somewhere or other—I do not know where—but it is somewhere where he has not any repose because there are to be masses for the repose of his soul! As there were for the repose of the soul of the late pope. Now, if even popes and cardinals go where they do not have any repose, where do ordinary Catholics go? It must be a very poor outlook for them! If I were in their place, I would turn Protestant, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and go to Heaven when I die! There is nothing to be had, you see, for money. The best thing that man can do is not worth anything in the sight of God—so let no one of us place the slightest reliance upon it.

Take any other form of this error and you will find that there is no rest in it. The common, somewhat diluted, Protestantized doctrine of salvation by works has the same flaw in it. If I am to be saved by my own works, when may I know that I have done enough? Never! Never! Even if I could have ever done enough in quantity, I shall soon undo it all by some sin or mistake which would make it valueless! And if I should persevere in well-doing even to the end of my life and do the best I can all the while, have I not reason to fear that I might still fall short of the Divine standard because my motive or my spirit is faulty and so, at the last, I would not have the quantity of good works necessary to make me a Christian? Unless you lessen the requirements of the Law of God, salvation by works can only be possible upon the condition of absolute perfection—but absolute perfection is beyond any man’s reach, seeing that he has already sinned!

If, however, you lower the standard and say that sincere obedience will avail instead of perfect obedience, who is to decide as to the sincerity? How is a man to be certain, even then, he is always sincere? May he not, sometime or other, have a mixture of insincerity with his 1ove? And if so, may not that, like a little leaven, sour the whole lump? So unsatisfactory and unreliable is this doctrine of salvation by works that Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest of the Romish theologians, towards his latter end used words something like these—“that, while it is right to tell the people that they must be saved by their works, yet, inasmuch as few persons can ever tell that they have done sufficient good works to merit salvation, it is, probably, upon the whole, safer to trust in the blood of Jesus Christ than in our own works.” And I hope that the cardinal himself did so!

If you put your trust in the blood of Jesus and rely for salvation upon what Christ has done, you may not only say that it is, upon the whole, safer than trusting in what you do, yourself, but you may be sure that it is altogether the better, the more Divine, the truer way—for among many other blessings, it gives you peace and rest—which the other system never does and never can! To be continually flogged, like the galley slave tugging at the oar and to have your conscience always crying, “Do, do, do this and you shall live! Fail in doing this and you shall die,” is to live a dog’s life, a slave’s life—no, it is to remain dead in trespasses and sins! But when you come to the Gospel plan of salvation—“Believe and live! Trust Christ and you are both accounted righteous and made righteous! Rely upon what Jesus Christ has done and suffered and is still doing”— then you have God’s Word to rely upon! More—“he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” When I have complied with the conditions God lays down, that is, when I have believed in Jesus and have been baptized, I say, “It is enough, my Lord! Your servant is saved—here I find rest unto my soul.” O Beloved, ask for the old path of pardon through the Savior’s Sacrifice, and walk in it, and you shall find rest unto your souls!

Another old way that I want you to walk in is the way of believing the Word Of God like a little child. Here is this blessed Book and I can honestly declare that, as a rule, I see only one meaning to it. Yet, as I read it, I find that there are some difficult passages which I cannot understand. I try all I can, but if I fail, I rejoice that my Heavenly Father will not condemn me if I do not understand them. How can a little child understand all that his father knows? I am glad that there are some difficult passages, because they are a trial to my faith! Yet all that is essential for me to know, it seems to me, is as plain as possible when I just read it as I would read another book. But there are some people who always read the Bible through red or green spectacles—and they see there some wonderful system of theology which I have never yet discovered. In fact, they can find in a text of Scripture what no ordinary person ever would see. I think they must put it there before they find it, though I suppose they do not think so. Then there are others who read the Bible philosophically. I do not know, often, what they mean, nor can I make heads or tails of what they say—one needs to have been born in Germany in order to understand some of their remarks. They seem to enshroud the Bible with a cloud of smoke, so that they do not see in it what I perceive, but they see something very wonderful, indeed! Ah, well, Brothers and Sisters! I believe that you do not get any peace for your soul out of God’s Word either by trying to clip it down to fit in with some system of your own making, or by spiriting it away in some metaphysical incomprehensibility. But if you just take the Bible in its plain sense and say, “That seems to me to be what my Heavenly Father means by this passage. It looks very simple and clear to me. I, an unsophisticated person, reading it after seeking the Holy Spirit’s instruction and guidance, think it is so and I believe it, and I act upon it,” you will find peace and rest of heart in that way of studying the Scriptures.

Everybody wants to have an anchorage somewhere or other. Many have gone over to Rome because they foolishly imagined that they would find there an Infallible church, but if you believe in an Infallible Bible and in an Infallible Spirit explaining it, you have all the Infallibility that is necessary for mental and spiritual rest! And let me assure you that if you will but determine that you will believe whatever God says simply because He says it, whether you understand it or not, and if this Book becomes to you the standard of appeal on all disputed points, you shall find rest unto your souls instead of the disquietude which is bred so abundantly by so-called “thinking” gentlemen, in these modern times, and which is fed by the articles in Reviews which spread all sorts of doubt on every hand! If you will just come to the Bible and say—

*“This is the Judge that ends the strife,*

*Where wit and reason fail”—*  
you will find rest unto your souls! That is another good old way in which I urge you to walk.

A third way I can recommend to you for giving peace of mind and heart is the way of living daily by faith in God. A great many persons fall into the idea that life is to be divided into two parts—so much is secular and so much is religious. That is a gross error! The whole of a Christian’s life should be religious. It should be just as much a part of his religion to deal honestly in trade as to be orthodox in his creed. We are to live unto Christ! We are, as an old saint expressed it, to eat and drink and sleep eternal life. “We are Christians,” would have been the answer of the first disciples of Christ if you had asked them what they were. Are you a tentmaker, Paul? “I am a Christian.” But you make tents, do you not? “Yes, but I do it all for Christ.” How so? You take the money for the tents and live upon it. “That is in order that I may not be chargeable unto any, that thereby the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be freely proclaimed among the heathen. Every stitch I take through the hard canvas is done for Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. While I live, I live unto Him and when I die, I shall go to be with Him forever.” Well, now, Beloved, your whole life should be like that—you should spend it all for Christ!

See that the whole of it comes under the governance of faith in God. Have faith in God about everything—even about that little child that is evidently sickening—trust the child with God. Have faith about that doubtful customer whose bill is running up so high—I do not mean have faith in him, but trust in God, and then use the right means to prevent the man from robbing you. Bring everything to God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. It is wonderful how differently the days roll round when they are prayed over, to what they do when you enter upon them entirely by yourself. If you ask God’s guidance even about little things and especially about the things in which you think you do not need any guidance—for that is, often, where you need it most—your days shall be spent in peace and restfulness. If you have learned to bring every burden to the Lord, every care, every trial and every loss—yes, and every joy—then you shall find rest unto your souls, for this is the good old way of living by faith in which Abraham walked—and it is the way of peace and rest.

Another good old way is the way of obedience to the Divine commands. You can be your own master if you like, but that is not the way of peace. If God is your Master and you consult His will in everything and say, “I might have preferred to do that, but instead, I shall do this because I see that it is in agreement with the command of God,” you will have peace of mind and heart in doing it. But you would have found no peace in doing the other thing. Suppose that doing right should involve you in trouble? You will be able to bear it very cheerfully because you will say, “this comes through no fault of mine, and it is a pleasure to suffer for doing right.” I saw, the other day, a picture of John Bradford, the martyr, kissing the stake. He was represented as standing against the stake by which he was to be burnt alive and he was embracing it and kissing it! How could he do that? It is no joyous matter to be burned to death, but he felt that as he must die for the Truth of God, and for faithfulness to his God, it was a sweet thing so to die! There is not much stake-kissing, I am afraid, among us now, but it ought to come to that—and it does when a man, conscientiously, and at all hazards, resolves, “I will say the right and do the right, whatever happens.”

If you begin to tack about and to be guided by policy, not by principle. If you say, “I shall make just a little nick in my conscience here, and another nick there, but I shall make it right, by-and-by,” you will lose rest. When you get to bed at night, you will not look back upon the day’s proceedings with pleasure. When trial comes, you will have nobody to help you. But, on the other hand, if you can say, “In the name of God I have gone forward in all simple honesty, resting and confiding in Him,” you shall find that the Lord will not let you be a loser through trusting Him. You shall be borne up and brought through—and you shall bless and praise the gracious Master who is such a good Paymaster and who so well rewards those who diligently seek Him! That is another good old way in which I advise you to walk.

I will mention one other good old way and that is, the way of close communion with Jesus Christ. Oh, what a blessed way that is! If you walk in it, you will say, from your inmost soul, unto the Lord, “If You go not with me, carry me not up hence.” You will cry, “I must have Jesus with me or I dare not leave my chamber in the morning!” I must have the assurance of His gracious company, or I shall fear to fall asleep at night.” You will sing that delicious hymn, “Sun of my soul,” and you will pray to Him and get the prayer answered—

*“When the soft dews of kindly sleep  
My wearied eyelids gently steep,  
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest  
Forever on my Savior’s breast!  
Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without You I cannot live:  
Abide with me when night is nigh,  
For without You I dare not die.”*

So you will find such rest for your soul as you could never have known in any other way! The sheep must rest when the shepherd is near. The spouse must rest when her Beloved brings her to the banqueting house and waves the banner of His love over her. So, keep near to Jesus, for you may be certain that there you will be in the good old way where you will find rest unto your souls!

I wish I had the tongue of the eloquent that I might worthily describe the rest which belongs to the people of God. Do not tell me that there is no rest for us till we get to Heaven! We who have believed in Jesus enter into rest even now—why should we not do so? Our salvation is complete! The robe of righteousness, in which we are clad, is finished! The Atonement for our sins is fully made! We are reconciled to God, we are beloved of the Father, we are preserved by His Grace and supplied by His Providence with all that we need! We carry all our burdens to Him and leave them at His feet! We spend our lives in His service and we find His ways to be ways of pleasantness, and His paths to be paths of peace. Oh, yes, we have found rest unto our souls! I remember the first day that I ever rested in Christ and I did rest that day, and so will all of you who trust in Jesus as I trusted in Him! To a laboring man, rest is indeed sweet. Suppose a man is called, through some sudden emergency, to work for 24 hours at a stretch? Oh, how every bone in his body seems to bless God when he, at last, is able to rest! It does not matter much if his bed is only the hard floor—he throws himself down and every limb, as he stretches out, seems to say, “Thank God, thank God. Now I can rest!” That is just how a poor burdened one feels when he comes to Christ! Till he gets to Him the bed is shorter than a man may stretch himself upon it—but when once he trusts in Jesus, he may stretch as much as he likes and he shall find that he can satisfy his soul in the abundance of peace and rest that he finds laid up for him in Christ!

II. Now, secondly, I want to speak upon this theme—REST FOUND BY WALKING IN “THE GOOD OLD WAY” IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL.  
Possibly, somebody says, “I can understand that you Christian people, who believe that you are saved through faith, and who sing, as you often do—  
*‘Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven’—*  
I can understand that you enjoy rest, but is that rest good for you, because, you know, that rest very soon degenerates into laziness?” I have known a man who said that it would take a great deal of rest to knock him out and I am fully aware that there are some who, spiritually, like the idea of rest because, as they misinterpret the term, it means downright laziness to them. Nothing to do precisely suits their constitution! So, let me just show you that no evil consequences ever flow from the rest which God gives to our soul when we walk in the good old way!  
For, first, it brings satisfaction, but not self-satisfaction. Somebody says, “If I knew that I were saved, I would feel as proud as Lucifer. I would say then, ‘That is quite enough for me! I do not need to go any further, for I am all I ought to be.’” Yes, my dear Sir, I do not controvert your statement that, very likely, you would say that. While you are what you are, I believe you would talk so—but when God makes a man a new creature, such an idea as that does not enter his head! When he says, “I am saved from condemnation,” he also says, “Now I desire to be saved from every propensity to go back to be what I was before! Now that I am clear of guilt, I desire to be saved from ever again living as I formerly did. God has given me salvation, but He means me to work it out—that is to say, He has worked it in me by His gracious Spirit—and I am to work it out in my life and so let others see, by my walk and conversation, that I am really saved.”  
If you were to proclaim liberty to a man who was in prison—if you went and opened the door and said to him, “Now, my good fellow, out of pure grace, Her Majesty freely pardons you, and orders you to be set at liberty”—according to your theory, that man would sit still, and say, “Well, I have got my pardon, I do not need anything more.” You know that he would not talk like that! The first thing he would do would be to want to get out and go home and see his wife and family. And the very first thing that we feel, when we are saved, is that we want to see our Father who is in Heaven. We want to know our dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ and we want to do something to show the gratitude which we feel towards God for His abounding mercy towards us! I tell you that the Grace of God breeds no self-satisfaction, for we think less of ourselves after we are saved than we ever did before! Yes, and the more sure we are that we are saved, the deeper is our sense of our own unworthiness, and the more we groan out, “O God, deliver me from the sin that still dwells within me!” He who has to work out his salvation by his own merits and good deeds may be content to live in sin—but he who is saved feels that he must no longer be the slave of sin, yet he groans that he is often under bondage and he cries to God for something better, higher, nobler!  
“Yes” says another objector, “but if a man knew he were saved, it would breed sloth in him, he would not want to do anything.” Again I reply that if the man was what men are by nature, that is what would happen. But when a man gets changed by Divine Grace, it is very different. You think, you sons of Hagar, children after the flesh that are under the Law, that nobody will do anything unless he is paid for it. You suppose that there is no motive in the world but self-interest—to escape from Hell and to win Heaven. That is the only argument that can have any effect upon you, for you are slaves—you are bond-servants and that, probably, is all the argument we can use with you at present. But if you ever become children of God, you will find better arguments than these—nobler and more worthy of men redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! You will, each one, then say, “I am saved. I have nothing to do in order to be saved, that is all done. I am saved to a certainty. Now, for the love I bear my Savior’s name, I will do a hundred times as much as I ever could have done under the threat of damnation, or the offer of entrance into Heaven! Now, by His Grace, I am going to live according to the Law of Love which—  
*‘Makes my willing feet,  
In swift obedience move’—*  
and I will prove to all mankind, by my life, that the impulse of love can produce greater results than the impulse of fear, threat, and selfinterest!” Oh, yes, we get a new set of motives! The old ones cease to influence us and we get other and higher motives which enable us to overcome the sloth to which, by nature, we are all too prone.  
“But,” says yet another friend, “if I believed that I was really saved, I would say, ‘Now I may live as I like.’” Ah, my Friend! There is nothing I should like better than to live as I like—and do you know how I would live if I could live as I liked? I would never sin again! If I could live as I liked, you would be able to call me a strait-laced old Puritan with whom you could not find a fault except that I was too strict! That is what I would be if I could live as I liked. But if you, as an unconverted man, live as you like, I should not like to read the record of your life! But we are not talking about men in general, but about renewed men—those who have been changed by Divine Grace and who have become children of God—and who like to live after a very different fashion!  
“Well,” you say, “but if I thought that God never could and never would cast me into Hell, and that I was eternally saved, I should go and live in sin.” No, no, no! Come now, you are quite bad enough, I am sure, but I will not believe even that to be true of you! I cannot think so badly of you as that. There was a little boy who had a very kind father. And there were some bad boys, living on the same street, whose father used to horsewhip them and treat them very cruelly. But this boy’s father was the soul of love and kindness. There was an orchard that the bad boys wanted to rob, so they proposed to this other lad that he should go with them. “No,” he replied, “I shall not go, for I do not want to grieve my father.” “Oh!” they said, “you know that if we are caught, we shall catch it! But your father is so fond of you that he will not beat you, so you may freely go and do it.” “What?” he exclaimed, “Do you think because my father loves me, that therefore I will go and do wrong because of that! No, I will do nothing of the kind.”  
You sympathize at once with the boy, and say, “That is right.” Very well, I hope you will sympathize with him so much that you will feel that this is the way a Christian acts. He has received so much love from God that he cannot do that which would grieve the One who has been so good and so kind to him! Our God forgives our transgressions and blots out the sin of His people because He delights in mercy! Therefore that love of His has more influence over His redeemed ones than all the thunders and threats of the Law will ever have over the ungodly! We enjoy this blessed rest, but we shall always be ready for service, still be watchful against sin and constantly be pressing forward towards growth in Grace. It is a rest which a man may safely have and come to no harm thereby!  
Beloved, the man who has rest in his own soul is the man who can best serve God. Queen Elizabeth once said to a great London merchant, “I want you to attend to some important business for me at the Hague.” “Your Majesty,” he said, “I am your humble servant, but I have a large business here at home and, while I have that to attend to, I am afraid I could not discharge Your Majesty’s business.” She said, “You go to the Hague and see to my business there, and I will attend to your business here.” Well, now, that was enough said by the Queen that allowed the man to go, with a free mind, to attend to Her Majesty’s business! And the Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to us, “You go and serve Me in the world, and I will see to the matter of your salvation.” The man to whom He thus speaks can give all his thought and care to living to the Glory of God and to His service!  
More than that—I will venture on a strong assertion—no man is capable of virtue, in its highest sense, until he knows that he is saved. Just think, if a man simply does that which is right because he expects to be rewarded by God for it, whom is he serving? Why, himself! Are you in the habit of taking your hat off to your employees at night and saying to them, “Much obliged to you, Gentlemen”? Do they work out of pure love to you? Well, not many of them, I reckon. I do not think there are many masters who are so specially attractive that anybody wants to serve them without a thought of salary or wages! No, I know that you thank no man for what he does if he is to be paid for it. Suppose you try to live a good life in order to get to Heaven by it? You are simply serving yourself—it is selfishness at the top, and at the bottom, and throughout it all!  
But the man who comes, and says, “I am a saved man. Eternal Love has brought me to Jesus’ feet, washed me in His blood and clothed me with His righteousness. No condemnation do I dread for this day, or for all the days that are to come—for none can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.” He begins to serve God with all his might, he loves his fellow men and seeks to promote everything that is pure and holy and good. What is his motive? Gratitude, not selfinterest! Love to God, not love to himself! No longer is the slave-driver’s whip cracked in his ear! No bribe of a glorious Heaven to be won by merit is held before him. It is already his! Now he is capable of the highest virtue! Oh, that you all knew this blessed rest, for then I am sure you would serve God! You may have it, for Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Why will you not have it? “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And labor for that which satisfies not?”  
I have only time for just this final word to you who have this rest. ENJOY IT. Enjoy it now. You are coming to the Communion Table—this place of sacred feasting and holy joy. You are not coming to kneel at it as if you were to adore the bread—you are to sit around the table, like persons at a common meal—yet all the while to be feasting with the great King of Kings! So be sure that you enjoy Christ, who is your Rest. Are you satisfied with Christ? If you are not, you do not really have Him. If you have Him, He is everything to you. “Ah,” you say, “satisfied with Him? Satisfied with Him? That is a very cold word—I am charmed with Him! No music is like His charming name. My soul is overflowing with love to Him.”  
The other day I saw a little cup suspended under a flowing fountain, so that the stream came right into it. The cup was quite full and as the stream kept flowing, the cup remained brimming over. And as I stood and looked at it, I thought, “That is very much like myself beneath the flowing of the Savior’s love. I cannot hold much, so it soon fills me, but I can pour it out to others as fast as it comes into me!” O come, Beloved, come all of you who know the Lord, and put yourselves, like little cups, under the flowing fountain and be filled with all the fullness of God! What a word that is! I do not know whether you understand it—I don’t— “filled with all the fullness of God.” Why, you cannot get all the fullness of God into you, can you? Suppose that a bottle were taken and held down into the sea till the water had filled it—then, when it is quite full, of course it sinks down to the bottom of the ocean. Now think that the sea is in the bottle and the bottle is in the sea, and that the bottle is full of all the fullness of the sea—it contains all it can hold and then it has all the rest to hold it! Now, just so, get as full as you can of the love of Christ and then sink into the Godhead’s deepest sea—be plunged into His immensity and dwell there, filled with all the fullness of the ever-blessed God! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT  
NO. 3257

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1911.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “The fruit of their thoughts.”  
Jeremiah 6:19.

Do you observe here, my Brothers and Sisters, how God declares that He would not only punish Israel for gross overt acts of sin, but that He would also bring upon the nation terrible chastisements for their thoughts? A solemn warning, full of instruction to us.

It has almost passed into a proverb, that “thought is free.” Whether this is true or false, an axiom or a gaffe, must depend on the sphere in which thought moves. It is true in the sense of thought being free before men, since none of us can judge our neighbor’s thoughts, nor have we any right to attempt the task. Religious opinion, for instance, is not a thing of which the law can justly take cognizance. As far as the civil government is concerned, whether a man’s sentiments are those of a Christian or an idolater, a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Mormon, he is entitled to all civil rights. Be he who he may, he is oppressed if he is deprived of his liberty, or of any privilege because of his thoughts! Be he who he may, he is injured if any one sect is rendered dominant, or is supported by a forced taxation drawn from the whole. Thought must be free and it shall be acknowledged, by God’s help, perfectly free as between man and man! Whatever tyrants may decree, they have never yet been able to stop the progress of opinion! When they have used all their prisons and their racks, their dungeons and their blazing stakes, they have never been able to turn a sound man from a truth which he has embraced, nor, I may add, have they been able to confirm a wavering man in the lies which they have tried to thrust upon him. Thought, in that sense, is free by natural right.

Yet there is another side to the same question, by reason of which we are bound to make this solemn protest—thought is not free before God. I have no more authority to think of God as I please than I have to act before Him as I please! In either case, the charge of licentiousness would lie against me, for the God who is supreme over the outward actions of my body is likewise the only Lord and Governor of the inward motions of my spirit. All the provinces of the little isle of man’s soul belong to God, the Great Governor. Over body, soul and spirit He is Legislator and Lord!

That thought in this sense is not free is to be proved very clearly, for some of the Commandments of God contained in the Decalogue particularly relate to thought. Such, for instance, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,” and so on. That Commandment is clearly, particularly and peculiarly one relating to thought. God’s Law, therefore, takes cognizance of thought. Moreover, we know that God has told us, as we read in the 139th Psalm, that He is constantly watching our thoughts. He knows them before they are known to us—“You understand my thought afar off.” To what end, do you think, does God watch our thoughts but with this view—to bring us into judgment at the Last Great Day for every idle word and for every idle imagination and thought of our hearts? And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have it upon record that God not only puts His Law to work on our thoughts, and watches our thoughts, but that He is also angry on account of evil thoughts. Remember what we read in Genesis 6:5, 6—“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.” Do not, therefore, make light of evil thoughts! If your conscience is awakened, truly awakened, you never will. A steeled and seared conscience may look upon them with indifference—those whose hearts are not right toward God may sneer at the idea of any evil consequences coming from what they simply turn over in their minds—but if you have a tender heart, if God has been pleased to takes the callousness from off your conscience, and to make it sensitive, you will say at once, “Oh, save my soul from base and wicked thoughts!”

That thoughts are of the utmost importance may likewise be inferred from the fact that God makes them here the ground of punishing His people. He speaks of “the fruit of their thoughts.” The thought in itself may not be a very great thing, but what will it come to? It may even be a very little thing, but what will be the end of it? Thoughts of evil are in themselves evil thoughts! It is questionable whether we can even read the report of our neighbor’s sin without producing some sinful thoughts in ourselves. It is debatable whether a person can have much to do with speaking or hearing of the offenses of others without in some degree defiling himself, for as pitch sticks, and soot and things black and dirty defile one by the slightest contact, so does sin in any shape passing over the mind! Touched by the hand, it might scarcely leave any discernible mark behind, but there is a distinct impression left upon the mind, so that every picture of evil which passes through the soul remains there to do that soul injury. The thought of evil is in itself sin.

And what is more, the thought of evil paralyzes the finer faculties of the soul. The more we think of sin and become familiar with it, the less terrible does it become to our apprehension. I am sure this is the result where men habituate their reveries with any form of evil. Could the minds of men who have become murderers be analyzed, I doubt not it would be found that they had been a long time in schooling themselves to the commission of the horrible crime. They have thought upon it, meditated and deliberated about it until, at last, it has seemed to them but a mere trifle—and then they have gone forth to do it without misgiving. I do not believe that a man becomes a villain all at once. He puts his soul to school—his thoughts are his teachers—or, rather, they are the schoolbooks in which his soul reads and, at last, he becomes capable of transacting the deeds of a scoundrel. If you think long upon any sin, the probability is that as soon as the temptation to that sin comes, you will commit it.

I have known persons produce a pathological obsession by constant brooding. I knew a man, once, who was constantly apprehensive that he was being poisoned by people—and I always stood in trepidation for that man lest he should poison himself! If you will harbor the evil thought—if you will ponder on any sin, turn it over and talk with it on your pillow, your familiarity will disarm your fear and the traitor you have harbored will betray you before your suspicions are awakened! Beware, then, of all thoughts of sin! If you show a thief all the locks, bolts and bars in your house—and tell him how the cellar window could be opened, or the backdoor lock be made to give way—do not be surprised if one of these nights you should find all your goods stolen! If you do this and introduce these evil things into your habitation, you cannot wonder at the consequence, however startled your friends may be at the detection!

It is certain that thoughts are the eggs of sin . These are the embryo out of which sins spring—the spawn from which every form of iniquity is developed. We sometimes hear of fever lairs and of pest dens—evil thoughts are just like these. They are the jungles where the monsters of sin fatten and grow. Thoughts of sin are the dark woods that harbor all sorts of evil—they are the evil birds of prey that destroy all sorts of good!

Therefore, as God takes cognizance of our thoughts, let us be mindful of the responsibility they entail upon us. Let us no longer despise them, but look into the nursery where they are reared and begin to search our hearts—and to judge ourselves as in the sight of Him who searches all hearts.

I. BAD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT EXHIBIT A VERY LARGE VARIETY. I shall, however, but refer you to the 20th Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where the Ten Commandments will help us to a list of thoughts, all of which are horribly mischievous.

The First Commandment God gives to us is, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” That is, in fact, “You shall have no other god but Me,” since God is everywhere. This precept is easily broken in our thoughts. If I say to myself, “This is God’s Law, but the contrary action will be most to my profit,” then I make myself, or my money, my god. If on any occasion I say within myself, “I clearly perceive that I ought not to indulge in that sin, but then it will give me great pleasure”—should I indulge in it, then I make my pleasure, that is to say, myself, my god—I worship myself instead of God! This is a sin, the essence of which must lie in the thoughts, in the judgment, in the affections. You need not make an image of gold, or of wood and bow down before it—you can become a thorough-paced idolater in the temple of your heart by offering homage to your own self-will!

The Second Commandment contains a further prohibition, “You shall not make unto you any graven image,” and so on. That is, “You shall not worship God under any symbol—you shall not worship God through any symbol,” or, in spirit, “You shall not worship God in any way which God has not commanded.” “You shall not invent to yourself methods and modes of worship, but you shall do as God commands you.” Now, we can very easily, in our thoughts, fabricate an image. This is what most of us do. We say and think that God is altogether such an one as we are and, having formed to ourselves an idea of God, we bow down before it and say, “These are your gods, O Israel!” Brothers and Sisters, you may be idolaters as much by worshipping a god whom your fancy has made as by worshipping a block of stone! That Incomprehensible One who has proclaimed Himself in Scripture according to the mysterious attributes of His Being, and has further revealed Himself so sweetly and gloriously in the Person of the Lord Jesus—this is the God we must worship! We must not make a god, but take the God whom the Scripture reveals! We are not to fashion in our thoughts a god such as we should like him to be—a god who is pure benevolence, but who has no justice—but we must take the God of Scripture—grandly stern, severely dreadful in His wrath while He is unbounded in His compassion and is always gracious and full of mercy! We must acknowledge the God of the Bible and not make a deity to ourselves, or else in our thoughts we have broken the Divine Law and the fruit of that thought will be that we shall be idolaters and sin will be laid at our door!

The Third Commandment, as you will clearly perceive, can be broken without saying a word—“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” Light thoughts of God, irreverence of soul towards Him is a violation of the solemn interdict. You have but to think lightly of His name and you have blasphemed it! Before your mouth has been opened to utter the rash expression, the rebellious thought is a profanation of the Most High.

As for the Law of the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment which binds our race, that is readily enough violated by us all. Do not suppose that you are a keeper of the Sabbath because you do no work with your hands—you are just as guilty if you work with your brain! You are to rest on that day from all your own works. Do as much as you please for God on that day, but your mind should lay aside its care. You must not bring your shop here—you might almost as well stay at home and carry on your trade. You must not bring your burden in here! No, my Brothers and Sisters, leave that at the door and ask God’s Grace that you may rise this day from all these things and give your heart and mind entirely to the worship of Him who has sanctified the day unto Himself. You see, then, that this Commandment may readily be broken without any overt act—and the breach destroys the validity of the Sabbath to you. It yields you no comfortable rest while your mind is toiling, tugging and straining about a thousand troubles and difficulties! But if you kept the Commandment in your spirit, it would be a sweet and blessed rest to you.

We turn now to the second table, the Commandments which relate to men. “Honor your father and your mother.” Ah, when we were children and since then, unkind and unhallowed thoughts of our parents have been quite sufficient to convict us of offenses against the Law. Without a disobedient action, without a rebellious word, the child may in thought be a rebel to his parents.

“You shall not kill.” But Christ tells us that he that is angry with his brother without a cause is virtually a murderer! So that thought can slay and kill and, indeed, it is the angry thought that lays the foundation of the deadly stroke! There would be no murdering and slaying if there were no enmity. Men would not march to slay each other, surely, or waylay their hapless victims and do desperate deeds of violence unless, first of all, their souls were set on the fire of Hell.

“You shall not commit adultery.” Little will I say on this Commandment, but here is our Lord’s own exposition of it, “Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Fornication may thus abound in us to our defilement—and our souls’ ruin—even though we may still be kept back by fear, perhaps, from the commission of the evil deed. Beware, then, you who can gloat over evil, you who can suck the forbidden sweet behind the door, you who can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue—beware lest you shall have your portion with those who fall into the sin! I say not that the thought of the sin is as bad as the sin, itself—it cannot be so, certainly, in its result to others—but it is still a sin—and a sin to be answered for in that tremendous Day when the Judge of all the earth shall allot their portions unto men!

“You shall not steal.” Every envious thought of another man, every desire to possess myself of what is not mine. Everything of this sort, in which I would grasp that which does not belong to me, is a constructive theft! The thief does not so much steal when he puts out his hand to take his neighbor’s purse, as in the thought which led him to do it, for the hand may sometimes take the purse without offense—it may be to protect the property of one who is disabled and incapable of guarding it himself. Such a thing is supposable—that one man might legitimately take another’s purse and have a right to do so. It is not the act, but the motive when he deliberately ventures to take that which is not his own and would possess himself of his neighbor’s goods to his neighbor’s injury—this constitutes the very virus and soul of the theft.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” If I think harshly of my neighbor without a cause. If I conceive an unjust prejudice against him. If I look coldly upon him when he really does not deserve it. If I make up my mind out of some whim or fancy that he is a bad fellow, and shrug my shoulders, and I know not what, besides—though I have never said a word—yet still in thought I have injured my neighbor! Above all things, Brothers and Sisters, avoid that shoulder-shrugging—it is an abomination! We sometimes see it in company. Ah, they will not dare to say what it means, the cowards! You might suppose that the man against whom it is directed had killed his mother if you liked, for you are sure to suppose the worst. Be brave enough, if it must be spoken, to speak it! And if it must not be spoken, well then, do not say it in that mysterious language which may ruin a man in the estimation of others. Avoid any false witnessing in your thoughts and you will not bear it in your words.

To the last precept of the catalog I have already referred. It is especially a thought-command—“You shall not covet.” All greedy desires which make us wish to get our neighbor’s goods to the injury of others, are sins—and the fruits of such thoughts are guilt, punishment and the wrath to come!

Let me now conduct you a step further to another set of evil thoughts which could not be very easily comprised in the Decalogue.  
There are self-righteous thoughts—the supposition that we are not as sinful as God says we are! The conceit that we may, perhaps, work ourselves out of our difficulties and force our way to Heaven! Now, the fruit of such a thought as this will be amazement in the day when God will strip us of our self-righteousness and make us stand naked to our eternal shame! Beware of self-righteous thoughts, my Hearers! They are the Tarpeian Rock from which Satan has hurled thousands of souls! It were better for you that a millstone were fasten about your neck and that you were cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should thank God that you are not as other men when, after all, you are as corrupt as other men and will perish as they do! Self-righteousness keeps you from coming to Christ and certainly it excludes you from eternal life and will close the gates of Heaven against you. God deliver us from the fruit of such thoughts!  
Then, again, proud, boastful, vainglorious self-seeking thoughts are, alike, obnoxious. How highly some people think of themselves! You can see it in their gait and their speech betrays them. Yet their wine is all froth and their gold is all counterfeit. Their speech, when they begin to tell of what they have, and what they can do, and what they did do upon such-and-such occasion—all this is an abomination to honest men—and their thoughts must be very abominable to God! It is one of the things which He says He hates—a proud look. God grant us Grace to be rid of every proud thought, for we have nothing to be proud of! A proud man is nothing but a windbag and when either the ills of life, or the crisis of death shall put a pin into it, what a collapse there will be! How the haughty one will discover himself to be nothing but emptiness and vanity! Get rid of proud thoughts, for oh, what will they do? Pride dragged an angel from Heaven and made a devil of him—and pride will drag any of us down to the level of the devil if we fall into its snare.  
Another still more common set of thoughts, but not much decried, are murmuring thoughts. Ah, me, how full some people are of these! They can hardly speak but what they have something to grumble about. Trade with them is always bad. Ever since I have been in London, trade has been bad, but it is even worse now! It never was so bad as it is now, except that it was just as bad last year and, as far as I know, has always been at the worst! Farmers never have, to the best of my recollection, had more than “an average crop.” And most years there has been a failure. If the wheat has been good, the turnips have always gone bad, or something has! I notice murmuring to be a very common thing with many people—and you no sooner sit down in the cottage than, instead of telling you that someone has been there to help them a little, and give them some assistance—they say they have only the parish allowance—a miserable pittance! So it is—but they forget the mercies that they have. Why should I always be telling how often I have rheumatic pains and how many times I find that there is something wrong with my constitution? Why should I make it my constant habit to compel everybody to be miserable wherever I go? “Well,” says one, “but you know we cannot help it!” My dear Friend, if you do not help it, then I will tell you what will be the fruit of it—you will make yourself incorrigibly miserable. You will bring yourself into a desperate state in which nothing will comfort you! I believe that in this respect, we are very much our own masters. Not all bounties of Providence can make us happy if we have a thankless, ungrateful heart! You may have all that the world can give you, and yet be wretched—or you may be very, very poor, and yet be cheerful! A thankful heart is the thing we need and, oh, may God be pleased to give us that thankful heart! But what I want you to remember is that murmuring is a great sin. They murmured against God in the wilderness and He sent fiery serpents among them. God thinks much of our complaints against His Providential dealings with us—let us not think so little of the sin of provoking Him with our thoughts.  
How prone we are likewise to cherish unbelieving thoughts! Oh, that we were all rid of these! But I suppose if I went round these galleries, I would find in every pew somebody who has unbelieving thoughts. We fancy that God will forsake us, that Providence will turn against us. We get like old Jacob when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” Whereas everything is working for us, only we cannot see it. Be gone, unbelief, for the fruit of unbelieving thoughts is weakness, sorrow, rebellion against God and I know not what else of rashness and presumption! God save us from these thoughts!  
Procrastinating thoughts have been the fruitful source of mischief to full many of you. You have good thoughts and good resolves, but you always put things off and think that better times will come for leaving off your sins and seeking Christ! Even though the least evil would be a fearful waste of time—worse than which you run a perilous risk—it is yet to be dreaded that your souls will be lost at the last.  
Others of us have to complain of wandering thoughts when we are worshipping God—and the fruit of these is to spoil the golden seasons which, well used, might yield great profit. Oftentimes, when the service has been fitted enough to minister refreshment and instruction—and others have been nourished by the Word—some poor soul goes out and says, “I have not enjoyed it at all.” Why, of course not, for your thoughts have been elsewhere! These are the birds that come down upon the sacrifice. If, like Abraham, we drive them away, we shall be able to worship in peace. But if not, the fruit of wandering thoughts in the House of God is that the service is spoiled. So, too, in the closet, whether ostensibly engaged in private devotion, or the reading of Scripture—unless the thoughts are centered upon the subject in hand—there can be no spiritual gain in drawing near unto God.  
II. For a few minutes, now, let us think of brighter things while I mention A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.  
“Of which,” says an Apostle, “we cannot now speak particularly,” when he had a long list and little space, so I must say now. If you would have good faith in your soul, cultivate humble thoughts. No man was ever injured by having too lowly a view of himself. The best definition of humility I ever heard was this—“to think light of ourselves.” To think of ourselves as below the standard is lowliness—to think of ourselves as above the standard is pride. But to form a right estimation of ourselves is true humility! Avoid the counterfeit which is in the world—that is mock humility. Be truly humble. Have low thoughts of yourselves, especially before God! Penitent thoughts of sin, humble views with regard to Divine Grace and a close account of your own responsibility are indispensable— so, you will find that humility will sweep out the chamber of your soul and prepare it for the incoming of the Great Prince.  
Cultivate very much forgiving thoughts towards your fellow men. Never be hard to be persuaded to pardon an offense. He that takes his brother by the throat will be sure to be taken by the throat himself. Evil for evil, it is said, is beast-like. Good for good is man-like. Evil for good is devillike, but good for evil is God-like! Try to do it and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart, it will be to forgive one who has very greatly and wantonly injured you. The worse the offense, if you can overlook it, the greater will be your own joy and the better proof will you have that you are a child of God.  
Go to bed each night and wake up each morning with admiring thoughts of God’s goodness and with adoring thoughts towards God’s greatness. You will find these thoughts to be like bees that will come home to you laden with honey. Let your soul be a hive of them! Worship the Lord. Think much of Him. Let every blessing you receive make you think of Him. Do not sit at the table and offer what we call, “Grace,” because it is the custom to do so, but let your soul really see God’s hand in the gift of everything that is on the table! We need not fear worldly thoughts if we were to sanctify those worldly thoughts. Said one, “The road on which I tread makes me think of Christ—the Way. The door through which I pass makes me think of Christ—the Door. I cannot handle money but what I think that I am not my own, but am bought with a price. I do not receipt a bill without recollecting that He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against me. I cannot talk to my fellow man and receive his answer without thinking how I talk with God and how He answers me.” In such manner, with many thoughts of God, you will find the fruit of heavenly-mindedness in your spirit. Angels will come and go to and fro between you and the courts of the Most High if you have many of these admiring and adoring thoughts of God!  
Thankful thoughts are well deserving your high encouragement. Get a cage full of these birds of paradise and let them fly about in the groves of your soul and sing there at all times! Oh, there is no better companion than cheerful gratitude! If a man can but see the mercy of God in everything, instead of looking always at the black side of the picture, you will be happy, indeed! The fruit of thankful thoughts will be summer in your soul even when it is the depth of winter outside! Cultivate thankful thoughts as you cultivate sweet flowers in your garden!  
Yet again, dear Friends, get many and abundant believing thoughts. When you cannot see your way, still trust in your Lord. Believe in Him. Though everything should give the lie to the promise, still believe the promise to be true.  
Abound much in thoughts of submission to God. Every morning exercise such thoughts. Put your soul into God’s hands that He may deal with you according to His will all the day. And each night, when you review the day, thank God for it all, whatever it may have been—knowing that it must be good—no, must be best if God has ordered it!  
I will finally say, seek, Believer, to have many longing thoughts after Christ. Have longing thoughts to be with Him where He is! Let Christ have the best thoughts—the cream of them. Let Him have the first growth of your spirit. Be with Him in waking. Say to Him in the evening, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” And if you lie awake at night, still seek to have some precious thought of Christ, like a wafer made with honey, to put under your tongue. Oh, we can bring Heaven down to earth if we can take our thoughts up to Heaven! If thoughts are the wings and the Spirit is the wind, we will fly away to the celestial Paradise!  
Be much, then, in such thoughts as these, and may the fruit of your thoughts be such as God, Himself, may delight in, to Jesus Christ’s praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 7:1-15; 17:1-14**

Jeremiah 7:1-3. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Many of them thought that if they went up to the Temple, it was all right with them. If they did but go through the outward ritual, they would certainly be accepted. They must have been astonished when Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, met them at the Temple door and told them that the best worship of God was holiness—not the mere outward ceremony but the renewal of the life, the cleansing of the heart before Him.

4-7. Trust you not in lying words, saying The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD. The Temple of the LORD, are these. For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. The blessing is not to the Temple and the Temple worshippers—the blessing is to holy men, to such as love righteousness, to such as obey the living God and do justice between man and man—and especially between themselves and the poor and needy of the earth. It is necessary to say this even now, for there are some who talk of being regenerated by baptism, of being saved by sacraments—they trust in their priests and rely upon their performances. “Trust you not in lying words”—that is the Scriptural description of all that kind of thing—just lying words and nothing better!

8-10. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Will you quote the very decree of God as an excuse for your sin? Will you make it out that even He is partaker in your criminality? That will never do! Only a lying heart could conceive of such an abomination!

11-16 . Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the LORD. But go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all the works, says the LORD, and I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein you trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your father, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make interception to Me: for I will not hear you. You know how, through the sin of Eli’s sons, God forsook Shiloh—and the tent of His House and the Ark of His Covenant were removed—and Shiloh became an utter desolation. So will God do to any Church that becomes unfaithful to Him! Go to Rome and see what she is today—mother of harlots, though once she seemed to be the chaste spouse of Christ. Her idolatries are as many as those of the heathen, for she forsook the Truth of God and turned aside from the Most High! Think not that God is tied to any place, or to any ministry. If we walk not before Him aright, He may take the candlestick out of its place! He may take the talent away and give it to others and then, “Ichabod,” shall be written on the walls whether it is of Shiloh or of Jerusalem! Jeremiah has thus shown us clearly that no confidence can be placed in holy places or outward ceremonies— the state of the heart and the life is the all-important matter!

Jeremiah 17:1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with  
the point of a diamond. [See Sermon #812, Volume 14—THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is so

ingrained in their very nature that you might as well try to erase an inscription that is written upon steel with the point of a diamond as hope to get this perversity out of the nation! It is engraved upon the tablets of their heart. What is mere habit can be altered, but what is ingrained in the heart cannot be taken away except by a miracle of Grace! It was the heart that was wrong—the fountainhead was polluted—so what could the streams be, but foul?

1. It is engraved upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; Their holiest things were defiled. They wrote up the names of their idol gods even upon God’s altar and so they bore a written testimony against themselves!

2. While their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. God forbade the setting up of altars. There was one altar at Jerusalem and there were to be no more—but they selected spots where great trees had long grown—they chose the tops of the hills—and they built shrines for their idols there! And therefore God was angry with them. Oh, how readily we may turn anything into sin! How easily our choicest mercies may be made into occasions of iniquity!

3-8. O My mountain in the field, I will give your substance and all your treasures to the spoil, and your high places for sin, throughout all your border. And you, even yourself, shall discontinue from your heritage that I gave you and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you know not: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever. Thus says the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes , but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Oh, the blessedness of confidence in God! You see it here set out in contrast with the misery of trusting in men! Drought comes even to this tree and times of trouble come to the Believer—but the drought does not affect the tree, for it has secret, underground sources from which it sucks up its life! It spreads out its roots by the river and blessed is that man who has a secret life, a secret strength, a secret comfort which sustains him in the trying hour! The world cannot perceive it, but he drinks it in and lives upon it.  
9. The heart. That is the principal matter, it was the heart of the nation which had gone astray from God. “The heart—

9-11. Is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge sits on eggs, and hatches them not; so he that gets riches, and is not right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool. The Prophet likens the man who gets riches by falsehood and oppression to a bird which has many eggs, too many for her to cover and, consequently, though she sits on them, there is such a heap of eggs that they are, none of them, hatched—they come to nothing. I think I know some men who are very much like that partridge. It would be a great mercy for them if they had only half of the eggs that they have, for all they get is the care and trouble of covering them, but no living joy comes out of them—the eggs are worthless. He that has not the Grace of God in his heart is just like a bird sitting upon worthless eggs. Poor soul! “At his end he shall be a fool.” He must therefore be something of a fool, now, for he that pursues an end which shall end in folly is a fool to have such an end before him!

12-14 . A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake You shall be ashamed and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are

my praise. [See Sermon #1786, Volume 30—OUR SANCTUARY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]  
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THE BELLOWS BURNED  
NO. 890

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The bellows are burned.”  
Jeremiah 6:29.**

THE Prophets frequently spoke in parables. They did this partly to excite the attention of their hearers. Those to whom they spoke might not have listened to didactic truth expressed in abstract terms, but when they heard mention of common things, such as bellows and lead and brass, they turned aside and asked, “What is this which this man has to say?” Moreover, metaphors often convey to the mind truth which otherwise would not have reached the understanding, for men frequently see under the guise and form of an illustration a doctrine which, if it had been nakedly stated, they could not have comprehended.

Illustrations, like windows, let light into the chambers of the mind. There is this use also in a metaphor, that even if it is not understood at first, it excites thought and men exercise their minds upon it as children upon an enigma and so they learn, perhaps, more through a dark saying than through a sentence at first sight transparent. Yet further, metaphoric speech is apt to abide upon the memory—it retains its hold, even upon the unwilling mind—like a lion which has leaped upon a giraffe in the desert. Mere bald statements are soon forgotten, but illustrations stick in the soul like hooks in a fish’s mouth.

Therefore I thought it right, this morning, to take the simple and homely illustration of the text, which Jeremiah before had so well used, and see if we cannot impart thereby some arousing Truths of God to your minds. Perhaps you may with more pleasure attend to them, exercise more thought upon them and embrace them more earnestly in your memory because they come in homely pictorial garb.

I. “The bellows are burned.” This short sentence, as Jeremiah used it, was intended to apply to THE PROPHET HIMSELF. He likens the people of Israel to a mass of metal. This mass of metal claimed to be precious ore, such as gold or silver. It was put into the furnace, the object being to fuse it, so that the pure metal should be extracted from the dross. Lead was put in with the ore to act as a flux (that being relied upon by the ancient smelters, as quicksilver now is in these more instructed days). A fire was kindled and then the bellows were used to create an intense heat, the bellows being the Prophet himself.

He complains that he spoke with such pathos, such energy, such force of heart, that he exhausted himself without being able to melt the people’s hearts—so hard was the ore that the bellows were burned before the metal was melted—the Prophet was exhausted before the people were impressed! He had worn out his lungs, his powers of utterance. He had exhausted his mind, his powers of thought. He had broken his heart, his powers of emotion. But he could not divide the people from their sins and separate the precious from the vile. Now, alas, this is no solitary case, for throughout the whole history of the line of Heaven-sent ambassadors, this has been the rule and not the exception! The bellows have in almost every case been burnt, but the metal has not been melted.

It was so with Noah. For 120 years that preacher of righteousness continued to warn the people of the coming deluge. He added to his words the more powerful eloquence of deeds, for, moved with fear, he prepared an ark so that his preaching and his practice agreed. And yet by the space of 120 years he labored on, but not one single person was led to find a shelter in the ark which he prepared. And, with the exception of himself and family, the whole of his hearers perished in the judgment against which he warned mankind! In later times God’s servants seldom fared better— the most of them were despitefully persecuted and at best they were treated with neglect.

Listen to the mournful question of Isaiah, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?...All day 1ong,” he says, “I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” As for Jeremiah, from whom we borrow our text today, he was, indeed, like the bellows burned in the fire, for you hear him crying, “O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people.” And that famous lament of Jeremy, at the end of his prophecy, remains on record as one of the most amazing utterances of woe that could be poured out by a patriot and a Prophet over a captive people. Need I add that even to the days of John the Baptist, the servants of God wearied themselves in vain with a graceless people?

Say, it was not so with Prophets only, for He, our Lord and King, the chief of all teachers, fared no less cruelly at the hands of men! Never man spoke like that Man. He was, indeed, a bellows that might well, with His vehement force, have created a heat that might melt an adamant stone— but yet, after one of His most mighty sermons, His hearers would have cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill where their city was built! And at the end of His life’s sermon you know how the Cross and the crown of thorns were the honors meted out to Him. Sooner than the people would repent and become as molten metal, the Messiah, Himself, was made like the bellows which are burnt by long use at the fire.

Nor has this ceased to be the fact. Since the days of Christ, civilization, with all its progress, has not softened the human heart. Men are no mere amenable to the jurisdiction of God than they used to be. That heart which, in prophetic times, was like the nether millstone, is not today like wax. Looking down the list of the Apostles and of the confessors who followed them, we perceive what were the rewards accorded to the messengers of the Lord—they were stoned, were burned, were cast to beasts or drowned in the sea. The faithful servants of God and Truth were housed only in desert caves or sepulchral catacombs or loathsome dungeons. The comforts afforded them were the stocks, the fetter and the rack.

Their dying honors were the illuminations of the stake or the glitter of the headsman’s axe. And as for burial, full often they found no sextons but the dogs. The world was not worthy of them and yet it cast them out as too vile to live. Instead of the nations returning to their God, they took the messengers of the King, one by one, and treated them despitefully and slew them and cast them out of the vineyard. This iron-hearted world could not be melted—let the preachers of righteousness blow their vital breath upon the coals, the fire would burn the bellows—but not melt the ore.

Now, what does this say to us? Does it not tell the preacher and each one of us, who are laboring for Christ, that we ought never to be discouraged when we meet with little rebuffs from those whom we seek to bless? You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin! What if you have been ridiculed? What if your best endeavors have been misrepresented? What is this compared with the sufferings of those who have gone before you? Do you run with the footmen and do they weary you? What would you have done if you had been destined to contend with horses? If these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, make you cry, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord,” of what coward blood are you?

How little worthy are you to be written in the same muster-roll with those who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might be with Christ and gather in His redeemed! If you try to be like the bellows to melt these hard hearts and make them flow into the mold of Christ’s Gospel, you must expect to be burned in the fire! And because you encounter a little persecution, or disrespect, or difficulty, do you flee to your chamber and cry, “I will give it up”? Shame upon you! Rather, redouble your efforts and pray God to give you a greater blessing by way of success, or if not, greater patience to bear His will. For mark you, Brethren, though the bellows were burnt and the metal was not molten, the work was only lost so far as the metal was concerned, the Great Founder was not confounded!

Men shall glorify God one way or the other whenever the Gospel is preached to them. If they reject that message of love, yet they have made manifest in them the longsuffering of God in having borne with their hardheartedness. They show the mercy of God in having sent the Gospel to such unworthy persons. They cast all slurs away from the severity of God, for clearly it cannot be too severe to visit with vengeance those who have willfully rejected mercy. Those who weary the preacher, who brings them nothing but good news, deserve to be left in misery! It can by no means be complained of that, by-and-by, another preacher with heavier tidings is sent to summon them to judgment! The damned in Hell who heard the Gospel—oh, say not that the minister’s toil was lost because they rejected his entreaties!

May we labor not in vain and spend not our strength for nothing, for God’s honor is vindicated and His justice cleared from all manner of accusation, since the lost from among these, our cities, perished not without the opportunities of mercy! And they went not down to the Pit because relentless justice would not accept repentance! They had space for repentance—they had invitations to return—but they resolved on daring the wrath of God. The wooing of mercy was used and the entreaties of love were spent upon them, but inasmuch as they would not come, their blood is upon their own heads and even in the terrible wrath of God His rejected mercy is honored!

The preacher must not suppose that if men are not converted, he has lost his work. We are unto God a sweet savor as well in them that perish as in them that are saved—though in them that perish we are unto the men, themselves, a savor of death unto death—yet we are still a sweet savor unto God. If we do but proclaim the Gospel and are willing to wear ourselves out in so doing, if the bellows are burned, yet, verily I say unto you, we shall not lack our reward! If we receive no recompense in the conversion of souls, we shall have it from the lips of Him who shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! If you have not been successful, yet you have been faithful—enter into the joy of your Lord!”

We must not pass from this first meaning of the text without noticing that while it is the preacher’s business to continue to labor till he is worn out like the bellows that are burnt, yet his so doing involves many solemn consequences upon those for whom he labors so unsuccessfully. O my Hearers, this is the great test that discerns between the precious and the vile, between the chosen and the reprobate! The Gospel is the infallible test! If it comes to you being preached affectionately and with the Holy Spirit, if it does not save you, it confirms you in your ruin! If it does not lift you up to Heaven, it will be like a millstone about your neck to sink you to the lowest Hell! I know of none who are in a more hopeless case than those who have long listened to the Gospel preached to them with all affection and earnestness and yet have resolved to continue in the error of their ways.

We cannot tell what the metal is till we get it in the fire. But the fire tries it and if you have lain long in the white heat of an impressive Gospel ministry—the love of Jesus being like coals of juniper—and yet you have never been melted, if you do not tremble for yourself, I take leave to tremble for you! If a mother has pleaded with you. If she has even gone to her grave with sorrow because of the hardness of your heart, oh, surely this will testify against you in the day of reckoning! This marks you, even today, as hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. If you have worn out one after another of faithful friends who would gladly have conducted you to the Cross. If you have made your God to be, as Amos says, like a cart that is loaded with sheaves and pressed down, beware, O Man, beware! You are filling up the measure of the Almighty’s wrath! It is almost full and when it is filled, beware! Beware! Beware!

God is long in being provoked, but when His anger is at last stirred within Him, woe unto those against whom He lifts up Himself! Oil is a smooth and gentle thing, but once set it on a blaze and how it burns! And love, that tender thing, if once it turns to jealousy, how terrible its flame! Christ is the Lamb today, but tomorrow He may be a lion to you if you reject Him. That face which wept over Jerusalem—that dear face which is the very mirror of everything that is compassionate—will, if you continue hardened in heart, become the image of everything that is terrible, so that you shall call to the rocks, “Hide us,” and to the mountains, “Cover us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne.”

I wish that I had power to plead with you with the pathetic earnestness of Jeremiah. I fall far short of that, but I can at least speak with all his sincerity. I pray you do not wear us out with entreaties. Turn unto God while yet He gives you space. I pray you, if you have long rejected, harden no more your neck lest you suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. It may seem a slight thing to reject the preacher, but what if he is God’s ambassador! An insult to the Lord’s ambassador may be avenged by the Lord Himself! Since we come to you with nothing but terms of love and invitations of mercy and say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” we pray you, in Christ’s place, put not away our invitations, lest while we are exhausted you also should be condemned!

God bless this gentle word of admonition to many of you, and Christ shall have Glory by it.  
II. We turn now to a second interpretation of the text. This does not materially vary from the first. The bellows may be here meant, and according to many expositors it is so meant, THE AFFLICTIONS WHICH GOD SENDS UPON UNGODLY MEN. These afflictions are sent with the design of seeing whether they will melt in the furnace or not. If words of admonition have not been successful with them, God often, in His great mercy, tries with the ungodly the judgments of Providence, if perhaps by humbling them in their estate, or paining them in their bodies, or bereaving them of their friends, they may be brought into a humbler and better mind and may then seek the favor of God.  
Now where Divine Grace comes with these afflictions, it often happens that this good result is answered and like Manasseh, the sinner being taken among thorns, seeks unto the Lord and finds salvation. But without Grace, without the Holy Spirit’s softening power, all the afflictions in the world are but like bellows that blow the fire but they are sooner burnt—I mean the afflictions themselves are sooner exhausted—than the sinner’s heart is made to melt under the heat caused. It is clear enough in history that many men have been utterly insensible under Divine judgments. Chief and foremost among these was Pharaoh.  
God sent upon him plague upon plague—the great bellows poured in a terrific blast upon the furnace into which the Egyptian was cast! Ten great and vehement tempests of wrath followed each other. The huge furnace might well have melted granite, but Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not let the people go. In the full blast of the bellows he did, for a moment, relent and he said, “Entreat the Lord for me,” but it was all false repentance, for no sooner were the flogs or flies taken away, than once more he said, “Who is Jehovah? I will not let the people go.” He was raised up for this very purpose—to show forth the power of God to break those whom His mercy could not melt. There have been others like he. There are others like he, I fear, in this congregation this morning!  
Like Israel, given up to successive afflictions, they have, for awhile, repented, but then have returned, again, to their idols as fast as the judgments have been removed. They are like Ahaz, afflicted again and again, of whom it is written, “When he was afflicted, he sinned yet more and more: this is that king Ahaz.” Jerusalem was often chastened for her sins with siege and famine, plague and pestilence—but all this refining fire refined her not and at last the incorrigible city was given over to her doom. Her streets became rivers of blood, her palaces became a heap of ashes and her very site was sown with salt and her doom a theme of horror, making both the ears of him that heard it to tingle. Metal that will not melt must be cast away.  
I say there have been and there still are sinners upon whom the judgments of God seem to exert no melting power—they only grow harder the more severe the judgments of God become. Ah, my Hearers, I fear there are some such among you! You have now suffered a long series of trials, one after another they have come upon you. Your heavenly Father will not let you perish without at least, by His Providence, giving you line upon line, warning upon warning. He has not left you like Moab to be settled on your lees, but He has emptied you from vessel to vessel.  
Now, if all this has not brought you to His feet, you may expect to endure still more trials. If slight strokes will not suffice, they shall grow thicker and heavier, or mark, you, the Lord may say, “Let him alone, he is given unto idols.” And then if He never strike you again, it shall be worse with you still, for whom God gives up, Hell shall swallow up and where God’s Providence and Grace leave off, there God’s Justice and His Wrath begin—never to leave off—world without end!  
O you that have just escaped from a sick bed, saved as by the skin of your teeth from the jaws of death! O you that have lost your property and have been brought down from opulence to penury! O you that have suffered bereavements following each other, whose scars are fresh upon your soul—throw yourselves into the arms of Him who strikes you and yield to Him at once! It is far too unequal a combat! Let not the stubble contend with the fire! Let not the straw defy the flame! You shall be utterly consumed in the day of His terrors when He lays bare His arm to deal with you! If His rod makes you smart, what will His sword do? And if the hidings of His power have been so terrible, what will it be when He puts on His armor and comes forth to fight against you?  
Let not God exhaust His afflictions on you. O let not the Lord be made to say, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you?” Behold, He has dug about you. He has done for His vineyard all that could be done, yet if there is no more to be done in mercy, there will be much more to be done in vengeance! If the bellows are burned, yet the fire is not quenched and that fire shall burn even to the hottest Hell. God save you from it for His mercy’s sake.  
III. A third application of the text may be allowed. The bellows are burned. This may be an allusion to THE CHASTISEMENTS WHICH GOD SENDS UPON HIS OWN PEOPLE which are not always as successful as they ought to be, by reason of the hardness of His servants’ hearts. In such cases it seems as if affliction, itself, would be exhausted before they would be purified—the bellows would be burned before the metal would be melted. My dear fellow Christians, you and I, if we are walking very near to God, ought to know and do know, that God gives us much instruction by little hints. When two persons perfectly understand each other, they can say almost as much with their eyes as others can with their tongues.  
Now, you who are the King’s favorites will sometimes suffer a little twitch of bodily pain, or a little trial in business, or some slight relative affliction—that little trouble may be the Lord speaking to you with, as it were, a shake of the head or a lifting of the finger. There is something in you which your loving Lord would have you purge out, something displeasing to Him or dangerous to you. Now search and look for this upon the faintest hint. He has said, “I will guide you with My eyes,” but He has added, “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding”—for mark, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you do not observe those motions of God’s eyes—He loves you too well to let you sin and therefore the hints will become stronger, and they will be more painful.  
Notice how the Psalmist proceeds—“Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” God does not wish to bit and bridle you. He would have you guided with the gentle warnings of His eyes. But if you will not accept the more tender guidance, why, then, it must come to the bit and the whip. If you will not be melted at a common heat, you shall find the temperature rising higher and higher! And if one severe trial is not sanctified to you, you may expect another of a still hotter sort, for the Great Refiner will have His gold pure and will utterly remove our tin.  
I do not lay down the doctrine that all our afflictions are indications of indwelling sin! On the contrary, I believe that some afflictions may be Sovereign, that other afflictions are sent for a trial of our Graces that God may be glorified by our victories, and yet a third class are intended to promote our advance in Grace. But yet I am persuaded that the rod in God’s house is principally used because of the offences of the children, and I am persuaded that if you would be spared that rod, so far as it is a chastening rod, you can only escape it by obedience and by a very careful observance of the gentle motions of your Father’s eyes.  
Why, a dear child, when he is living obediently and lovingly with his father, does not need, in order to repentance, to have done so much amiss as to cause his father to speak—he is grieved if he has done enough to make his father shake his head! That shake of the head cuts him to the quick. And should he unhappily provoke a sharp word from his father, why then his tender heart communicates with his weeping eyes and he cannot forgive himself. Yet there are unloving children who will even rebel until they draw down blows upon themselves and, even then, hold out till the strokes are multiplied and the father proceeds from chastening to repeated chastening.  
I am afraid the most of us are such children. We cause our Father to chasten us very frequently and if we have to mourn amid many tribulations, we may well say, “Why does a living man complain—a man for the punishment of his sins?” Brothers and Sisters, do not let it be said of us that the bellows are used till they are worn out before our afflictions melt us to repentance and cause us to let go our sins! But let us seek of the Lord a spirit that is amenable to His rod, a filial heart, a sensitive nature. O that the breath of His Word may make fire enough to melt our hearts to repentance and that we may never provoke trials which shall even burn the bellows!  
IV. Fourthly, I may, without violence to propriety, use the text as if it taught that the time is coming when THE EXCITEMENT OF UNGODLY MEN, which now keeps the fire of their activity vigorously burning, will be taken away from them and then they will flag and die out in sorrow. The fire in the smithy burns gaily and merrily and sends forth troops of leaping sparks dancing into the air like stars—but no sooner do the bellows cease to blow than there remains only a little fire, and by-and-by only cold coals and dead ashes—for everything depends on the bellows.  
Perhaps, my Hearer, this morning you are like a furnace excited by the bellows and your excitement is the pursuit of wealth. You can rise early, you can sit up late, you can work, you can bear a deal of exertion and mental strain because you are bent on accumulating a fortune. Yes, but what would you do, what have some done when sudden reverses have swept away the accumulations of a life, or when a panic has blown down their speculations like card houses? Oh, what tears have strong men shed in this city, tears which fell not outside the cheek, these had been harmless—but they dropped within the soul to scald and sear it with everabiding melancholy! That which cheered and comforted them—the gain of wealth—has gone and the busy merchants have been ready for the lunatic asylum or for suicide.  
How these golden bellows will cease to blow when men come to die! Ah, how little will wealth stimulate the joys of the last moment! Fool, you have only bought yourself a marble tomb and what is that to your poor dustred ashes? You are now to leave all you have—you are as the partridge that sits on the eggs but hatches them not. Your joys are all for another and not for you. Oh, how often do men that have been happy enough in the accumulation of riches, die in utter misery with all their gold and silver about them because their bellows of avaricious acquisition have been burned by their very success and the flame of hope and ambition has hopelessly died out!  
Many activities are kept up by the love of fame. Men have climbed step by step the ladder of public esteem and loved the dizzy height. How men will flame and blaze while fame blows the bellows! How content men are to burn away

their lives for the approbation of their fellow creatures, yet many of them have lost all joy in honor long before they have departed this life! And certainly those who have nothing else to inspire the flame of hope in the last article of death but the approbation of men will find their fires dwindling sadly low and dark—dark, dark must be their departure! How sad for a soul to know that the clangor of fame’s trumpet is dying away from its ears to be superseded by the blast of that awful trumpet ordained to wake the dead and call them to their last account! Dear Hearers, live not with such aims as these or your bellows will be burned.  
Often, alas, conspicuously often, men live for pleasure and for pleasure they destroy body and soul. But after awhile satiety follows lust, enjoyment palls and the man’s vigor decays and his mirth is gone. The last days of the votary of fleshly pleasure are like that dwindling fire which, despite its temporary blaze, is a poor dying thing when the bellows foster it no longer. Alas for the wretch who is dead while he lives, standing amid his fellows like a blasted tree amid the forest that has been split by lightning—a little lingering verdure proves that life is yet there—but the decaying trunk and sapless branches show how near it is to death. Make not pleasure the bellows of your life, lest these bellows be burned in the fire and the flame of your joy go out.  
Others have made the great bellows of their life hypocrisy. They have been religious that they might be esteemed. They have frequented God’s House that they might be thought respectable. But at last they have been unmasked, or if not, in the last hour Death has knocked off their mask and let the man see in the looking glass of truth what he really is. The silver veil has been taken from the pretender’s leprous brow and he has seen himself to be accursed and then, poor wretch, how the bellows have been burned in the fire—no longer could he keep up his reigned zeal and pretended joy—his hopes turn to ashes and his consolations die out in despair!  
My dear Hearers, have nothing for your stimulus but that which will last as long as you last! Have nothing for your master motive but than which you can take with you beyond the grave! Seek nothing as the grand object of your existence but that which may be suitable for an immortal’s pursuit. Remember, this life is not all and the grave is not the goal of being. You are not dumb driven cattle—going to the shambles of death, there to be slaughtered and forgotten—you are about to enter through the porch of this life into the palace of eternity, or, if you will dare to make it so, the dungeon of eternity.  
Your future shall be as this life foretells it. O that you may be helped by Divine Grace to spend this life in a way that from it you may pass into the better and not to waste the present that from it you may descend into that worst of ills which has no end.  
V. The last use we shall make of the text, “The bellows are burned,” is this—this may be applied to THOSE EXCITMENTS WHICH KEEP ALIVE THE CHRISTIAN’S ZEAL. The mercy is that I can only apply this negatively, for I trust we are well assured that the bellows which maintains our spirit’s ardor are not burned. My dear Friends, we have, in our time, seen in certain Churches great blazes of enthusiasm, as if Vesuvius and Etna had both taken to work. These outbursts of flame have been misnamed revivals, but might just as well have been called agitations.  
I have known, in my short time, certain Churches in the paroxysms of delirium, meeting houses crowded, aisles filled, preachers stamping and thundering, hearers intoxicated with excitement and persons converted wholesale—even children converted by hundreds—they said thousands. Well, and a month or two after, where were the congregations? Where were the converts? Echo has answered, “Where, where?” Why, the converts were worse sinners than they were before! Or they were mere professors, puffed up into a superficial religion from which they soon fell into a hopeless coldness which has rendered it difficult ever to stir them again.  
I love all genuine revivals—with all my heart I would aid and support them—but I now speak of certain spurious things which I have seen and which are not uncommon, even now, where there has not been God’s Holy Spirit, but mere excitement, loudness of talk, big words, fanaticism and rant and nothing more. Now, in such cases, why was it the fire went out? Why, the man who blew the bellows went away to use his lungs elsewhere! And as soon as ever the good man, who, by his remarkable manner and telling style, had created this stir, was gone, the fire went out! I have known quiet Churches in which the same thing has happened in a manner equally grievous. The people have been very earnest and much good work has been done, but the departure to Heaven of their excellent minister has been to this people what the death of a judge was to the children of Israel.  
O may God spare those valued lives which in our Churches promote the earnestness of God’s people and may it be long before the bellows are burned! But, still, mark you, our zeal ought no to be so sustained. The fervor of the Church ought never to be dependent upon the eloquence of any man. Our reason for earnestness should not depend on the ministrations of any particular individual. Principle ought to sway us and not passion—real fervor and not the excitement which may be gathered from vehement speech and crowded assemblies. Brothers and Sisters, I shall not enlarge upon this except to come home to you.  
There may be those here who in years now past were very earnest, and the fire in their soul was burning very vehemently. To you I speak. You were generous in your gifts. You were constant in your attendance upon the means of Divine Grace. You were always at the Prayer Meetings. You were diligent in pious labors, you were happy and useful—but now you have subsided into a state of lethargy. You give but little, you pray but little, you work less and feel scarcely anything. You have grown colder and colder, and colder by degrees, till you are now as cold as the North Pole itself! Now, Brother, how is it that your bellows are burned? How is it that the excitements which kept you alive are gone?  
Ought they to have departed? Am I not right in saying that your obligations remain the same as ever they did? Ten years ago you owed your salvation to the precious blood of Jesus Christ—to what do you owe it now? Ten years ago you were nothing but a sinner looking up to the crucified Savior—what are you now? How much of your debt to Christ Jesus have you paid? Can you boast of not being as much in debt as then? I frankly confess that if I owed my Lord much 20 years ago, I owe Him far more today. Instead of rising out of His debt, I sink the deeper and the deeper in it, for I am all over in debt to Him.  
Your obligations, my Brother, my Sister, remain. If they made you zealous 10 years ago, why not now? If it was but right and just that you should live for Christ, who bought you then, in the name of right and justice what shall excuse you now? As your obligations remain the same, so your Master abides the same. If you loved Jesus, then, and for the Glory of His name you sprang into the forefront of the battle, is He less worthy now? Is Christ less lovely? Does He love you less? Has He been less faithful? Is He today less kind? Is His intercession failing? Is His precious blood losing its cleansing power? Can you afford, therefore, to treat Him worse when He is still the same yesterday, today and forever? Why, if it really was obligation to Christ and attachment to His Person that acted as the bellows to keep your zeal blazing, there are the same bellows today! So why not be just as earnest, or even more so?  
My dear Friend, surely at this moment the strength that keeps your soul alive is the same as it used to be. You were sustained in the past by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit has grown old and His power is palsied, I can understand your zeal becoming feeble and your being excused for it. But since the Holy Spirit is always the same, ought not the fruits to be the same? If you only had your native strength, I can understand your decaying, as we all must, by the lapse of years. But the Immortal Life within you is not affected by the decay of the body—it ought to bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. Since your Strength is still the same, the bellows are not burned—so let the fire flame up afresh today.  
Moreover, you that served God in your youth should remember that the objects for which you served God remain the same. Souls are as precious today as they were when you, as a lad, gave your heart to Christ. Ah, you thought, then, you could do anything to win a soul! But men are damned today as they were then. Hell is as hot now as it was then. Death is as terrible a thing, today, as it was 20 years ago, and therefore let not the bellows be burned, but return to the fullness of your zeal and serve your Master as you did in the days of your espousals. My dear Friend, for you to decline as you grow older will be to make the world say, “That man gets wiser, and the wiser he gets the less he loves God. Therefore,” say they, “it is foolish to love God at all.”  
Will you put such pleas into the mouths of blasphemers? Will you be an advocate for the devil? Will you thus practically help the ungodly to sleep on in their careless disregard of God? I pray you now to do so! As you grow in Divine Grace, and I trust you do so if you are, indeed, a Christian, is it consistent that the stronger the tree grows the less it should bear? Is it consistent that if the child worked, the man should sleep? If the boy carried his burden, is the full grown man to carry none? Are you, because you progress in the Divine life, to be gradually excused of all Christian service? Shall only the recruits march to battle and the veterans never bear the banner nor wave the sword? Oh, it must not be!  
Besides, you are drawing nearer Heaven and are you to be less heavenly as you get nearer to the New Jerusalem? Are you to serve God less as you approach nearer to the place where you are to serve Him day and night without weariness? Are you to be less like Christ as you approach nearer to the place where you are to be altogether like He is? No! Scorn such insinuations—  
*“Let every flying hour confess  
We bring Your Gospel fresh renown!  
And when our lives and labors cease  
May we possess the promised crown.”*  
Suspect, dear Brothers and Sisters, that if your zeal is flagging there must have been some other motive than a heavenly one that made it so lively at first, for heavenly motives never cease and neither do they lose their reasonableness, or their efficacy. Ask yourselves if you were genuinely converted. Examine yourselves whether you are really in the faith, for if you are not, it is no wonder that your piety declines!  
But if you are true converts, your faith must be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day. Instead of bellows burned in the fire, Brethren, may it be yours and mine to go to our grave in a hale old age with more earnestness within than our bodies can execute! May we serve our Master till the last minute! If the scabbard is worn out, let the sword be sharp. God grant us every day we live to serve Him better! May every hour that He gives us here be getting more and more spiritually-minded, more and more anxious to tell abroad the glories of His name. God bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 6.*  
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“WHAT HAVE I DONE?”  
NO. 169

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 27, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“What have I done?”  
Jeremiah 8:6.**

PERHAPS no figure represents God in a more gracious light than those figures of speech which represent Him as stooping from His throne and as coming down from Heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We must have love for that God, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were reeking with iniquity, would not destroy those cities— although He knew their guilt and their wickedness, until He had made an actual visitation to them and had sojourned for awhile in their streets. Methinks we cannot help pouring out our heart in affection to that God of whom we are told that He inclines His ear from the highest glory and puts it to the lip of the faintest that breathes out the true desire. How can we resist feeling that He is a God whom we must love, when we know that He regards everything that concerns us, numbers the very hairs of our heads, bids His angels protect our footsteps lest we dash our feet against stones, marks our path and orders our ways?

But especially is this great truth brought near to man’s heart when we remember how attentive God is, not merely to the temporal interests of His creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. God is represented in Scripture as waiting to be gracious, or, in the language of the parable, when His prodigals are yet a great way off He sees them. He runs and falls upon their neck and kisses them. He is so attentive to everything that is good, even in the poor sinner’s heart, that to Him there is music in a sigh and beauty in a tear. And in this verse that I have just read, He represents Himself as looking upon man’s heart and listening—listening, if possibly He may hear something that is good. “I hearkened and heard. I listened. I stood still and I attended to them.” And how amiable does God appear, when He is represented as turning aside, as it were, with grief in His heart, exclaiming “I did listen, I did hearken, but they spoke not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, ‘What shall I do?’ ”

Ah, my Hearer, you never have a desire towards God which does not excite God’s hope. You never breathe a prayer towards Heaven which He does not notice. And though you have very often uttered prayers which have been as the morning cloud and as the early dew that soon passes away, yet all these things have moved Jehovah’s heart—for He has been hearkening to your cry and noticing the breathing of your soul. And though it all has passed away, yet it did not pass away unnoticed, for He remembers it even now. And oh, you that are this day seeking a Savior,

remember—that Savior’s eyes are on your seeking souls today. You are not looking after one who cannot see you—you are coming to your Father, but your Father sees you even in the distance. It was but one tear that trickled down your cheek, but your Father noticed that as a hopeful sign—it was but one throb that went through your heart just now during the singing of the hymn, but God, the Loving, noticed even that and thought upon it as at least some omen that you were not yet quite hardened by sin nor yet given up by love and mercy.

The text is “What have I done?” I shall just introduce that by a few words of affectionate persuasion, urging all now present to ask that question. Secondly, I shall give them a few words of assistance in trying to answer it. And when I have done so, I shall finish by a few sentences of solemn admonition to those who have had to answer the question against themselves.

I. First, then, a few words of EARNEST PERSUASION, requesting everyone now present and more especially every unconverted person, to ask this question of himself and answer it solemnly: “What have I done?” Few men like to take the trouble to review their own lives. Most men are so near bankruptcy that they are ashamed to look at their own books. The great masses of mankind are like the silly ostrich, which, when hard pressed by the hunters, buries its head in the sand and shuts its eyes and then thinks because it does not see its pursuers, it is safe. The great masses of mankind, I repeat, are ashamed to review their own biographies. And if conscience and memory together could turn joint authors of a history of their lives throughout, they would buy a huge iron clasp and a padlock to it and lock the volume up, for they dare not read it.

They know it to be a book full of lamentation and woe which they dare not read and still go on in their iniquities. I have, therefore, a hard task in endeavoring to persuade you one and all to take down that book and be its pages few or many, be they white or be they black, I have some difficulty in getting you to read them through. But may the Holy Spirit persuade you now, so that you may answer this question, “What have I done?” For remember, my dear Friends, that searching yourself can do you no harm. No tradesman ever gets the poorer by looking to his books. He may find himself to be poorer than he thought he was, but it is not the looking to the books that has hurt him. He has hurt himself by some ill trading before. Better, my Friends, for you to know the past while there is yet time for repairing it, than that you should go blindfolded, hoping to enter the gates of Paradise and find out your mistake when alas, it is too late, because the door is shut.

There is nothing to be lost by taking stock. You cannot be any the worse off for a little self examination. This of itself shall be one strong argument to induce you to do it. But remember you may be a great deal the better. For suppose your affairs are all right with God—why then you may make good cheer and comfort yourself. He that is right with his God has no cause to be sad. But ah, remember there are many probabilities that you are wrong. There are so many in this world that are deceived that there are many chances that you are deceived, too. You may have a name to live and yet be dead. You may be like John Bunyan’s tree, of which He said, “‘twas fair to look upon and green outside, but the inside of it was rotten enough to be tinder for the devil’s tinder box.” You may this day thus stand before yourself and fellow creatures well white-washed and exceeding fair, but you may be like that Pharisee of whom Christ said, “You are a white-washed sepulcher, for inwardly you are full of rottenness and dead men’s bones.”

Now, Man, however you may wish to be self-deceived, for my own part I feel that I would a thousand times rather know my own state really than have the most pleasing conceptions about it and find myself deceived. Many a time have I solemnly prayed that prayer, “Lord, help me to know the worst of my own case. If I am still an apostate from You, without God and without Christ, at least let me be honest to myself and know what I am.” Remember, my Friends, that the time you have for self-examination is, after all, very short. Soon you will know the great secret. I perhaps may not say words rough enough to rend off the mask which you now have upon you, but there is one called Death who will stand no compliment.

You may masquerade it out today in the dress of the saint, but death will soon strip you and you must stand before the Judgment Seat after death has discovered you in all your nakedness, be that naked innocence or naked guilt. Remember, too, though you may deceive yourself, you will not deceive your God. You may have light weights and the beam of the scale in which you weigh yourself may not be honest and may not therefore tell the truth. But when God shall try you He will make no allowances. When the everlasting Jehovah grasps the balances of justice and puts His Law into one scale, ah, Sinner, how will you tremble when He shall put you into the other. For unless Christ is your Christ you will be found light weight—you will be weighed in the balances and found wanting and be cast away forever.

Oh, what words shall I adopt to induce everyone of you now to search yourselves? I know the various excuses that some of you will make. Some of you will plead that you are members of Churches and that, therefore, all is right with you. Perhaps you look across from the gallery and you say to me, “Spurgeon, your hands baptized me but this year into the Lord Jesus and you have often passed to me the sacramental bread and wine.” Ah, my Hearer, I know that and I have baptized, I fear, many of you that the Lord has never baptized and some of you have been received into Church fellowship on earth who were never received by God. If Jesus Christ had one hypocrite in His twelve, how many hypocrites must I have here in nearly twelve hundred?

Ah, my Hearers, in this age it is a very easy thing to make a profession of religion. Many Churches receive candidates into their fellowship without examination at all. I have had such come to me and I have told them, “I must treat you just the same as if you came from the world,” because they said, “I never saw the minister, I wrote a note to the Church and they took me in.” Verily, in this age of profession, a man may make the highest profession in the world and yet be at last found with damned apostates. Do not put off the question for that. And do not say, “I am too busy to attend to my spiritual concerns. There is time enough yet.” Many have said that and before their “time enough” has come, they have found themselves where time shall be no more. Oh, you that say you have time enough, how little do you know how near death is to you! There are some present that will not see New Year’s Day. There is every probability that a very large number will never see another year. Oh, may the Lord our God prepare us each for death and for judgment and bless this morning’s exhortation to our preparation, by leading us to ask the question—“What have I done?”

II. Now, then, I am to help you to answer the question—“What have I done?” Christian, true Christian, I have little to say to you this morning. I will not multiply words, but leave the enquiry with your own conscience. What have you done? I hear you reply, “I have done nothing to save myself, for that was done for me in the Everlasting Covenant, from before the foundation of the world. I have done nothing to make a righteousness for myself, for Christ said, ‘It is finished.’ I have done nothing to procure Heaven by my merits, for all that Jesus did for me before I was born.” But say, Brother, what have you done for Him who died to save your wretched soul? What have you done for His Church? What have you done for the salvation of the world? What have you done to promote your own spiritual growth in grace?

Ah, I might hit some of you that are true Christians very hard here. But I will leave you with your God. God will chastise His own children. I will, however, put a pointed question. Are there not many Christians now present who cannot remember that they have been the means of the salvation of one soul during this year? Come, now. Think—have you any reason to believe that directly or indirectly you have been made the means this year of the salvation of a soul? I will go further. There are some of you who are old Christians and I will ask you this question—have you any reason to believe that ever since you were converted you have ever been the means of the salvation of a soul? It was reckoned in the past, in the times of the Patriarchs, to be a disgrace to a woman that she had no children. But what a disgrace it is to a Christian to have no spiritual children—to have none born unto God by his instrumentality!

And yet there are some of you here that have been spiritually barren and have never brought one convert to Christ. You have not one star in your crown of glory and must wear a starless crown in Heaven. Oh, I think I see the joy and gladness with which a good child of God looked upon me last week, when we had heard someone who had been converted to God by her instrumentality. I took her by the hand and said, “Well, now, you have reason to thank God.” “Yes, Sir,” she said, “I feel a happy and an honored woman now. I have never, that I know of before, been the means of bringing a soul to Christ.” And the good woman looked so happy the tears were in her eyes for gladness. How many have you brought during this year? Come, Christian, what have you done? Alas! Alas, you have not been a barren fig tree, but still your fruit is such that it cannot be seen. You may be alive unto God. But how many of you have been very unprofitable and exceedingly unfruitful?

And do not think that while I thus deal hardly with you I would escape myself? No, I ask myself the question, “What have I done?” And when I think of the zeal of Whitfield and of the earnestness of many of those great evangelists of former times, I stand here astounded at myself and I ask myself the question, “What have I done?” And I can only answer it with some confusion of face. How often have I preached to you, my Hearers, the Word of God and yet how seldom have I wept over you as a pastor should! How often ought I to have warned you of the wrath to come, when I have forgotten to be so earnest as I might have been. I fear lest the blood of souls should lie at my door, when I shall come to be judged of my God at last. I beseech you, pray for your minister in this thing, that he may be forgiven, if there has ever been a lack of earnestness and energy and prayerfulness. And pray that during the next year I may always preach as though I never might preach again—

*“A dying man to dying men.”*

I heard the moralist while I was questioning the Christian, say, “What have I done? Sir, I have done all I ought to have done. You may, as a Gospeller, stand there and talk to me about sins. But I tell you Sir, I have done all that was my duty. I have always attended my Church or Chapel regularly every Sunday as ever a man or woman could. I have always read prayers in the family and I always say prayers before I go to bed and when I get up in the morning. I don’t know that I owe anybody anything, or that I have been unkind to anybody. I give a fair share to the poor and I think if good works have any merit I certainly have done a great deal.”

Quite right, my Friend. Very right indeed—if good works have any merit. But then it is very unfortunate that they have not any. For our good works, if we do them to save ourselves by them, are no better than our sins. You might as well hope to go to Heaven by cursing and swearing as by the merits of your own good works. For although good works are infinitely preferable to cursing and swearing in a moral point of view, yet there is no more merit in one than there is in the other, though there is less sin in one than in the other. Will you please to remember, then, that all you have been doing all these years is good for nothing?

“Well, but, Sir, I have trusted in Christ.” Now, stop! Let me ask you a question. Do you mean to say, that you have trusted partly in Christ and partly in your own good works? “Yes, Sir.” Well, then, let me tell you, the

Lord Jesus Christ will never be a make-weight. You must take Christ wholly, or else no Christ at all—Christ will never go halves with you in the work of salvation. So, I repeat, all you have ever done is good for nothing. You have been building a card house and the tempest will blow it down. You have been building a house upon the sand and when the rains descend and the floods come, the last vestige of it will be swept away forever. Hear the word of the Lord! “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” And in as much as you have not continued in all things that are written in the Law you are transgressors of the Law and you are under the curse. All that the Law has to say to you is, “Cursed, cursed, cursed! Your morality is of no help to you whatever, as to eternal things.”

I turn to another character. He says, “Well, I don’t trust in my morality nor in anything else. I say—

*‘Be gone, dull care, I pray you be gone from me.’*I have nothing to do with talking about eternity, as you would have me. But, Sir, I am not a bad fellow after all. It is a very little that I ever do amiss. Now and then a peccadillo, just a little folly, but neither my country, nor my friends, nor my own conscience can say anything against me. True, I am none of your saints. I don’t profess to be too strict. I may go a little too far sometimes, but it is only a little and I dare say we shall be able to set all matters straight before the end comes.” Well, Friend, but I wish you had asked yourself the question, “What have I done?”—it strikes me that if each of you would just take off that film that covers your heart and your life, you might see a grievous leprosy lurking behind what you have done.

“Well, for the matter of that” says one, “perhaps I may have taken a glass or two too much sometimes.” Stop a bit! What is the name of that? Stutter as much as you like! Out with it! What is the name of it? “Why, it is just a little mirth, Sir.” Stop. Let us have the right name of it! What do you call it in anyone else? “Drunkenness, I suppose.” Says another, “I have been a little loose in my talk sometimes.” What is that? “It has been just a merry spree.” Yes, but please call it what it ought to be called— lascivious conversation. Write that down. “Oh, no, Sir. Things are looking serious.” Yes, they are indeed. But they do not look any more serious than they really are. Sometimes you have been out on the Sabbath-Day, haven’t you? “Oh, yes. But that has been only now and then—just sometimes.” Yes, but let us put it down what it is and we will see what the list comes to—Sabbath-breaking!

“Stop,” you say, “I have gone no further, Sir, certainly I have gone no further.” I suppose in your conversation, sometime, during your life, you have quoted texts of Scripture to make jokes of them haven’t you? And sometimes you have cried out, when you have been a little surprised, “Lord have mercy upon me!” and such things. I don’t venture to say you swear—though there is a Christian way of swearing that some people get into and they think it is not quite swearing, but what it is nobody knows and so we will put it down as swearing—cursing and swearing.

“Oh, Sir, it was only when somebody trod on my toes, or I was angry.” Never mind, put it down by its right name. We shall get a pretty good list against you by-and-by. I suppose that in trade you never adulterate your articles. “Well that is a matter of business in which you ought not to interfere.” Well, it so happens I am going to interfere—and if you please, we will call it by its right name—stealing. We will put that down. I suppose you have never been hard with a debtor, have you? You have never at any time wished that you were richer and sometimes half wished that your opposite neighbor would lose part of his custom, so that you might have it? Well, we will call it by its right name—that is “covetousness, which is idolatry.” Now, the list seems to be getting black indeed.

Besides that, how have you spent all this year? And though you have pretended sometimes to say prayers, have you ever really prayed? No, you have not. Well, then there is prayerlessness to put down. You have sometimes read the Bible, you have sometimes listened to the ministry. But have you not, after all, let all these things pass away? Then I want to know whether that is not despising God and whether we must not put it down under that name? Truly, we need go but very little further. For the list already, when summed up, is most fearful and few of us can escape from sins so great as these, if our conscience is but a little awake.

But there is one man here who has grown very careless and indifferent to every point of morality—and he says, “Ah, young man, I could tell you what I have done during the year.” Stop, Sir, I don’t particularly wish to know just now. You may as well tell it to yourself when you get home. There are young people here. It would not do them much good to know what you have done, perhaps. You are no better than you should be, some people say—which means you are so bad they would not like to say what you are. Do you suppose in all this congregation we have no debauched men—none that indulge in the vilest sin and lust? Why, God’s angel seems even now to be flying through our midst and touching the conscience of some, to let them know in what iniquities they have indulged during the year. I pray God that my just simply alluding to them may be the means of startling your conscience.

Ah, you may hide your sins. The coverlet of darkness may be your shelter. You may think they shall never be discovered. But remember, every sin that you have done shall be read before the sun—and men and angels shall hear it in the day of final account. Ah, my Hearer, be you moral or be you dissolute, I beseech you, answer this question solemnly today— “What have I done?” It would be as well if you took a piece of paper when you went home and just wrote down what you have done from last January to December. And if some of you do not get frightened at it I must say you have got pretty strong nerves and are not likely to be frightened at

much yet.

Now I specially address myself to the unconverted man and I would help him to answer this question in another point of view. “What have I done?” Ah, Man, you that live in sin! You that are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God—what have you done? Do you not know that one sin is enough to damn a soul forever? Have you never read in Holy Scripture that cursed is he that sins but once? How damned then, are you by the myriad sins of this one year? Recall, I beseech you, the sins of your youth and your former transgressions up till now. And if one sin would ruin you forever, how ruined are you now? Why Man, one wave of sin may swamp you. What will these oceans of your guilt do? One witness against you will be enough to condemn you!

Behold the crowds of follies and of crimes now gathered round the Judgment Seat that have gone before you into judgment. How will you escape from their testimonies when God shall call you to His bar? What have you done? Come, Man, answer this question. There are many consequences involved in your sin and in order to answer this question rightly you must reply to every consequence. What have you done to your own soul? Why, you have destroyed it. You have done your best to ruin it forever. For your own poor soul you have been digging dungeons. You have been piling fire wood, you have been forging chains of iron—fire wood with which to burn it—and fetters with which to bind it forever.

Remember, your sins are like sowing for a harvest. What a harvest is that which you have sown for your poor soul! You have sown the wind, you shall reap the whirlwind. You have sown iniquity, you shall reap damnation. But what have you done against the Gospel? Remember how many times this year you have heard it preached? Why since your birth there have been wagon loads of sermons wasted on you! Your parents prayed for you in your youth, your friends instructed you till you did come to manhood. Since then how many a tear has been wept by the minister for you? How many an earnest appeal has been shot into your heart? But you have rent out the arrow. Ministers have been concerned to save you and you have never been concerned about yourself. What have you done against Christ? Remember, Christ has been a good Christ to sinners here. But as there is nothing that burns so well as that soft substance oil, so there is nothing that will be so furious as that gentle-hearted Savior when He comes to be your Judge. Fiercer than a lion on His prey is rejected love. Despise Christ on the Cross and it will be a terrible thing to be judged by Christ on His Throne.

But again—what have you done for your children this year? Oh, there are some here present that have been doing all they could to ruin their children’s souls. ‘Tis solemn what responsibility rests upon a father. And what shall be said of a drunken father?—the father that sets his children an example of drunkenness. Swearer, what have you done for your family? Haven’t you, too, been twisting the rope for their eternal destruction? Will they not be sure to do as you do? Mother, you have several children, but this year you have never prayed for one of them—never put your arms round their necks as they kneeled at their little chair at night and said, “Our Father.” You have never told them of Jesus that loved children and once became a child like they.

Ah, then, you, too, have neglected your children. I remember a mother who was converted to God in her old age and she said to me—and I shall never forget the woman’s grief—“God has forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself. For, Sir,” she said, “I have nourished and brought up children, but I have done it without any respect to religion.” And then she burst into tears and said, “I have been a cruel mother, Sir. I have been a wretch!” “Why,” said I, “my good woman, you have brought your children up.” “Yes,” said she, “my husband died when they were young and left me with six of them and these hands have earned their bread and found them clothes. No one,” she said, “can accuse me of being unkind to them in anything but this. But this is the worst of all, I have been a cruel mother to them, for while I fed their bodies I neglected their souls.”

But some have gone further than this. Ah, young man, you have not only done your best this year to damn yourself, but you have done your best to damn others! Remember last January when you took that young man into the tavern for the first time and laughed at all his boyish scruples, as you called them, and told him to drink away as you did? Remember, when in the darkness of night you first led astray one young man whose principles were virtuous and who had not known lust until you had revealed it to him? You said at the time, “Come with me, I’ll show you London life, I’ll let you see pleasure!” That young man, when he first came to your shop, used to go to the house of God on Sunday and seemed to bid fair for Heaven—“Ah,” you say, “I have laughed religion out of Jackson. He doesn’t go anywhere on a Sunday now except for a spree and he is just as merry as any of us.” Ah, Sir, and you will have two Hells when you are damned. You will have your own Hell and his, too, for he will look through the lurid flames upon you and say, “Maybe I had never been here if you had not brought me here!”

And ah, seducer, what eyes will be those that will glare at you through Hell’s horror?—The eyes of one whom you led into iniquity! What double Hells they will be to you as they glare on you like two stars whose light is fury and wither your blood forever! Pause you that have led others astray and tremble now. I paused myself and prayed to God when first I knew a Savior that He would help me to lead those to Christ that I had ever in any way led astray. And I remember George Whitfield said when he began to pray, his first prayer was that God would convert those with whom he used to play at cards and  
wasted his Sundays. “And blessed be God,” he says, “I got every one of them.”  
O my God, can I not detect in some face here astonishment and terror? Does no man’s knees knock together? Does no man’s heart quail within him because of his iniquity? Surely it cannot be so, else were your hearts turned to steel and your hearts become as iron in the midst of you. Surely, if it is so, the Words of God are most certainly true, wherein He says in the seventh verse of this chapter—“The stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times. And the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.” And certainly that Prophet was true who said, “The ox knows its owner and the ass his master’s crib, but My people do not know, Israel does not consider.” Oh, are you so brutish as to let the reflections of that guilt pass over you without causing astonishment and terror? Then, surely, we who feel our guilt have need to bend our knees for you and pray that God might yet bring you to know yourselves. For, living and dying as you are—hardened and without hope—your lot must be horrible in the extreme.

How happy should I be if I might hope that the great mass of you could accompany me in this humble confession of our faith. May I speak as if I were speaking for each one of you? It shall be at your option, either to accept what I say, or to reject it. But I trust the great multitude of you will follow me. “Oh, Lord! I this morning confess that my sins are greater than I can bear. I have deserved Your hottest wrath and Your infinite displeasure. And I hardly dare to hope that You can have mercy upon me. But inasmuch as You did give Your Son to die upon the Cross for sinners, You have also said, ‘Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.’ Lord I look to You this morning, though I never looked before, yet I look now. Though I have been a slave of sin to this moment, yet Lord accept me, sinner though I am, through the blood and righteousness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Oh Father, frown not on me, You may well do so, but I plead that promise which says, ‘Whosoever comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ Lord, I come—

*“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to You  
O Lamb of God, I come.’  
My faith does lay its hand,  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.”*

“Lord accept me. Lord pardon me and take me as I am, from this time forth and forever, to be Your servant while I live, to be Your redeemed when I die.” Can you say that? Did not many a heart say it? Did I not hear many a lip in silence utter it? Be of good cheer, my Brother, my Sister. If that came from your heart you are as safe as the angels of Heaven, for you are a child of God and you shall never perish.  
III. Now I have to address a few words of AFFECTIONATE ADMONITION and then I have done. It is a very solemn thing to think how years roll away. I never spent a shorter year in my life than this one and the older I grow the shorter the years get. And you, old men, I dare say, look back on your sixty and seventy years and you say, “Ah, young Man, they will seem shorter soon.”

No doubt they will. “So teach us to number our days, O God, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” But is it not a solemn thing that there is another year nearly gone? And yet many of you are unsaved. You are just where you were last year. No, you are not, you are nearer death and you are nearer Hell unless you repent. And perhaps even what I have said this morning will have no effect upon you. You are not altogether hardened, for you have had many serious impressions. Scores of times you have wept under discourses and yet all has been in vain, for you are what you were. I beseech you answer this question, “What have I done?” for remember there will be a time when you will ask this question, but it will be too late. When is that—say you—on the deathbed? No, it is not too late there—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,*

*The vilest sinner may return.”*  
But it will be too late to ask, “What have I done?” when the breath has gone out of your body.

Just suppose the monument as it used to be, before they caged it round. Suppose a man going up the winding staircase to the top, with a full determination to destroy himself. He has got on the outside of the railings. Can you imagine him for a moment saying, “What have I done?” just after he has taken his leap? Why, methinks some spirit in the air might whisper, “Done? You have done what you can never undo. You are lost— lost—lost!” Now remember that you that have not Christ, are today going up that spiral staircase. Perhaps tomorrow you will be standing in the article of death upon the palisade and when death has gotten you and you are just leaping from that monument of life down to the gulf of despair, that question will be full of horror to you. “What have you done?”

But the answer for it will not be profitable, but full of terror. Methinks I see a spirit launched upon the sea of eternity. I hear it say “What have I done?” It is plunged in flaming waves and cries, “What have I done?” It sees before it a long eternity. But it asks the question again, “What have I done?” The dread answer comes—“You have earned all this for yourself. You knew your duty, but you did it not. You were warned, but you did despise the warning.” Ah, hear the doleful soliloquy of such a spirit. The last great day is come—the flaming Throne is set and the great Book is opened. I hear the leaves as with terrible rustle they are turned over. I see men motioned to the right or to the left, according to the result of that great Book.

And what have I done? I know that to me sin will be destruction for I have never sought a Savior. What is that? The Judge has fixed His eye on me. Now it is on me turned. Will He say, “Depart you cursed,” unto me?

Oh, let me be crushed forever rather than bear that sight. There is no noise, but the finger is lifted and I am dragged out of the crowd and singly I stand before the Judge. He turns to my page and before He reads it, my heart quakes within me. “Be it so,” says He, “it has never been blotted with My blood. You despised My calls. You laughed at My people. You would have none of My mercy. You said that you would take the wages of unrighteousness. You shall have them, the wages of sin is death.” Ah, me, and is He about to say, “Depart, you cursed?” Yes, with a voice louder than a thousand thunders, He says, “Depart, you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

“Ah, it is all true now. I laughed at the minister because he preached about Hell. And here am I in Hell myself. Ah, I used to wonder why he wanted to frighten us so. Ah, I would to God he had frightened me more, if he might but have frightened me out of this place. But now here am I lost and there is no escape. I am in darkness so dark there is not a ray of light can ever reach me. I am shut up so close, that not one of the bolts and bars can ever be removed. I am damned forever. Ah, that is a dreary soliloquy. I cannot tell it to you. Oh, if you were there yourselves, if you could only know what they feel and see what they endure, then would you wonder that I am not more earnest in preaching the Gospel and you would marvel—not that I wish to make you weep—but that I did not weep far more myself and preach more solemnly.

Ah, my Hearers, as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, I shall one day stand acknowledged by your conscience as having been a true witness unto you this morning. For there is not one of you here today but will be without excuse if you perish. You have been warned. I have warned you as earnestly as I can. I have no more powers to spend, no more arts to try, no more persuasion that I can use. I can only conclude by saying, I beseech you—fly to Jesus. I entreat you, as immortal spirits that are bound for endless weal or woe—fly to Christ! Seek for mercy at His hands. Trust in Him and be saved. And at your peril reject my solemn warning.

Remember you may reject it but you reject not me, but Him that sent me. You may despise it, but you despise not me, but a greater than Moses—even Jesus Christ the Lord. And when you come before His bar, piercing will be His language and terrible His Words when He condemns you forever, forever, forever, without hope, forever, forever, forever. May God deliver us from that, for Jesus’ sake Amen.

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MIGRATORY BIRDS  
NO. 2858

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1870.

**“Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times, and the turtledove and crane and the swallow observe the time  
of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.” Jeremiah 8:7.**

IN our text the Prophet makes use of the flight of migratory birds to teach a valuable lesson. He mentions the swallow, which is the most prominent among the summer visitors to our own country, but he also names the stork, the crane and the turtledove, all of them familiar instances of birds that came, at a certain season, to Palestine and, punctual to the hour, at given changes of the weather, winged their way back again to warmer climates. Too many careless observers, like the peasant of whom Wordsworth writes—

*“A primrose by a river’s brim  
A yellow primrose was to him  
And it was nothing more,”*

would have seen those birds and soon forgotten all about them. But the Prophet, observing the wisdom of these wanderers of the air, contrasts it with the folly of man who knows not “the judgment of the Lord,” and obeys not so readily the monitions of his God as the birds do the instinct by which He guides them to and fro. We shall mark these migratory birds and set the wisdom of their instinct in contrast with the folly of mankind.

I. The first thing that strikes us is the fact that the stork, the swallow, the crane and the turtledove know WHEN TO COME AND GO.  
So far as we know, no audible command is given to them. You and I might forget, in the beginning of summer, that then is the period when the swallow will put in an appearance in our land. And that towards autumn he must take himself away, across the purple sea, to the African strand, or wherever he can find a suitable climate. But these birds know when to come or go—they tell, by some mysterious means, exactly when to start on their long flight. They were never known to go too soon. They are never known to stay too late. The bulk of them depart at one period and the rest a few days later. If we are living in the suburbs, we hear a twittering congregation gathering around the gables of the houses and, in the evening we miss the swift-winged hawks who had, during the summer, found their evening meal among the dancing insects. Their shrill, joyous twittering is hushed, for they have perceived that the heavy dews of autumn and the long nights of winter are coming to strew the earth with fading flowers and falling leaves and, by-and-by, with frost and snow and, therefore, they have flown off to fairer lands where other summers await them! They will come back again in due time, true as the calendar. Whether we look for them, or not, they will be punctual to Nature’s appointment. As sure as the summer’s sun will be their return! They know, without any special instruction, when to come, and when to go.  
It is worthy of observation that the young birds which have been born in this country and have never made the long journey before, yet set forth with the older ones at the appointed time. They are novices in the art of travelling, yet they try their callow wings and away they fly to the far-off land where the sun shines as it does not in this higher latitude. I wish that our young people were all as wise as the young swallows are—that they knew their appointed time, that they understood that there is no period in life which has so much of hopefulness about it as the period of childhood and youth—that it is the best time in which to seek the Savior, for it has a special promise attached to it. “Those that seek Me early shall find Me.” I would that they could hear the Lord Jesus Christ’s peculiarly sweet and tender message concerning them—“Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Yet, alas, young storks, swallows, cranes and turtledoves fly at the appointed season—but many young men and maidens delay and waste the joyous hours of the morning of their lives in the ways of sin and folly! Yes, they waste the hours which, if consecrated to Christ and to His service, would have brought them a rich return in this life and, in the life to come, would have tended to increase and intensify their everlasting happiness.  
Further, the parent birds, also, go their way at the right time. They can, and doubtless do, help to guide the young. They may have made that journey but once before, but they know all about it—they remember how long and how weary a way it was to them, but when the hour has struck, away they go, attended by their little ones! I would that all you who are parents among mankind were as wise as these parent fowls of the air. You have your children around you, but where are you leading them? Your example, if not your precept, is guiding them somewhere—you are influencing them for good or evil. You cannot help doing so. I think you would hardly wish to help it, for a child of yours, over whom you had no influence whatever, would be a strange occupant of your home! Oh, that you would be as wise as these migratory birds! May God’s own wisdom make you so, that your own flight to Heaven may be an impulse to your child to take flight there, also! May your faith help his faith! May your holiness check him from sin! May your consecration to God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, induce him to give his heart to God while he is yet young!  
I speak to you who are in middle life and remind you that these birds which have come to the prime of their days, take their flight at the appointed time—and if ever there is a set time for turning unto God, with you who have come so far on life’s journey without seeking the Lord, it surely is now! You who have reached the full strength of your manhood and have your households about you and yet are not saved, be not like the rich man whom God called a fool because he had much of this world’s goods stored up and yet had not thought of making provision for his soul! Do not set your affections upon those well-feathered nests which you are so soon to leave, but seek an enduring portion in that better land where joy maintains eternal Spring! Stretch your wings for the flight Christ-ward and heavenward, and may you have the happiness of seeing your sons and daughters following in the same blessed track!  
Some of the migratory birds are growing old. Their wings are somewhat worn and their flight is a very weary one. Life, to them, has lost its early brilliance, yet, when the time comes, they too, the veterans of the sea passage, are measuring the leagues of ocean waves when the waters are calm, or in times of storm when favoring gales may better serve their purpose. These birds add experience to instinct and rightly follow the guidance of Nature—yet there are old men and old women who are not as wise as the old swallows are! They linger in the plains of sin though the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and the winter is coming fast upon them. I see the first flakes of snow on their frost-crowned heads. Already their leaf begins to wither. The light of their day is darkening, the flower of their beauty fading and the shadows of their weakness lengthening. What? Not away yet, old graybeard? Not away yet, when the killing frost is already upon you? Stretch your soul’s wings at once! ‘Tis late, ‘tis very late! The sere leaf of autumn warns you. The white rime of the early frost chides you! Oh, that you would know the seasons and the judgments of God, even as the birds of the air do, and that you would seek Him, now, before it be too late! It is the eleventh hour with you, Man! You have reached your three-score years and ten, yet you are unsaved! May Divine Grace visit you and make you wise—and if it does, you will not sleep till you have found the Savior, lest your couch should become your tomb! You will not dare to go into another week of work-days until you have made this first day of the week the appointed Sabbath, a day of rest unto your soul in the bosom of your Savior!  
Observe well that these birds—the young, the parents and the older birds, all go at the right time. Perhaps the bright days linger a while—our autumns sometimes are protracted and tempting. When the winter months have come, we may have some almost summer days in this changeful climate of ours, but no bright second-summer tempts the swallow to linger! That interesting bird may have an eye for fair scenes and lovely views and, I think wherever he may fly, he will see no fairer land than this, and no greener dells and fresher woodlands than those that adorn our happy isle. Yet he lingers not for them. Though it is Africa’s brown unattractive sand that calls him, on he goes, for he must go or die! His food will fail him here, the damp will be deadly to him—so away he must go. He has built his nest and birds love their nests as we love our homes. He has formed associations and acquaintances, it may be, for birds have friendships. But the time has come when, with his companions, or without them, he must without fail proceed on his long voyage to the sunny shore! He performs his predestined journey at the ordained time.  
And let nothing tempt anyone to linger in love of sin and love of this world when he ought to be seeking those things which are above! Let not the world’s pleasures, nor its gains, nor its most tender associations beguile you. You, O Man, like the swallow, must go or die! It is with you as it was with Lot in Sodom—the city of your habitation is soon to be destroyed—this world, in a little while, must meet destruction. Up, and away! The fiery hail is ready to descend! The angel of God comes to warn you, saying, “Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.” So, let nothing hinder you, but speed on till you reach God, your Father, and Christ, your Brother, and are washed in His precious blood and made meet to dwell with Him in Heaven forever!  
But alas, alas, it is still true that men “know not the judgment of the Lord.” They know not, as the birds do, their “appointed times.” There have been, with some of you, times of very gracious visitation—when your heart has been made soft and impressible. I beseech you, “know” that time and avail yourself of it! You know that the preacher’s word is not always with equal power. Even the Inspired Word of God has not always the same effect when it is read. Therefore, cherish every tender emotion that you feel. You know what was said to David, “And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you.” So, when there is a movement within the spirit. When there is a revival in the Church. When there are manifest tokens of earnestness in the assembly, then, I pray you, know your appointed time and “bestir yourself.”  
There are other times, also, which should not be forgotten. For instance, times of sickness. Have you been laid aside lately and are you able again to come out of doors? This is a loud call to you, an admonition, a very kind and tender one, yet one that ought to say to you, “Prepare to meet your God.” If sicknesses do not soften, they harden. If we get no good from our chastisements, we are sure to get harm from them. So, my afflicted but restored Friend, know your time, recognize that you have been smitten by your God and turn not away from the hand that smites you! Sometimes the visitation comes in the form of death. Possibly death has come into your home and carried off your child. O mother, follow your dear babe to the skies! Or, is it your husband who has been called away? Then, O widow, take your Maker for your Husband! Is it your Christian father who has been taken from you and yet you, his child, are still unsaved? Your father beckons to you from the skies and bids you seek his Savior! Is it your brother who is gone? It might have been yourself, so let the tolling of the knell for him have a message for you—let it say to you, “Consider your ways, for your soul shall soon be required of you.” Make this period, when God is summoning others to Himself, to be the time when you, also, take flight to the better land—I mean not Heaven, but I mean the heart of Christ—that is the true Heaven of this life, and makes this life to be the foretaste of the unending life that is yet to come!  
It is very sad that seasons like these, of which I have been speaking, are often the very times when people become more hardened than before. Death itself may grow so familiar that it loses all its impressiveness. The grave digger is often the last man to be affected by the thought of dying. It must have been a grim spectacle when, during the French Revolution, a certain cemetery was leveled and turned into a saloon—and there, with the tombstones still in sight, they danced and sang a song in which part of the refrain was, “We dance among the tombs.” Their hair was made up in the same way as those had their hair combed who were prepared for execution by the guillotine—and no one was admitted to the dance unless he or she had lost a father, or brother, or some other relative by the guillotine! And knowing that they, themselves, would, in all probability, die in the same terrible fashion, they gathered in the place of the graves and whirled in the merry dance among the tombs! It was a strange sight. Surely, none would have dared to act like that had they not been carried away by the madness of that awful period. Literally, of course, we do not act as they did, but, spiritually, this is just what many are doing—they are dancing and singing among the tombs! In utter carelessness and wantonness of spirit they dance within the very jaws of death and, unless God shall cure their madness and teach them wisdom, even as He has taught the birds of Heaven—they will dance themselves into Hell!  
II. But, next, it is very remarkable—indeed, it is one of the wonders of Nature that THEY KNOW WHERE TO GO.  
Many of them—those newly-hatched birds—have never seen the land towards which they speed. Yet they go there and go to the very place where their parents went before them! They have never seen that sunny shore, yet onward they fly towards it, straight to the mark as if they were arrows shot from a bow! They have no

swift-winged messenger to proclaim the time of going and to describe the country so temptingly as to induce them to go, but feeling the motion of a mysterious impulse within them, they fly at the appointed time to the far-off land where they may dwell, through the winter, in a more genial climate. Why do they go south? Why don’t they fly north, east, or west? If we were left to seek other shores and we knew nothing of geography, we could not find a suitable place. But these birds, untaught, find the exact spot where it is best for them to spend the many months until they can return to this more northerly land!  
The pity concerning poor foolish man is that by nature, he does not know where to go. When our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “Where I go you know, and the way you know,” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?” The cry of many aroused souls is, “Where shall we go? We know not the way.” Men want happiness, where shall they go for it? If the swallow were to fly straight for the north pole in the hope of finding a genial climate, he would not be more foolish than most men are in their supposed pursuit of happiness! Some fly to unchastity and lasciviousness and, in this way both wreck their bodies and damn their souls! Some fly to moneygrubbing, raking up their gold and silver till they fancy that they are wealthy, whereas, often the more a man has of these things the more he craves and it is a poor thing that makes us want more than we have any need of. Some fancy that they shall find pleasure in the approbation of their fellow men, but before long they discover that the breath of man’s nostrils can never fill an immortal soul.  
We need something better than the blasts of fame’s trumpet to satisfy the spirit which is to live forever and ever—in raptures or in woe. Some fly to strong drink, some to one thing and some to another, all alike fools! There is but one kind of true happiness and only one place where it can be found. Solid satisfaction can only come from reconciliation to God and that reconciliation can only come to us through Jesus Christ, His Son! Man is never right till he is right with God. And never happy till he is happy in the happy God. Man needs peace and rest—every man needs these blessings. In these feverish days, rest is the great need of the age and, to find it, man sometimes flies to superstition and sometimes to unbelief. He must be quiet, he says, for there are thoughts that vex and perturb his spirit. And Jesus stands and says again, as He said of old, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” But, to a sadly terrible extent, man heeds not His gracious invitation and flies anywhere but to the true place of rest!  
When man is spiritually awakened, he sees that he needs pardon. And pardon is to be obtained nowhere but in the precious blood that flowed from the wounds of the crucified Son of God! Yet many men try to get it by almsgiving, penances and outward reformations—they will even look to priestly lips for absolution, though none can forgive sins but God! They fly here and there—anywhere except to God and to the one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus! O men, as I look upon you, I see the contrast between you and the stork, and the turtledove, and the crane, and the swallow, for, when the time comes for these birds to fly, they stretch their wings and away they go as though they could even see the far-off land! They never stop until they have reached the goal for which they started. But you fly here, there, anywhere—and nowhere, in the long run, and you drop down, faint and weary—drop, ah, where?—but into the devouring jaws of the old dragon who has long sought your destruction and who will achieve it unless you listen to the voice of wisdom which said, “turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”  
II. Thirdly, dear Friends, these migratory birds not only know the time for them to come or go, and the place to which they should go, but, BY SOME STRANGE INSTINCT, THEY ALSO KNOW THE WAY.  
There is no road that they can follow. Our swallows, I suppose, fly across the English Channel—sometimes across France and Spain—but they are often met with far, far out at sea and have been known to rest upon the rigging, the masts, and even the decks of vessels when they have grown weary. Their flights are very long and rapid, but they can have no landmarks. They usually fly far across the sea, yet they never miss their way and, in due time, they reach their desired end. No convoy is by their side, no wings of angels are heard rustling around them as they speed upon their way. There may be no favoring wind, but if it should be contrary to them, they fly against it. They must reach the sunnier climate, or die in the attempt and, therefore, though the wind should, at times, keep them back, and impede their flight, yet onward they go!  
Now, there are many, many men who can say with the Apostle I quoted before, “Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?” They say this concerning the way to salvation, the way to safety, the way to Heaven. They do not know the way. Some of you who have heard the Gospel preached for years do not know the way. That is not through our lack of plain speaking, nor through our lack of reiterating— *“The old, old story,  
Of Jesus and His love.”*  
I always feel that I have not done my duty as a preacher of the Gospel if I go out of this pulpit without having clearly set before sinners the way of salvation. I sometimes think that you have so often and so long heard me tell this story that you will get weary of it, but I cannot help it if you do. I had better weary you than in any way be false to my charge. Yet, with all this telling over and over, and over again the simple message of, “Believe, and live,” though the outward ears hear it and the mind catches some idea of it, yet the soul embraces it not.  
Let me tell it to you yet once more. The way for a soul to fly to the place of safety lies in this direction alone—God’s only-begotten and wellbeloved Son, who is Himself “very God of very God,” came down from Heaven and became Man. He lived upon this earth a life of perfect obedience to His Father’s Law, and a life of holy service on behalf of sinful men. On the Cross of Calvary, the sin of all those who will ever trust in Him were laid upon Him and, on the accursed tree, He endured all that they ought to have suffered for their sins. God bruised Christ, His own Son, in the place of as many sinners as believe on Him. God was perfectly just in acting thus. The payment of our enormous debt of guilt was demanded—and Christ paid it in full. So, all who trust in Jesus may rest assured that their sin was laid upon Christ, put away by Christ and so completely blotted out that it has ceased to be! We are accounted just through our faith in Jesus Christ, the great Sin-Bearer. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” The way of safety, then, is the way of Substitution, the way of Atonement, the way of Jesus Christ’s blood! And the way to travel in that road is by simply trusting—believing with the heart in Jesus Christ, relying upon Him, depending upon Him, leaning on Him, resting on Him, believing His Word—and accepting Him to be to us what God has set Him forth to be to the trusting sons and daughters of men!  
IV. My last remark about these migratory birds the stork, the turtledove, the crane and the swallow is that they not only know the time for their flight and the place they need to reach, and the way they have to go, but THEY SHOW THEIR WISDOM BY ACTUALLY GOING TO THE SUNNY LAND.  
It would not profit them, in the least, to know when to go if they did not really go at the appointed time. It would not serve them an atom to know where to go, if they did not go—nor to know how to go if they still loitered here. But the wisdom of these fowls of the air is proved by the fact that they do go. They practice what they know. They yield to the instinct which guides them, the impulse which moves them! But, alas, in contrast with these birds, sinners are often very foolish. They have long heard the Gospel, but they have not yet obeyed it. They have never practiced what they know, at least in a sense. There are many who profess to believe all that we preach, who prove, by their actions, that they have never really received our message. How foolish it is to say that they believe there is a Hell and yet seek not to escape from it—to talk of believing that there is a Heaven and yet never begin in the way that leads to it—and to pretend to believe in the only Savior of sinners and yet really not to trust in Him!  
Then there are many who know their danger, yet do not escape from it. They are fully aware of the terrible place where their sin is carrying them. They are quite conscious that they are without hope of entering Heaven and that, when they die, there will be nothing for them but “the blackness of darkness forever.” Yet all this knowledge is of no avail to them, for they do not seek to escape from their impending doom! Where shall I find language strong enough to describe such folly as this? There are some who even say, as that son said to his father, “I go, Sir,” yet they do not go. They vow yet break their vow again and again. They are at times moved, but it is only with temporary regrets, for they turn again to the sin they said they had left. Alas! Alas! Alas! Yet these people are not idiots—they are not fools in other matters. See them at their business— they are sharp enough there. They want to see the latest telegram, for it may affect the stocks and shares in which they are so deeply interested. They are very anxious to be on time about their temporal affairs. They are punctual in their payments and they are glad to be equally prompt in their receipts.  
They look after their own interests in everything except the greatest and most important of them all! They carefully examine the title-deeds relating to their estates. They will not set their signature to any document till they have thoroughly understood it and seen that it is all right. They make everything as secure as they can except their immortal souls! To take care of the garment, but to neglect the body it covers, is folly! To give all our time to our houses and lands, to our money and our worldly estate—and to leave our soul to be lost—is the most supreme folly of which we can be capable! I know not what to say to those who know what they should be, what they should do—and yet hesitate, debate and delay to do it! Is there such folly anywhere else under Heaven? The birds of the air and the beasts of the field are not so stupid as that! Surely the very stones in our streets have as much reason in them as those men have who know that there is a Savior for sinners and who yet lose Him by neglecting to trust in Him! Vain is it for me to appeal to you! Instead of doing so, I make my appeal to God! Holy Spirit, save these fools from themselves and from their sins, and lead them to faith in Christ, the only Savior! O fools, and slow of heart to believe, I call Heaven and earth to witness that I have warned you of the consequences of your fatal folly! If you will perish in your sins, remember that I have warned you—not with such a voice as I would use if I had it, nor in such language as I would wish to speak if it were possible—but using the best I have, that which my heart prompts me to use!  
“Why will you die?” Why will you be lost to all eternity? You must live forever, for you are immortal! God has made you so and He will never let your soul die. Then, will you deliberately choose to make that endless life of yours to be forever wretched, forever without hope? You do not mean to do so! I cannot think that you are so insane as that! You desire to have peace here and hereafter? Then seek the Savior this very hour! None are as happy as true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you have joy forever? Then trust in Him! But if you do not, no joy can ever be yours. The inexorable decree of God concerning Heaven is, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Therefore, if your names are not in that Book—that is to say, if you believe not in Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you are not trusting in the blood of the Lamb—you will go to that dread place where hope can never dawn—but where the midnight despair shall darken over the lost souls that will be imprisoned there forever and forevermore!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.**

Jeremiah 8:1. At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves. The Prophet Jeremiah had to foretell terrible judgments upon the guilty people who had been often warned, but who had, at last, gone beyond all bearing and were about to be destroyed by the Chaldeans. Here we have the picture of Judah and Jerusalem invaded by the Chaldeans and Babylonians, just before the city was utterly destroyed. It was a very common practice to bury treasure with the bodies of kings, hence when any land was invaded by foreign foes, they broke open the tombs and searched for hidden valuables and it was a sign of the special detestation of the enemy, and of their fury against the people when they dragged the carcasses out of the graves and scattered the bones to the four winds of Heaven. In this case, it was foretold that this desecration would not only take place with regard to the bones of the kings, in whose tombs the greatest treasure might be expected to be found, but the bones of princes, priests, Prophets and people were all to be alike brought forth!

2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. What a striking and appropriate judgment that was! As they had worshipped the sun, that very sun was to dry their bones. As they had worshipped the moon, that moon’s rays should fall upon their relics and the stars, which they had adored, would also be quite unable to help them.

3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family which remain in all the places where I have driven them, said the LORD of Hosts. There was to be stern treatment for the dead, but it would be worse with the living, for the Chaldeans were strong, fierce, cruel and most ingenious in the torments which they inflicted upon their captives. It was an awful thing to be living in such times as those—and it is always a terrible thing to be living when God’s judgments are abroad in the earth—and sinners are hardened in their sin.

4, 5. Moreover you shall say unto them, Thus says the LORD, Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. Perseverance in sin is a great aggravation of it. There are some who fall into sin, but, by God’s Grace, they are raised out of it and they turn away from iniquity and are restored to God’s favor. Where there is true Grace in the heart, where there is spiritual life, there will be restoration sooner or later. But there are others, like the people of Jerusalem, who have “slid back by a perpetual backsliding.” Day after day they grow more outrageous in their wickedness.

6. I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course as the horse rushes into the battle. God listened. He waited to be gracious. He was eager to hear one penitent cry and to observe one tear of genuine repentance, but, as the war-horse is eager for the fray, and, at the first blast of the trumpet, seeks to dash into the very center of the fight, so did these ungodly people! Instead of turning to God, they turned more desperately to sin.

7. Yes, the stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtledove and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the LORD. When God’s judgments are being experienced, it is high time to repent! But these people did not think of such a thing—they were not half as sensible as migratory birds which come and go as the seasons guide them.

8. Why do you say, We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us?

Certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain. What? Do they talk like that, the people who do not know and do not regard God’s judgments—do they talk in such a style as that? Ah, yes! Some of the most wicked of them have a so-called “religion” upon which they still pride themselves. Their hands are red with blood, yet they keep a Bible handy. They say, “We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us.” All the while that they are sinning against the Lord and His Law. Scribes multiplied copies of the Law and some of these very people who were most hardened in guilt possessed a copy. But, says God, “certainly in vain he made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain.” And our own Bible Societies may go on printing Bibles by the millions but, as long as men do not obey what is taught in the Bible, the work of the printing press, like that of the copyist, will be in vain! We need more than the letter of the Word, valuable as that is! We need to know, in spirit and in truth, what the Spirit teaches through the letter, and also to practice it! God grant that even our Bibles may not rise up in judgment against us!

9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is in them? See God’s judgment upon a man wise in his own conceit? You hear, every now and then, of some wonderfully learned philosophic, scientific man— and many folk are frightened because he is an infidel. He does not possess true wisdom. God’s description of such a man is this, “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

10-11. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them; for everyone from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace—when there is no peace. It is a dreadful thing when those who ought to warn the people simply flatter them. When, instead of speaking sharp, stern, honest, faithful words, they cry, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. Such false teachers say, “Do not trouble yourself. All will be right at last. You may live as you like, for there is no hereafter that need alarm you. In another state you may get set right, whatever God’s Word declares as to the punishment of the impenitent.” There are far too many of these smooth-tongued deceivers now living! God deliver this land from them, lest they become an occasion of judgment against the people!

12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD. They had gone so far that they could not blush. It is a dreadful thing when a man has lost the very sense of shame—there will be no repentance where that is the case!

13. I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. They would not recognize the Giver, so the gifts would be taken away from them. Now the people dwelling in the country villages begin to be alarmed because of the Chaldeans—and they say—

14-16. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence and given us water of gall to drink because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones, for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. Dan was the northernmost tribe, bordering on Phoenicia. And after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Phoenicians, he began to march through the territory of Daniel. The mighty horses of the Chaldeans can be seen represented upon the slabs brought home by Mr. Layard. They are a very prominent part of the Chaldean force—so the poet-Prophet pictures them as being heard as far as from Dan as all the way to Jerusalem, so terrible was their snorting. This, of course, is the imagery of poetry, but there was terrible reality behind it.

17. For, behold, I will send serpents among you, vipers which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD. Such were the Chaldeans—crafty as serpents, full of the venom of cruelty wherever they came! There was no way of charming them as a serpent may be charmed. They came on a deadly errand and thoroughly did they perform it.

18-21. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her king in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me. The weeping Prophet sorrows over the desolation of his land in words that have seldom been surpassed for sublime sympathy and pathos—

22. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?  
Jeremiah 9:1. Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Matthew Henry well observes that, in the Hebrew, the same word signifies, “eye,” and, “fountain,” as if God had as much given us eyes to weep with as to see with, as if there were as much cause to sorrow over sin as to look out upon the beauties of the world. Magnificent in its poetry and most touching in its pathos is this verse which ought never to have been cut off from the previous chapter—“Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1658 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HEALED OR DELUDED? WHICH?  
NO. 1658

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 7, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”  
Jeremiah 8:11.**

**“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are my praise.”  
Jeremiah 17:14.**

THE people among whom Jeremiah dwelt had received a grievous hurt and they felt it, for they were invaded by cruel enemies. Their goods were plundered, their children were slain and their cities burned. Jeremiah, with true love to his nation, warned them that the cause of all their trouble was that they had forsaken their God. They had turned aside from the living God and had made gods of the idols of the nations round about them, and so had provoked Jehovah to jealousy. Therefore He chastened them sorely and plagued them again and again, even as He had threatened them from of old. He took up the quarrel of His Covenant and He made them smart, indeed.

Jeremiah tried to show them that the only way to be healed of their hurt was to be healed of their sin—that if they would give up their idolatry and all the infamous wickedness that grew out of it—and turn to the true God and obey His Commandments, then brighter days would come. Their conscience must have told them that all this was true but, alas, Jeremiah preached to them in vain! As the old classic prophetess Cassandra was doomed forever to speak the truth and never to be believed, so was Jeremiah—the people heard him, but they regarded him not. Meanwhile, certain pretenders to prophecy opposed Jeremiah and sought to win the confidence of the nation. They came with, “Thus says the Lord,” upon their lips, blasphemously pretending to be speaking in the name of Jehovah when Jehovah had not sent them. Nor did they seek His Glory.

These suggested to the people easier remedies than repentance—they should make an alliance with Egypt and in that way beat off the Assyrians. They should send a certain amount of tribute to the great king and thus buy off his armies. They buoyed up the people’s hopes with vain confidences and took them away from repenting and returning to God. No good came of their teachings—they did but film the wound of the nation and left the deadly venom still within. The hopes which they excited lasted but for a little time and then died out in blank despair. They had not touched the root which bore the wormwood. They had made light of the national sin. They had healed the hurt of Judah slightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace.

God’s servants, today, who are the true successors of the Prophets, have a task before them sterner, even, than that of the ancient Seers! It is not ours to point to smoking ruins and the carcasses of the unburied dead—plain evidences of a grievous hurt—but our work is to deal with spiritual sickness and to come among a people who confess no hurt. Great multitudes of our hearers do not welcome the news of a heavenly remedy because they are not aware that they are sick! They are not only sound in wind and limb, but in head and heart. From the crown of their head to the sole of their feet they have scarcely a blemish on them! Or if they have some little spot here and there, yet they are much superior to the general run of mankind and need no special spiritual surgery.

A physician who has to commence his practice by convincing his neighbors that they are sick has not a very hopeful sphere before him. Such is our work—we have, first of all, to declare in the name of the God, the Truth that man is fallen; that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that he is a sinner doomed to die—and such a sinner that there is no reclaiming him unless the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots! Truths so humiliating to human pride are by no means popular! Men prefer to hear the smooth periods of those who parade the dignity of human nature. The very phrase grates on my ears—talk of the dignity of a dunghill and you are as near the mark!

Man, viewed as fallen, descends below the level of the beast which perishes, for the beast has not offended its Creator. Look how Adam’s proud descendants rage against this Truth of God! To persuade them of it is a work so hard as to be utterly hopeless unless the Spirit of God, Himself, shall undertake it! It is a divinely wise arrangement that He has undertaken it—as it is written, “When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall convince the world of sin.” When that great labor is accomplished, we have yet another, remaining, namely, to excite in men a desire to seek healing! Many there are who confess their disease, but the disease of sin has worked in them a spiritual lethargy so that they find a horrible rest in their lost estate! They have no longing to rise to spiritual health, of which, indeed, they know nothing. They are guilty and willing to remain guilty— inclined to evil and content with the inclination!

Hundreds live and die in this condition. They know that there is a wrath to come on account of sin, but they put far from them the evil day and amuse themselves with the mirth of the present. They do not deny that a great change must be undergone by them before they can enter Heaven, but then there is time enough for this, for even at the 11th hour they may be called by Divine Grace! They are willing to run the risk of gasping out a last penitential prayer—and so they give Mercy a denial, refusing the Good Physician because they are afraid of being well too soon. Ah, me! We must bring them out of this. They will perish unless they are quickened out of this indifference—they will sleep themselves into Hell unless we can find an antidote to the opiates of sin. Like the rich man, of whom we read that in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, they will dream on till their awakening will be too late. Would to God they might lift up their eyes while there is yet a hope of their beholding Christ upon the Cross and finding everlasting life in Him!

After these things are done, we have but stormed the outworks of the castle, for there still remains another difficulty. Convinced that they need healing and made, in a measure, anxious to find it, the danger with the awakened is lest they should rest content with an apparent cure and miss the real work of Grace! We are perilously likely to rest satisfied with a slight healing and, by this means, to miss the great and complete salvation which comes from God, alone. I wish to speak in deep earnestness to everyone here present upon this subject, for I have felt the power of it in my own soul. To deliver this message I have made a desperate effort— quitting my sick bed without due permit—and moved by a restless pining to warn you against the counterfeits of the day.

I have taken two texts. First, that I may show how easy it is for us to be deluded into a slight healing and, secondly, that I may plead with you to seek real healing. And, lastly, that I may plainly show where the true healing is to be had according to the teaching of our second text, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.”

I. First, then, we sorrowfully assert that IT IS VERY EASY FOR US TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF A FALSE HEALING. You will kindly understand that I am not going to talk about the inhabitants of the Island of Laputa—I am now speaking straight to every one of you and I am setting myself in the middle pew that my keenest sentence may enter my own heart as well as yours! I say, we are, all of us, in danger of being the subjects of a false healing—ministers, deacons, elders, Church members, aged professors and young beginners—all alike! We might infer this from the fact that, no doubt, a large number of persons are deceived.

If a large number of persons are so, then why should not we be? The tendency of other men is probably also in us. Why not? Are there not many persons who consider that all is well with themselves because they have been observant of Church ordinances from their youth up? And their parents were observant for them before they actually came upon the stage of responsibility? Were they not duly christened and correctly confirmed? Have they not taken the sacrament? Have they not gone through every form that is required by the sect to which they belong? What more can be needed? They do not, in so many words, assert that these ceremonies have given them perfect wholeness before God, but secretly they pour this flattering unction upon their souls and lie down in quietness! If they are not all right, where will you find any who are?

On the other hand, it may be that some now present are thankful that they never were christened nor confirmed and they think a good deal of not having undergone those ceremonies. Let them not err in the same way as those they are judging! They have been attentive to religion from their own point of view—they are never absent from their pew; they like to be at Prayer Meetings—they enjoy everything that has the stamp of Christianity upon it and, therefore, they enquire no further, but take their safety for granted! They are afraid of digging too deep and so they are satisfied with having a form of godliness. Though they have felt no change of heart and no renewal of spirit, they, nevertheless, believe that all is well with them— at least they hope so—and, therefore, they are at ease in Zion.

This is a poor, slovenly soul-surgery which will end in eternal death! Beware of it, I pray you, while yet a work of Grace may be worked upon you! Too many are reliant entirely upon external religion. If that is attended to, carefully, they conclude that all is right. To sing a hymn is, in their minds, a good thing, though their heart never praises God! To join in the posture of prayer is, to them, an excellent thing, though their heart never cries to God for mercy! Alas, that men should dream that the hollow hypocrisy which insults God with empty forms should have a magical virtue in it! Oh, that men should be so mad as to conceive that the bringing of the mere husks and bran of external devotion to God can be anything to Him but sheer mockery, provoking Him to greater wrath!

And yet they mock God with pretended prayers and feel pleased with their crime. They chant a heartless hymn and so vex His Spirit—and they are pacified by their empty song! The very deeds that will be mentioned against them, to condemnation, they quote to their darkened mind as hopeful grounds of justification! Outward religion is a slight and pretended healing, being, in fact, no healing at all, but a cry of, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! I am afraid, too, that many who do not rely upon religious forms yet confide in doctrinal beliefs. They are sound in the faith—Orthodox, Evangelical and Calvinistic! They heartily detest any doctrine that is not Scriptural. I am glad to find that it is so with them—but let them not rest in this! To cover a wound with a royal garment is not to heal it and to conceal a sinful disposition beneath a sound creed is not salvation! Believe what you may, even though you should know the whole Truth of God, yet if your faith never changes your heart nor affects your life, you will in no way be superior to the devil who believes—no, you may not be quite so good as he, for devils believe and tremble—and to believe without trembling is a stage lower down!

Oh, my dear Hearer, I implore you, do not rest content with such a slight healing as this! I have heard of one who changed from a Churchman to a Dissenter, and another who changed from a Dissenter to a Churchman—but I long to hear of you that you have turned from sin to righteousness, from self to Jesus! Conversions may be no better than perversions unless they are conversions to Christ! We must know the Truth of God in the heart or we do not know it at all. Dry doctrine may kill—it is only the living Truth of God, worked in us by the Spirit of God, that can make us alive! Many are the quackeries of the spiritual world. And multiplied are the nostrums of the physicians of no value—yielding to men a slight and transient hope.

If others are deceived, may not we be? Depend upon this, that if there is a chance of our being deceived at all, we are always ready to aid in the deception! As a rule, we are all inclined to think too well of ourselves. I dare say that if any cautious flatterer will assure me that I am a very wise person, I shall, before long, come to the conclusion that he is a remarkably sensible and far-seeing individual! If anyone should accuse you of a virtue which you never possessed, if he would but persevere long enough with his pleasing insinuation, you will begin to smile inwardly and hint to your conscience that there are latent excellencies about you which this man with the prophetic glance has discovered! The devil, who knows the exact bait for poor human nature, finds it easy to pacify an anxious mind by presenting a false salvation and persuading the heart that all is well, while in fact nothing is well!

A little feeling of natural regret flits over the mind and the false fiend whispers, “It is repentance.” “Oh, yes,” says the ready dupe, “I am a penitent!” A little presumptuous puffing up of ourselves into comfort is indulged and the deceiver sings, “Hail, precious faith!” How pleased we are when we jump to the conclusion that we have passed from death unto life and are, indeed, the servants of the living God! We do not look back to see whether there was any new birth; whether there was any change of heart; whether there was any giving up of sin; whether there was any laying hold on righteousness; whether there was any severance from self and union to Christ! Those enquiries may be troublesome and, therefore, the irksome duty of self-examination is cried down as unbelief and we are bid to shut our eyes and make up our minds that all is right.

“Believe that you are well and you are well” seems to be the Gospel of many, but it is not the Gospel of Jesus! But it is so easy to jump into fancied security that many take to it. We are, almost all of us, on the side of that which is most easy and comfortable to ourselves—the exceptions to this rule are a few morbid spirits who habitually write bitter things against themselves—and a few gracious souls whom the Holy Spirit has convinced of sin who would comfort themselves if they could, but dare not do so. They are dying for need and yet their soul abhors all manner of meat. I do not suppose I shall do any good this morning except to this last class—and they are few. But the words I shall speak will reach their ears, I know, and I pray God it may drop into their hearts to comfort them.

Take this, then, for granted, that there are many ways of being slightly healed and we are, most of us, likely to be pleased with one or other of them. Besides, flatterers are not yet an extinct race. False prophets abounded in Jeremiah’s day and they still may be met with. I could indicate where they are, but I advise you not to go after them. They are to be found in several places of worship in London, but you had better leave them alone. There is a flatterer in your own bosom, namely, proud Self! Another flatterer often crosses your path and is eager to destroy your soul—I mean Satan. If by any possibility you can be beguiled to put up with something which looks like healing, but which is not, you shall have all the art and craft of Hell to help you in it!

If it is possible, the very elect shall be thus deceived! Instead of faith, they shall have presumption; for regeneration, they shall have reformation; for holiness, morality; for purity, censoriousness; for zeal, fanaticism; for Grace, fancy—and for Christ and His Cross—human works and their merit. Many who profess to love you will aid the general deceit and puff you up with the idea of being what you are not. Slight healing is sure to be fashionable among a great many because it requires so little thought. People will do anything but think according to the Word of God. They will both think and speak against the revealed will and Truth of God, but to consider what the Lord has said is not at all to their mind. They bring forward philosophical notions which read like passages of a comedy! He seems to be most honored, nowadays, who will invent the most monstrous theory and stand to it!

The more absurd it is the better, so long as it is opposed to the Bible and to the accepted beliefs. I do not hesitate to say that any ordinary person, who would dethrone his reason and enthrone his imagination, could dream up as many good theories in a day as have been invented during the last 50 years by our vain-glorious philosophers! Give him sufficient liquor to make him half drunk and he might invent many more—and those far more philosophical than the folly which rules the wisdom of the present hour! The more the philosophies stagger, the more they will suit this present age, for that which is really reasonable and solid is rejected.

Sober thought about one’s own soul and its destiny is, by no means, a favorite occupation with men. How few sit down and answer the question, “How much do I owe unto my Lord?” They would sooner hear a thunderclap than be asked to consider their ways. They would sooner be flogged than sit down and say to their soul— “How have you dealt towards your Creator? What is your state towards your Redeemer? What of love, what of fear, what of holy confidence, what of consecration have you ever given to Jesus Christ, your Lord? How will it go with you when you come to die? How will you fare in the swellings of Jordan? How will you meet the Judge of all the earth in the Judgment Day?” Such questions as these they put back as only fit for women and for priests! Yet were they truly manly, they would be eager to look such enquiries in the face. O Sirs, it is a grievous pity that men should be lost for lack of thought! I would gladly hold you by the sleeve and beg you to remember and consider!

Superficial religion only requires so much church-going, or attendance at a sermon, or so many half-guineas, so much repeating of pious phrases and listening to pious periods—it suits the thoughtless—but as to seeking after God by meditation, prayer, confession, faith, they cannot! Away with it! Superficial religion will always be fashionable because it does not require self-denial. A man may be outwardly religious and yet be a private tippler, but he cannot be a true Christian at that rate. Such secret defilement he must abandon. That, however, is a blow too near the root for many—they like not so sharp an axe as that! Or perhaps he has enmity towards his brother. Now he can go to “mass” or attend early communion and yet hate his brother—but he cannot go to Heaven and do that! He cannot be a regenerate man and do that! He may be following, all the while, some secret lust and yet be a great man in his church so long as he can keep his wantonness hidden away from prying eyes.

A superficial religion suits the unclean gentleman, but genuine godliness will not allow a darling lust to live. Do you wonder that vital godliness is at a discount when it proclaims war to the knife against a lifelong indulgence? It is with Christ as it might be in surgery! Two eminent practitioners profess to deal with the disease called polypus. The first declares that he can work an effectual cure, but it must be understood that he uses the knife freely. He believes no cure to be possible unless all the roots of the growth are taken away. He will not pretend to half measures— the whole thing must be eliminated, or he can work no cure. On the other side of the street another surgeon of great name depends upon an outward application which, in quite a painless manner, acts upon the diseased part and, according to his statements, secures the desired result. He says, “My friend goes too deep and makes too much of the matter. Come in here! The disease is a mere trifle. I will end the mischief without cutting and hacking.”

You can readily guess how popular this last gentleman will be if he can gain public confidence! But what will be the end of it? That is the point! If the sharp and deep cut of the first surgeon ministers to ultimate health and is absolutely necessary to a cure, is it not best? If, in the second case, the end of all those honeyed words is but the covering up of a foul loathsomeness which will breed corruption and hasten death—is it not a wicked deception? Yet most men are so foolish as to choose the worse of the two in the affairs of their souls. Slight healing, also, is sought by men, because it does not require spirituality. There are multitudes of men who, if the Kingdom of Heaven were to be had by outward actions—no matter how difficult—would at once commence the task! Say, “You must save so many hundreds of pounds and buy Heaven,” and they would starve themselves until they had hoarded up the money! Anything that could be done by the body would be cheerfully attempted!

But true religion is spiritual and carnal men cannot get at it—it is high above and out of their sight. They ask us “How can we be saved?” We tell them. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then they reply, “But what is this, believing?” and they try and make believing into a kind of hard mechanical action of the understanding by which it receives certain facts about Christ, just as it believes in Roman or Grecian history. They do not grip at the idea that it is the heart’s resting upon Christ. When we begin to preach repentance and faith, they appear to be in a fog—they cannot get at our meaning because they are prejudiced by other modes of thought. Hence it is that the slight healing which comes of formalism and ceremonies, seeing it deals with outward manipulations, at once attracts them.

But, my dear Hearers, let me warn you with all the energy I possess against ever being satisfied with any of the slight healings that are cried up nowadays! They will all end in disappointment, as sure as you are living men! I could wish that they might speedily end so you could begin again and begin aright. Believe me, sickness is often a time when a man is led to turn over the pages of his past life, to see whether they will bear inspection. It will be a fearful thing when you are racked with pain and depressed in spirit to see all your evidences blotted and blurred—and all your hopes of Heaven cancelled by the hand of the Truth of God before your sight! Suffering times call for realities, solid facts, eternal verities— for then it is that dark thoughts crowd in upon the soul and anxious questions which must and will have an answer!

Then Conscience talks in this fashion—“You must be born again.” Are you born again? “Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” Has that blood-shedding ever come near to you? Such thoughts as these gather around the spirit in the dead of night and haunt the soul in the weary watches, when you toss to and fro and cannot sleep. Unless you fix your eyes upon the Cross and can answer, “I have believed in Jesus for salvation and I still believe in Him. I have forsaken every evil way and I am still striving against sin. I am a renewed man. I am struggling to the Light of God and struggling up to purity and to my God”—unless, I say, you can give such firm and solid answers, there will be hard times for you and deep depressions far more grievous than physical pain could possibly bring to you. I pray you, therefore, do not put off making sure work for eternity. Remember that if you pass through this life deceived, there will await you an awful undeceiving in the next world!

I will not try to depict the man who finds himself lost forever, though he died in the odor of sanctity. What will be his horror, when he finds himself cast out and hears the Lord Jesus say, “I never knew you.” Your minister knew you! The deacons knew you! The members knew you, but the Lord Jesus never did, for you had no heart-fellowship with Him and were not in heart a believer in Him! O Brothers and Sisters, if there is any error about your profession, get it right at once! Do not go on under a delusion! Surely you cannot wish to be puffed up with vain imaginations of hopes which are fallacious! Search, then, and see. Beg the Lord to search you and let your state before Him be in all things according to His Truth. Time flies, and so does my strength, and therefore we must hasten to the second point.

II. BE IT OURS TO SEEK TRUE HEALING. But then, as we have already said, this true healing must be radical. Oh, pray to have it so! The healing which we need must go to the root of the business and work a thorough change. Such a work is described in Scripture as a creation— “created anew in Christ Jesus”—it must be a resurrection. “And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Now I ask you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, whether you can undertake this? Creation and resurrection—do these lie in your power? You can do nothing of the kind! And so you are driven to my second text, “O Lord, heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.”

Be it known unto every one of you, men and women, that you must be the subjects of a Divine Power by which you must be as totally changed as if you had been annihilated and then created anew! By this Divine agency you must be as really changed as if you were dead and buried and then were raised again from the dead. There is no soul-healing, no soul-saving apart from this! Does this strike you with despair? I am glad of it, for this kind of despair is next door to eternal hope. When a man despairs of himself, he will begin to trust in his God, Oh that we might each one lie at Christ’s feet as dead till He shall touch us and say, “Live.” Truly, I desire no life but that which He gives. I would be quickened by His Spirit and find in Him my life, my all!

Now go a step further. The healing we need must be a healing from the guilt of sin. My anxious Friend, you must no longer be guilty—you must be free from fault. Every offense you have ever committed must be washed right out, even the least stain of it must vanish and it must be as though it had never been! And you must be as though you never had offended at all! “How can that be?” you ask. It is clear it cannot be by anything that you can do and this, again, drives you to the prayer of my text, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” How can it be? Only by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Savior! He took the sin of His people upon Him. He became their Substitute and Representative. He bore their iniquity and was made a curse for them—and in consequence they are set free, cleared and justified!

What a word was that, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts.” Beneath that sword, our Shepherd offered up His life, a ransom for the flock! By one tremendous Sacrifice which He offered unto the Father, the Lord Jesus delivered all His redeemed! Look to Jesus Christ and in a moment your sins have ceased to be! “With His stripes we are healed.” Hallelujah! The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for and they shall not be found! Yes, they shall not be, says the Lord. Blessed healing this! Who but a Divine Physician could work such a cure? This is pardon worthy of a God!

But you must not only be free from sin, you must be freed from sinfulness—a work must be worked in you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and in me, by which we shall be clean rid of every tendency to do evil. We cannot enter into Heaven with sinful tendencies—corruption and depravity cannot be endured before the Throne of the thrice holy Jehovah! The very roots and rootlets of sin must come out of the nature which is to share the abode of God. Does not this drive you to despair? Does not this make you cry, “Heal me, O God, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved”? It ought to do so and, in doing so it will work your safety! In answer to your cry, the eternal Spirit shall come upon you, creating you anew in Christ Jesus! He shall come and dwell in you and shall break down the reigning power of sin, putting it beneath your feet.

Though this defeated foe shall strive and struggle like a serpent with his back broken, yet it has its death wound and cannot regain its former dominion. It will struggle so long as you are in this life, but it must ultimately die, and you shall attain perfection—

*“Sin, my worst enemy before,  
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more!  
My inward foes shall all be slain,  
Nor Satan break my peace again.”*

No tendency to sin, no affection towards evil, no fear of relapse, nor danger of apostasy shall remain, but there shall be in us the living and incorruptible Seed and we shall be the members of Christ’s body! We shall be as pure as Adam when he was first created—we shall have about us a purity superior to that of mere creation—a purity produced by the infusion of the Divine life. We came into this world defiled by original sin, but every trace of this will vanish through the work of the Spirit of God and the washing in the precious blood! This is a work which can only be worked in us by God, Himself. Oh to be so saved that we can survive Divine inspection, a Divine inspection by which every spot would be revealed if spots were there—but we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! It is most desirable to be so healed in soul as to stand the test of this present life.

I have known friends discharged from the hospital as healed of disease who were bitterly disappointed when they came into everyday life—a little exertion made them as ill as ever. A person had a piece of diseased bone in her wrist. It was taken out by the hospital surgeon and the arm seemed perfectly healed. But when she began to work, the old pain returned and it was evident that the old mischief was still there and that a part of the decayed bone remained. Thus some are saved, so they think, but it is only in seeming, for when they get into the world and are tried with temptation, they are just the same as they used to be. They have not received a practical salvation—and nothing but practical salvation is worth having.

A sham cure is worse than none. If a bone is ill set it is often necessary to break it, again, and it sometimes seems to me that certain converts need their hearts to be broken again, that they may be truly comforted. If any man here has been healed, but his arm will not work for Jesus and for righteousness, it needs breaking again! And I should not mind if my sermon should break it, so long as he was driven to Christ to get it set in the right fashion. If you cannot resist the temptations of this life, depend upon it, your salvation is a mere myth! We need a salvation that will bear the test of sickness and the strain of death, so that a man may lie back on his bed and say, “I do not fear to die. Jesus Christ has made me perfectly whole and among the healed ones before His Throne I shall shortly stand and sing His praises world without end.”

Oh, my dear Hearers, could you die like that? Have you a hope which will bear the light of your last hours? If you have not, do not let this day close until you have found it! I beseech you, cry to Jesus, at once to save you in His own effectual way.

III. I close by saying, LET US GO WHERE TRUE HEALING IS TO BE HAD. It is quite certain that God is able to heal us of all our sins, for He who created can restore. Whatever our diseases, nothing can surpass the power of Omnipotent Love. Blessed be the name of the Lord, no work of Grace can be beyond His will, for He delights in mercy. His name is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord That Heals You, and He has given us a sweet word, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.” You remember how David sang, “He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions”? The Lord is so fond of healing sin-sick souls that He had but one Son and He made a Physician of Him that He might come and heal mankind of their deadly wounds!

And He, being made a Physician, came down among us, and sought out for His patients, not the good and excellent, but the most guilty, for He said, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Jesus, then, the Beloved Physician, is able and willing to meet the case of every one of us! His wounds are an unfailing remedy. Oh, that you were willing to come to Him and spread your case before Him! Come at once! Even at this instant! Jesus certainly can meet your condition, though apart from Him it may be utterly hopeless.

As I turned over my text while coming here, I was charmed with the encouragement which it offers to the very chief of sinners, for these may say to themselves, “Is it, after all, God’s work to save? Well, then, He can save a great sinner as well as a little sinner!” If salvation were of works or of merits, then many persons would evidently be excluded from hope. But if it is entirely of Grace, then none are excluded! And if the power is found in God, and not in us, then the same power which can save the most moral young man can save the most dissolute and debauched person—and the same Grace which can save the godly matron can save the impious harlot! The power of God is equal to any miracle! The mercy of God can go any length!

Tell it! Tell it that Jesus Christ is able to have compassion on the ignorant and to save those who are out of the way! Out of the way sinners, outrageous sinners, black sinners, scarlet sinners—they, too, may pray the prayer, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” If it is of Grace, then surely hope is encouraged where otherwise despair might reign supreme! If it is of pure mercy, then the utmost guilt need not shut out a soul from Heaven. Would God, dear Friends, you would come and try the unfailing Grace of God in Christ Jesus, which is unto all and upon all them that believe!

I know that while I am preaching, certain of you say, “He does not mean me: I am too great a sinner.” On the other hand, another class imagines that they are not sinful enough, so they, also, fancy that the discourse is not meant for them. Oh that you would give up this wicked perversity and know that all the Truth of God that applies to you is meant for you! I have heard of Robert Burns, that, on one occasion when at church, he sat in a pew with a young lady whom he observed to be much affected by certain terrible passages of Scripture which the minister quoted in his sermon. The wicked wag scribbled on a piece of paper a verse which he passed to her. I fear that the substance of that verse has been whispered into many of your ears full often—

*“Fair maid, you need not take the hint,  
Nor idle texts pursue;  
‘Twas only sinners that he meant,  
Not angels such as you.”*

This sermon is meant for those who think themselves angels as well as for those who know themselves to be sinners! Cease from all dreamy confidences! Awaken yourselves from proud self-content and come to Jesus, the Savior, who alone can save from sin and death!

I love my text because it gives security for the future. “Heal me, and I shall be healed.” Certain theologians appear to doubt the lasting nature of the Divine cure and fancy that Christ’s patients may die, after all. Would they have us pray, “Lord, heal me, and I shall not be healed”? Yet that would be the way to pray if we may fall from Grace and perish! We do not believe in this questionable healing, but we pray, “Heal me, and I shall be healed.” If you are saved by a priest or by yourself, you may be lost—but if God saves you—you never will be lost! That which God does, He does forever. The Lord never puts His hand to a creation which He leaves unfinished. He that is born again cannot be unborn! We may unravel all that is of Nature’s weaving, but that which is God’s workmanship defies the infernal powers! There stands the promise, sure forever— “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

Dear Friends, if you are saved, pray the Lord that you may be saved, indeed! And if you are not saved, get to Him and pray Him to begin His good work within your souls. I am often anxious about this congregation. I do not want to build up, in this place, a host of hopes that are ill-founded. I felt that I must come and deliver this message at this time, though I am quite unfit to be among you. I have not delivered it as I hoped to—still there it is—and unto God I commend it. I was told if I preached, this morning, I should suffer a month’s relapse as the consequence of it. But I ran the risk because I could not be quiet till I had delivered my soul! Oh that the careless might be disquieted! Oh that the penitent might be encouraged! Let none of us excuse ourselves from self-examination!

Do not let the preacher, or the deacons, or the workers in this Church deceive themselves! Let us get on the Rock and know that we are on it! Let us be true men—true to the core—sincere right through and through. Let us pray God that there may be a work of Grace in us and not the mere outgrowth of human will, fancy and self-flattery! If there are any who have not even felt the slight healing, I am glad they have not. May their wounds never be bound up till Jesus binds them! May none of us ever think of health unless it comes from beneath the wings of the Sun of Righteousness! May we all stand together and gaze with tearful eyes upon the Cross of our Lord! He is all my salvation, all my desire and all my praise! If I perish, it shall be at His feet! If I live, it shall be in His service. Amen!

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A DISCOURSE FOR A REVIVAL SEASON  
NO. 608

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 8TH, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country, Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities? The harvest is past,  
the summer is ended and we are not saved.”  
Jeremiah 8:19, 20.**

THESE words, as they stand in the book of Jeremiah, were probably meant to set forth the sin of Israel. The Prophet’s heart is very full of sadness—he can hear the shrieks and cries of the people in the streets of Jerusalem. They are moaning for sorrow because of the oppression of the Chaldeans—the nation that dwelt afar off. And in the midst of their bitterness and woe they remember the God whom they had forgotten in their prosperity—but this remembrance is not a gracious one. They do not remember Him to humble themselves before Him, but to bring accusations against Him!

They enquire, “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” As if they felt, “The people of the Lord, the people of the Lord are we, and therefore He is bound to send us a deliverance.” They question the faithfulness of Jehovah because He justly suffers them to be downtrodden for their sins. Then the Lord, speaking by the Prophet, tells them the reason why, although present among them, He did not help them—“Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?”

If they believed Him to be present, why did they set up false gods? If they considered Him to be their God, why did they turn aside to the vanities of the heathen? His Presence among them had been the occasion of greater provocation since they had mocked Him to His face and set up idols in His own temple! In the twentieth verse the Prophet represents the people as breaking forth into another dolorous and lamentable cry, “We thought that God would help us in the days of harvest—but the harvest is past. We dreamed that He would chase away our enemies when the summer months had come—but the summer is ended and still Chaldea has her foot upon Judea’s neck—still we drink the wormwood and the gall and our enemies open their mouths at us. The harvest is past and the summer is ended and we are not saved.”

We find in the New Testament that sometimes the Apostles used the language of the Prophets in other than the original sense. Finding the Prophetic words to be expressive of a sense which they themselves wished to convey to the people, they did, as it were, take the horses and chariot of the Prophet and drive them in another direction. So I intend to do this morning. It strikes me that there is no text in Scripture more applicable to our present condition than this. “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country.”

We have been crying and pleading with God for the multitude of far-off sinners who know nothing of Him. We will begin, therefore, by dwelling upon the cry. Then comes a question, a question much requiring earnest thought at present—“Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” Then we have another question which may cause searching of heart both among saints and sinners—“Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” And our text concludes with another cry, not the cry of gracious souls for others, but the cry of graceless sinners for themselves, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.”

I. At the outset we have in the text A CRY. Observe the word, “Behold.” I have told you many times that wherever the word, “behold,” occurs in Scripture, it is a sort of signpost to show that there is good entertainment within. God puts this, “N.B.,” in the margin that we may observe well what it is that He is saying to us. The “behold” here is the mark of astonishment. We are to “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people” as an unusual thing. So seldom does Israel cry unto the Lord—she is so negligent of prayer, she is so silent when she ought to be incessant in her petitions—that when at last she does cry, her voice is a wonder in God’s ears!

I have felt, this week, in the state of mind which is indicated by that interjection, “Behold!” When I sat on this platform on Monday night and marked your sobs and tears and heard the suppressed sighs and groans of the great multitude then assembled, I could not but say, “Behold!” And yet it ought not to be a wonder, it ought not to be a strange thing for God’s people to be in earnest, or for sinners to feel brokenness of heart! If prayer is the Christian’s breath, why then, to see a multitude breathing should never be a spectacle! If to pray unto God is the Christian’s daily privilege, then to approach the Throne of God with prevalent earnestness should never be looked upon with astonishment!

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, we must frankly confess that it is so. True prayer is an astonishing thing! Prevalent intercession is an amazing thing—and if you want to see something that will really thrill you with a holy wonder, attend a Prayer Meeting where the Holy Spirit is present in the fullness of His power and where the Brethren pray not as a mere matter of form, but as if filled with all the fullness of God!

Such meetings as we have had during the past week are things to marvel at! Behold! It has become a wonder for God’s people to really cry. Ah, there are some of you to whom weeping over sinners would be a novelty. To some of you professors agonizing for souls would be a new thing—you pray for sinners in your usual prayers—but you do not know what it is to travail in birth for souls. You never feel as if your hearts would break if souls are not saved. You do not feel the burden of the Lord laid upon you till you are crushed in the dust and made to groan out, “God have mercy upon these poor perishing souls.”

With some of you it would be a great wonder to be really on fire in prayer. And if we heard you cry, we should be compelled to say, “Behold the voice of the cry of My people.” Notice how this prayer is described. It is a cry—“Behold the cry.” A cry is the most natural form of utterance. It is a natural expression made up of pain and desire for relief. A cry is the first sign of human life—as if to indicate that we are most alive when most we cry. As if a cry were the way to life and the path to higher life ever afterwards. A cry! There is something cutting and piercing in it. It cleaves its way up to the Throne of God. A spiritual cry! It is born in the heart, down deep in the inner recesses of regenerate nature. It is not a mere lipworship, it is not a thing of the tongue and of the jaw.

A cry! It comes from the very soul and therefore it reaches to God’s ear and God’s heart. A cry! It is a plaintive, bitter, painful thing—and, mark you—God’s people seldom get a blessing in the conversion of souls till their prayer turns into a cry mingled with weeping. And if there is sobbing and groaning, it is none the worse. Do you know, dear Friends, the difference between the prayers which are not cries and those which are? When a Brother merely prays what we call prayer, he stands up and utters very proper words, very edifying, very suitable, no doubt, and then he is done.

Another Brother comes forward—he wants a blessing—he tells the Lord what he desires. He takes the promises. He wrestles with God and then he seems to say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” He cannot be satisfied till, with the cry of, “Abba, Father,” he has come before the Throne of God and really obtained an audience with the Most High. Note again, for every word of our text is suggestive—it is, “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people.” It is not enough to be earnest! You must know what you are earnest about! The cry must have a voice which is as far as possible understood by yourself and a voice which has a meaning in it before God.

I am afraid there have been some meetings against which the charge of fanaticism might be very fairly brought, because, while there was an admirable earnestness which it were well for colder Christians to copy, there was a lack of understanding—a want of really knowing what they wanted. Beloved, we must be clear when we come before God that we really are asking for something. Our soul must prepare itself by meditation upon its own needs and upon the needs of the people to express an intelligent desire before God.

Cry! Cry aloud as much as you will! But remember, when the voice said cry, the Prophet said, “What shall I cry?” And so when I come before God in prayer, I must ask Him, “What shall I cry?” And I must get a clear sense of what it is at which I am driving. For if an archer takes no aim, he may pull his bow with all his might, but he certainly is not likely to succeed. I must direct my prayer unto God as David says—pull my bow, direct the arrow, take aim at the center of the target—and then when the arrow flies it is likely to reach its place. “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You and will look up.”

What a mercy it is that our cries have a voice with God! Why sometimes, when our cries have no voice for us, they have a voice with God. “The Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” When my desires are such that there are no words in any human language which could possibly express them, my heart does but let fall a tear, or lift a glance to Heaven and there is a voice in my cry.

“Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning,” said a poor man in an earnest prayer, to which I remember to have once listened—“I cannot tell You, Lord, what I want, but take the meaning, take the meaning of my poor stammering words.”

There is a voice in our prayers as a Church and I think it is, “Father, have mercy upon souls! Father, arise and let Your kingdom come, and let the name of Your Son Jesus be honored in the hearts of many! Father, let the Spirit who dwells in His Church, now work mightily and get to Your name great renown in the midst of the dense crowd among whom we dwell.” O God, this is the voice of the cry of Your people! Further, study the matter of the voice—it was, “for them that dwell in a far country.” In what a far country does every sinner dwell! “He took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”

The sinner who is nearest to God is still in a far country. You moralists, how far off you are from God! Dear Mr. Offord said the other night, “Can any of you tell how far off God is from the unpardoned sinner? Remember, you are on this side of sin and God is on the other side of it—but can anyone tell how far God is from the other side of sin! His pure and holy eyes cannot even look on it! Then how far must He be from it! You are just so far off from God as God is from sin, added to the breadth and length of sin itself. See your sin towering like a stupendous Alp! You cannot cross that barrier and God is far away on the other side of that mountain. This is your wretched position afar off from God.”

Now, the prayers, I hope, of God’s people have been going up for all the far-off ones, that infinite mercy would make them near by the blood of Christ. There are certain special far-off ones whom we ought to mention in our prayers and whom we ought to labor after in our Christian efforts. Do not forget the harlot when you pray—illustrious trophies of Divine Grace have been snatched from the kennel and the pavement. Do not forget the poorest of the poor, the vilest of the vile—and those who dwell in haunts where theft, ignorance and crime do fester. Pray for these most. They most need your entreaties—and let your prayer be a cry—a cry like that of Jesus when He wept over Jerusalem.

It would be one of the healthiest things in all the world for you Christian people, if you were to spend a day with City Missionaries and Bible Women in the very worst of our back slums. If your cry did not come up, then, for those who dwell in a far country, I despair of your knowing what true religion means! The fact is we do not face the sin of London. We, like the ostrich, bury our heads and shut our eyes so as to avoid seeing the evil. We can so easily get to our places of worship along the front streets in which there is a fringe of respectability and order and so on, that we forget the dark lanes, the blind alleys, the dingy courts, the places where poverty, suffering, sin and ignorance abound.

O dear Friends, if we do not go further, if we do not think of foreign lands, we have still reason enough for putting up the voice of our cry for those who are, “in a far country,” and yet dwell at home in England! Still, I must have you remark another word in the text—for, “those that dwell in a far country”—there are some of you who make a long abode in a far country. You were afar off from God eleven years ago. I preached at you then. You were afar off from God five or six years ago, when revivals were frequent. When this Tabernacle was opened you came here and took your seat and you were afar off from God then—and you are afar off now.

The fact is, you have taken up your dwellings—you have made a settlement in one of the parishes of the City of Destruction! You are making out a claim to be enrolled in the devil’s register. You dwell in the far-off land. If you were uneasy and felt yourselves to be strangers and foreigners in the land of destruction, how would I clap my hands for joy, for you would soon be rid of your old master if you once felt sick of him. But no! You dwell in that country and I suppose some of you always will, till you are taken from it to make your lodging place in the flames of Hell forever! O, may God prevent it! But I fear it of some of you.

There are some who listen to my words who are made to feel under them. I heard but the other day of one who was set a trembling and shivering under the Gospel. He could not but come and hear though it was always like a great hammer to him. His friends and companions, by much persevering effort, laughed him out of coming here. They could not bear that he should come to hear the despised preacher. Though he had been a dreadful drunkard and swearer before and was then sober, yet they preferred his drunkenness to his coming here! Bitterly have they had to regret it—for he went back to his sins and became as gross a sinner as before.

And then when he was killing himself with sin, they began to wish him to come here again—but it was too late—he would not come again. Perhaps he dared not. A dreadful remorse settled upon him and under its influence he put an end to his own existence. Take care, any of you who hate the Gospel, that you do not laugh at other men’s convictions. And when the Gospel does come home with power to any, do not be the devil’s advocate and stand up and plead against God. God forgive those who do this and may none of us be guilty of it!

But oh, you dwell in this far country, some of you. You are in a state of danger and condemnation. It was only the other night, when we met at St. John’s Wood, that a man came into the vestry made broken-hearted through the address of the evening. My dear Brother Stott soon had him on his knees and began to pray with him. And to my grief this man said he used to hear me at Exeter Hall and was much better in his outward life. While hearing me he thought of religion and lived soberly—but the Tabernacle was too far for him to come to and he would not go anywhere else—and therefore he went back to the world and what seemed to be like a work of Divine Grace proved to be only a work of nature.

Let us be anxious concerning those who dwell in the far country and are only, for a time, as it were, taken out as on an excursion into the land of light. They still have their parish settlement in the far country and are numbered among the citizens of the City of Destruction and are not among the people of God. O, for a cry this morning, another cry from God’s people for those who dwell in a far country! One very consoling thought is in the text. I must only hint at it. The cry is, “The cry of the daughter of My people.” O beloved, it is so sweet to think that our prayers, poor as they are, are the prayers of God’s own people, and therefore they

must be heard.

You will say, “Is that a right argument?” Oh, yes it is! “If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children.” Remember that is how Christ puts it. You are the Lord’s children, therefore He will hear you. If you were strangers it might be a different thing. Our prayers might very readily be pulled to pieces by critics, but our Father will not criticize them because they are the cries of His own children. I do not think we set such store by Believer’s prayers as we ought to do. Would you let your child constantly cry to you and not answer him? I know you would not.

Put it differently—would you let your Brother in Christ plead with you and not grant him his desire if you could grant it? You have not a Christian’s heart if you would. Or I will touch you more closely. We love our wives—if your wife should ask for anything that would be for her good and you could give it, would you refuse it? Husband, would you refuse it? You are no husband if you did! Look at Christ, the Husband of the Church— do you think He will refuse the cry of His own spouse?

What? Shall His own dear bride come before Him and embrace His feet and say, “I will not let You go except You bless me”—and shall He who has espoused her unto Himself in faithfulness, say to her, “I have bid you seek Me, but I will not be found of you. I have commanded you to knock, but the door shall not be opened. I have told you to ask, but you shall not receive”? O, slander not my loving Lord like this—

*“He feels at His heart all our sighs and our groans,*

*For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones.”*Let us rejoice together in the spirit of prayer which God has given us. Let us try to foster it. Let us be much in the exercise of it. During the coming week let us still continue to meet together to intercede at the Throne of Grace.

And this is my reason for urging it upon you—God has promised that when we cry, He will hear us—“He shall call upon Me and I will answer him.” “Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.” “With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

II. We will now turn to the QUESTION—“Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” I will answer that question at once in the affirmative. “The Lord is in Zion. Her king is in the midst of her.” Having answered this question, it suggests many more. Let me put them to you. If the Lord is, indeed, in Zion and the king is in the midst of her, why do we pray as if He were not? I find no fault with the prayers of my Brothers and Sisters when they ask for an outpouring of the Spirit—what they mean by their prayers is a very proper thing. But I am not certain that the expression is altogether the best that might be used.

The Spirit of God is with His people. I could not, last Monday night, ask to have the Spirit of God poured out, for He was there. If at any time the Holy Spirit was with any men on earth, even at Pentecost, He was here last Monday night, as those present must have felt. We had not so much to ask for it as to be thankful for it. When two or three of you meet together in Christ’s name, do not meet unbelievingly. Remember that He has said, “There am I in the midst of you.” Be content with that assurance. You have not, as it were, to mount up to Heaven, that is, to bring Christ down—nor to descend into the earth, that is, to bring Him up from the depths—He is with you! “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” “God dwells in you.”

The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as a perpetual and abiding Comforter. And in the Church the Spirit of God always dwells. Do not pray, therefore, dear friends, as if God were not with you. “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” Do not pray, therefore, like the priests of Baal, as though your God were on a journey or needed to be awakened out of sleep. He is with you, ready to answer by fire, if, like Elijah, you have but faith with which to challenge His promise and His power. Is the Lord with you? Then in the next place, let me ask you this question. Why do you despond because of your own weakness? “We have not a sufficient number of ministers. We have little wealth. We have few places of public worship. We have few gifted members,” and so on.

So some unbelievingly talk. “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” What more do you want? “Oh, we would like to be strong.” Why would you be strong? That you must be disqualified to be used by God? “No,” you say. Well, but you would be! What did the Lord say by the mouth of His servant Gideon? “The people are too many for Me.” I never heard that the Lord said, “The people are too few”—never! “The people are too many.” If Samson had the choice of weapons with which to rout his enemies—if he wished to do it in such a way as to make the feat illustrious, if there were before him a cannon, a fifty-pounder and the jawbone of an ass—which would he take? Why, any fool can kill the enemy with a cannon, but it takes a Samson to smite them with the jawbone of an ass!

And so, when God has the choice of weapons and He always has, He chooses the weaker weapon that He may get for Himself the greater renown. My Brothers and Sisters, glory in your infirmities—thank God for your weaknesses! There is room for God when you are empty! But when you are so full and so strong and have such excellent machinery and can do the work so well, why then you will attempt to do without your God and a failure will be the result. But, O Beloved—

*“When I am weak, then am I strong,  
Grace is my shield and Christ my song.”*

Let this silence forever all your raving about weakness in Christian duty! “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” Did I hear you say, “I am a feeble woman and I have too much work to do for God. I had better, perhaps, curtail it, or give it up”? My Sister, now that you are weaker, try to do more! Now there is more room for your God. “Oh, I am a trembling, humble, unknown man with but little talent and what I have done has been about as much as I can do—I am afraid to venture more.” My Brother, venture more! Get onto the ground of, “I cannot, but God can.” That is safe ground. “I can” is like the ice on which the boy tries to slide and it swallows him up. “I cannot, but God can,” is terra firma—stand there and you stand safely.

There can never come a shock to the man who rests on the Eternal Rock—God all-sufficient. Rest on that and be glad. Again, this question provokes another one. If God IS with us, why these great fears about the prosperity of the Church? “Dr. Colenso becomes an Infidel. Stanley becomes something very suspicious. Multitudes of ministers, so called, become Puseyites—what will become of the Church of Christ?” What will

become of her? She will nestle where she always did nestle—beneath the eternal wings! And the more she gets rid of all her carnal confidences the better for her!

“Oh what will become of true religion?” Beloved, become of true religion? It will go on winning and conquering, and with Christ upon the white horse of victory, riding in her forefront, the Truth of God shall march on conquering and to conquer till He shall come whose right it is to reign. Be not discouraged, “Is not her King in the midst of her?” Every now and then, when we try a new scheme, certain prudent Brethren come and pull our ears a bit and they say, “It is more than you can do. You must be prudent.”

Yes, we are prudent. We claim to be prudent. We claim to have the highest prudence. For we reckon it always prudent to believe God and always prudent to act upon God’s promise and not according to carnal policy, nor the judgments of our proud, self-conceited, ignorant flesh. Brethren, if the King is in the midst of her, let us go on and conquer! You think you will never see such days as Pentecost? Why not? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?” You fear you will never see such wonders as were worked by Whitfield and Wesley? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?”

You fancy that Ireland will never receive the Gospel? You think that heathen nations will never lay aside their idolatry? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” You conceive that this is not the age of miracles and you condemn us to go on in the everlasting jogtrot of propriety, in the do-nothing style of prescription, keeping in the perpetual cart-rut of conventionality and never daring to blaze out a path for ourselves? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?” You do not believe there will be a thousand souls converted under one sermon? You do not think it is likely that the Church will be increased by hundreds in a day, or in a month? “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in the midst of her?”

Dear brethren, the God of Zion is here! The King of Zion is here! I grant you, we do not sufficiently recognize His Presence. We are not, as we should be, obedient to His commands. But I charge you, O you soldiers of the Cross, believe in the Presence of your Captain and press where you see His helmet amidst the din of war! His Cross is the great emblazoned banner which leads you on to Glory. Press forward to suffer, to deny yourselves, to bear witness for Christ—the battle is the Lord’s and the King Himself fights in the van. “Her King is in the midst of her.”

I want to see you trying deeds of daring! Noble deeds of consecration, generous gifts of liberality! I want you to be more earnest in prayer, more incessant in supplication—but, at the same time—more venturesome in your actions, more daring in your devotedness to Christ. The King is in the midst of her! The Lord is in Zion still! Sinner, I must leave this point, but there is one word of encouragement for you—

*“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,*

*He receives poor sinners still.”*  
He is in Zion, not on Sinai. Come to Him just as you are! Come to Him for He is ready to accept you. The King with the silver scepter in His hand holds it out to every broken-hearted sinner. Come and touch it—He will give you perfect pardon in an instant, if your soul does but touch the silver scepter of His Grace presented to you in Christ Jesus.

III. Time, however, will not stop for me and therefore let us go on to the third point. That is, ANOTHER QUESTION. “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” Here is a question for the Lord’s people. It becomes a very solemn thing when God is in His Church how that Church behaves herself. Suppose that Church to set up false principles—if her King were not there she might take the kings of the earth to be her head. But dare she do that when her King Himself is there?

She might begin to lean upon the civil arm if her God were not in her! But if her God is in her—will she venture to do that in the face of the Presence of God? Will she build up with untempered mortar the walls of human confidence and rest upon an arm of flesh when Jehovah is looking on? In the matter of Gospel ordinances it is a very important thing that we keep these ordinances as they were delivered. If the King were not in Zion it would not matter whether I practiced Believers’ Baptism or unbelievers’ Baptism! But if He has commanded Believers’ Baptism how dare I baptize unbelievers in the Presence of the King in Zion?

How dare I profane His own ordinance to what it was never intended? It therefore becomes a solemn question. If the King is in Zion, I must mind what doctrines I preach. The king is there to hear me. God is there to observe me. If God is in Zion, again, we must take care no wrong principles are let in. What? Shall I allow the King’s enemies to eat and drink before the King’s own Throne? Shall I wait upon the King’s foes and treat them as my friends when He is looking upon me with eyes of love?

Let me take heed lest I prove a hypocrite and receive anger instead of love! Certainly He will look upon my sins with increased wrath if I indulge them in His Presence. Is God in Zion? Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, how dare you set up that idol in your heart? Is it your child? Your spouse? What is it? Can you worship idols when the King is in Zion— when God is in the midst of her? My dear Friend, how can you be so worldly, so money-grasping? How is it that you can make wealth the main object of your life when the King is in Zion? If He did not know about your worldliness. If He did not know about your coldness of heart. If He did not mark your inconsistency—if He could not see you in the path of sin—then I might not plead with you!

But. O Christian men and women, when God is present, how careful should we be! And He is present in His Church! Judas, where are you this morning? The Lord Jehovah is here in Zion! He has come to search Jerusalem with candles and to punish the men who are settled upon their lees! What will He do with you? You think it a good thing to have God in Zion, but you have desired in this, as far as you are concerned, a day of darkness and not of light—for when He comes, He shall be as a consuming fire and as fullers’ soap! The Lord’s special Presence in His Church always involves a season of purification.

A Church may go on with dead members for twenty years, but when the Lord comes, as soon as the wind sweeps through the forest, the dead branches crack and fall from the tree. A visitation from God to this

Church will try you—it is all a blessing, but partly a trial. I believe that in every society and every Church where the Presence of God comes, instead of the dead calm which they formerly enjoyed, there usually comes some outbreak on the part of the flesh against the powers or the Spirit. And they are discovered to be hypocrites who otherwise might have gone on the whole of their lives with their vain profession—boasting in what they did not possess. Well, we must prepare for this ordeal. If God is in Zion, let us not provoke Him to anger with our idolatry, nor with our strange vanities. Let us purge and humble ourselves before Him!

But this text has a particular voice to sinners. I want you to listen to me, you who are unconverted, while I just read this text slowly. You have been saying, “God is in the midst of His people—how is it I have not had a blessing?” I will ask you this question, “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” I will turn that enquiry into English—it is in Hebrew now—“Why have you provoked Me to anger with your drunkenness and with your mixing with vain companions? Do not ask why I have not called you by My Divine Grace—do not ask why you are not among the people of God. Answer My question—Why have you provoked Me to anger by indulging the lusts of the flesh—by leaving the paths of chastity and virtue—when you knew the right and chose the wrong?

“Do not ask why the Word is not blessed to you! Do not ask why you do not enjoy the Prayer Meeting—answer My question first. Why have you provoked Me to anger with your tricks in trade, with your Sabbathbreaking, with your lying, with your loose songs, with your mixing up with worldly company, with your profanity? Do not ask Me why the holy dew has not dropped on you! Do not ask Me why the Holy Spirit has not come to quicken you, but answer this, ‘Why have you provoked Me to anger with your sins?’ ”

Why, some of you have provoked God to anger these twenty or thirty years! I hear of you every now and then. You love me, I know you do and you dare not leave my ministry! You cannot leave it though it is often a heart-searching ministry to you. God make it more so! But every now and then there comes an outbreak with you undecided ones. You must have the drink again, or you must go forth to lechery or sin. So it is with you— you would be saved, but you must be damned! You would have Christ, but you must have your sins! You would like to go to Heaven, but you want to taste the sweets of damnation’s dainties on the road!

How is it you will be such fools as to keep your filthy idols? My God, take the hammer and break their idols! O my God, be the great Iconoclast and dash down the altars of their lusts and clear a temple for Yourself! You say, “Amen,” to that—I hope you do. Then God hear your cry this morning! Through the eternal Savior who drove the buyers and the sellers out of the temple with a scourge of small cords and overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves and said, “Take these things away”—this day may He come into your heart and overturn your sins!

And may He say, “Take these things away—I have bought that man with blood! I have loved him with an everlasting love! I have brought him under the sound of the ministry! I purpose to bring him to Myself! I have ordained him to wear a crown and wave a palm and be wrapped about with the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints! He shall be Mine when I make up My jewels. Out with you, intruders! Away, you devils! Away, you lusts! You may be called Legion, but I, Jehovah-Jesus, cast you out, for this man is Mine.”

Lord, do it! Do it this morning! The voice of the cry of Your people comes up for those who are afar off, that their vanities may be given up and their sins may be dashed in pieces—that they may be Yours forever and ever.

IV. The last point is, ANOTHER CRY. I wish I might hear this cry this morning, for then I should not hear it in the world to come, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.” I have been talking to you. Now I want you to talk for yourselves in your heart to God. There came a harvest of souls to this Church, by His Grace, from the very day when first we began to preach the Gospel here. And we have gathered such numbers into the Church as probably never were received into any one Church in Europe in any age at one time except in the days of the Apostles.

That harvest is only past so far as the blessing which we have received has been received—for the harvest still continues in all its fullness. But, ah, the harvest has missed you! Some of you have had to move away, or the Word ceases to be a blessing to you as it once was. This voice has grown stale to you, has no trumpet-ringing clang about it as it once had— “The harvest is past.” Very blessed times have passed over this Church. We have had a summer—oh, what Divine warmth has been felt! The sun has shone strong in upon us and every plant has breathed forth its perfume—every plant that the Lord has planted.

But many a Monday night—many a Prayer Meeting night has gone—the summer has ended and you are not saved! You are not saved! Do you remember, some of you, that sermon in the Music Hall, from the text, “Compel them to come in”? Then we had a harvest and then we had a summer—but you were not compelled to come in. You were not saved! You remember some Monday nights when we have been bowed down and broken in heart before God in prayer? We have then had harvests and summers—but you are not saved! And now, last Monday night what a visitation we had! What a harvest! What a summer! But you are not saved!

I wish you would put up that cry, “Now, Lord, I am not saved! Lord I am not saved! I am not saved from my hard heart! I am not saved from my love of sin! I am not saved from the guilt of sin! I am without God, without Christ and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel! I am not saved!” There are some of you I could speak to very specifically—we pray for you— but you are not saved! You have a brother who prays for you, a sister who prays for you, a father and mother who have prayed for you—but still you are not saved!

Husband! You have a wife who never ceases to intercede for you—but you are not saved! We thought you would have been converted long ago!

There have been many hopeful signs about you, but you have disappointed us—you are not saved! Take heed, take heed! There may be more in the words that I now speak than if they were my words, for, to this day, God sometimes speaks to men prophetically by His truly sent ministers. The day is near with some of you, if you do not repent, when, tossing upon the bed of sickness you will have to cry in the sight of the approach of death, “the harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved!”

You will look back upon these Sunday gatherings with a very different eye from that with which you look upon them now. You will remember your Gospel privileges and value them very differently from what you do now. When you seem to hear the tolling of your own death knell, then you will value the Sunday chime! And take heed yet a little further! There will come a day when you will lift up your eyes in Hell, some of you, being in torments—and then, as you look up and see the people of God glorified at God’s right hand—you will have to say, “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended and I am not saved!”

And let me tell you, those words will ring very differently then from what they do now, when you have—

*“To linger in eternal pain, yet death forever fly,”*to have to say, “I am not saved,” will be dreadful. Then the Lord will come. We are looking for His coming. And when He comes His people shall reign with Him. They shall rise from the dead in triumph. And when their days of earthly reign shall be over the great archangel shall sound the trumpet for the second resurrection—and when you wake up and find that the righteous have all risen before you and have received their crowns and their rewards—then, as you see the harvest of God borne by the angelic reapers up to the sky—as you see the brightness of the Glory of the new Jerusalem taken up into the clouds to be withdrawn from the place where men shall stand to be judged, you will say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved!”

Oh, then you will cry, “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! We are not saved!” Those mountains shall have no ears for you—those rocks shall have no heart of compassion for you—there shall only be a dread reverberation of your awful cry, “We are not saved! We are not saved!” And when Hell opens wide her jaws and her tongue of fire shall lick up the ungodly, then, “We are not saved! We are not saved! We are not saved!” will be in dolorous contrast to that ever-swelling, ever-increasing song, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!”

Shall it be “Hallelujah,” Sinner, or shall it be, “We are not saved”? May God’s eternal Grace work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure and so make you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And then may the question be decided and may you not have to say forever, “We are not saved.” May God bless these words for Christ Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1562 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED AND MEN UNSAVED

NO. 1562

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.” Jeremiah 8:20.**

THIS is a very mournful chapter, especially if we include in it, as we rightly should, the first verse of the ninth chapter: “O that my head were waters.” The passage is full of lamentation and woe and yet it is somewhat amazing that the chief mourner is not one who was likely to be in trouble. Jeremiah was under the special protection of God and he escaped in the evil day. Even when Nebuchadnezzar was exercising his utmost rage, Jeremiah was in no danger, for the heart of the fierce monarch was kindly towards him. “Now Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, take him and look well to him and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto you.”

The man of God who had least cause, personally, to mourn, was filled with heavy grief—while the people who were about to lose their all and to lose their lives, remained but half awakened—complaining, but not repenting—afraid, but not yet humbled before God. None of them uttered such a grievous lament as that which came from the heart and mouth of the Prophet. Their heads were full of idle dreams, while his had become waters. Their eyes were full of wantonness, while his were a fountain of tears. He loved them better than they loved themselves. Is it not strange that it should be so—that the physician should be more anxious than the sick?

Perhaps, however, it is not so amazing that the shepherd should care more for the flock than the sheep care for themselves. When the sheep are men, it is certainly an unreasonable thing! The weeping Prophet cries, “For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt!” He was more hurt than they were. A preacher whom God sends will often feel more care for the souls of men than men feel for themselves or their own salvation. Is it not sad that there should be an anxious pain in the heart of one who is himself saved, while those who are unsaved and are obliged to acknowledge it, feel little or no concern? To see a man in jeopardy of his life and all around him alarmed for his danger while he, himself, is half asleep, is a sad sight.

See yonder man, about to be condemned to die, standing at the bar? The judge putting on the black cap is scarcely able to pronounce the sentence for emotion and all around him in the court break down with distress on his account—while the condemned is bronze-faced and feels no more than the floor he stands upon! How hardened he has become! Pity is lost upon him, if pity ever can be lost. Such a sad sight we constantly see in our congregations—those who are “condemned already” on account of sin are altogether indifferent to their awful peril—while their godly parents are greatly distressed for them! Christian people are pleading with them and earnest messengers from God expostulating with them! Heaven and earth are moved for them and yet they are unaffected!

Oh that it might not be so here this morning! May none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. May God in His infinite mercy strike the rock and make the waters of penitence to gush out from it! May His transforming hand turn stone into flesh and cause a holy tenderness to banish all stubbornness and insensibility! Such is my agonizing cry to the Holy Spirit. Certainly there ought to be dismay and even terror in the heart of any who are compelled to use my text in reference to themselves. Those few words, “We are not saved!” sound like a peal of thunder! They should cut the soul as with a case of knives—“We are not saved!” What worse thing can men say of themselves? We are now under the abiding wrath of God, for “we are not saved!”

We must soon stand before the Judgment Seat of God and then we shall be condemned by the great Judge, for “we are not saved!” We shall, before long, be driven from His Presence and from the glory of His power, for “we are not saved!” We shall then be shut out in outer darkness where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, for “we are not saved!” Had men but reason, or having reason would they but use it upon the most important of all subjects, surely they would cry out in the bitterness of their souls, “Oh that our heads were water and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night till we had found our Savior and He had washed away our sins and saved us!” How saddening to see the loaded wagons of harvest bearing no real blessing to us and to watch the clusters on the vine ripen all unblessed! Alas for that summer which amid all its flowers yields us no perfume of peace or joy!

On the other hand, my Brothers and Sisters, how blessed to feel that the harvest is past and the summer is ended and, blessed be God, we are saved! Now let winter come with all its blasts—we have nothing to fear— for wrapped in our Savior’s righteousness and hidden in the cleft of His side, we shall outlive every storm! I earnestly pray the Lord to bless the words I am about to speak, that they may be rendered useful to many undecided persons to lead them to decision and induce them to give themselves up to Christ at once. May the Holy Spirit work this blessed result in thousands! I have so long been silent that I am hungering to speak with power. Come Holy Spirit! Come!

First, I shall look at the text as a complaint—“We are not saved.” And, secondly, I shall suggest that out of it ought to come consideration— those who utter the complaint should be led, thereby, to solemn consideration.

I. First, we have before us the language of COMPLAINT. These Jews said, “The seasons are going by, the year is spending itself, the harvest is past, the vintage, also, is ended and yet we are not saved.” Some of them were captives in Babylon and they fondly expected to be brought back from the distant land, but they were disappointed. They hoped that when the produce of the Nile had been reaped, Egyptian troops would march against Nebuchadnezzar and break his power. Others of them had fled into the defended cities and taken refuge behind the walls of Jerusalem and they, also, dreamed that the march of the Chaldeans would be stopped and the land would be delivered from their invasion as soon as the summer heat was over. The rescue did not come.

Indeed, they could hear from Jerusalem the neighing of the Babylonian horses—“The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come and have devoured the land and all that is in it; the city and those that dwell therein.” Therefore they complained that their hopes had failed. In effect they complained of God—that He had not saved them—as if He was under some obligation to have done so! They complained as if they had a kind of claim upon Him to interpose and so they spoke as if they were an ill-used people, a nation that had been neglected by their Protector. The farmers had gathered in the harvest and vinedressers had gleaned the grapes, yet they had not been cared for, but left to suffer—in spite of all their hopes, they were not saved.

Certain persons fall into the same state of mind in these days. They know that they are not saved, but they do not blame themselves for it! The fault lies—they would not like to say where it lies—but they will not admit that it lies in themselves. They are not saved and somebody should be blamed for it, or perhaps nobody, but they mention the fact, not as a confession of which they are ashamed, but as a misfortune for which they are to be pitied! This complaint was a very unjust one of the Jews, for there were many reasons why they were not saved and why God had not delivered them. The first was they had looked to the wrong quarter— they expected that the Egyptians would deliver them.

You remember that in the reign of Zedekiah the Jews revolted from their subjection to the Babylonians because they hoped that the king of Egypt would come up and fight with the Babylonian power. Those who were captives hoped that the great armies of the Pharaohs might break down the might of Chaldea and so they looked to Egypt for help—an old fault with Israel and a gross folly—for why should they look to the house of bondage for succor? The same folly dwells in multitudes of men. They are not saved and they never will be while they continue to look where they look! All dependence upon ourselves is looking to Egypt for help and leaning our weight upon a broken reed.

Whether that dependence upon self takes the form of relying upon ceremonies, or depending upon prayers, or trusting in our own attempts to improve ourselves morally, it is still the same proud folly of selfdependence. Vain is all searching for legal righteousness, hoping to merit something from God, or to do something without help from on high—for the Lord, Himself, has assured us that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified! My Friend, you may have been very earnest and serious about Divine things, but if you have looked, in any measure or degree, to what you are, or can do, or what any man can do for you, it is no wonder that you are not saved, for there is no salvation except in Christ!

I am afraid some think that it is a great thing to sit under a faithful minister—that if the Gospel is thoroughly preached they may, naturally, expect that if they take a seat at the place they will be saved. But all dependence upon ministers is only another form of superstitious confidence in priestcraft! All trust but that which is found in Jesus is a delusion and a falsehood! No man can help you. Though Noah, Samuel and Moses prayed for you, their prayers could not avail unless you believed in the blood of Jesus—there is salvation nowhere else! Though the whole Church were to unite in one protracted intercession and determine that all its ministers should preach to only you for the next seven years, there would be no more hope of your being saved, then, than now, unless you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the salvation of the sons of men.

The most fruitful of harvests may pass and the most genial of summers may smile upon you, but while you look to yourself, no sunshine from God shall cause you to flourish. Eternal barrenness is the portion of those who trust in man and make flesh their arm. While men go about to establish their own righteousness and will not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ, they shall be like the woman who spent all her living upon physicians and was no better, but rather grew worse. Those people had prided themselves upon their outward privileges—they had presumed upon their favored position, for they say in the 19th verse, “Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?” Because they belonged to the chosen nation; because the Lord had entrusted them with the sacred Oracles and manifested Himself to their fathers, therefore they thought that they might sin with impunity and reckoned upon being delivered in the day of danger.

I do not know how many of you, here, may be depending upon outward religiousness, or indulging some kind of thought that apart from your personal faith in Christ, you will be saved by your pious connections and hallowed relationships. But if that is what you are depending upon, rest assured you will be deceived! Vain are the baptism or the confirmation of your youth—faith in Jesus is the one thing necessary! Vain is the fact that you were born of Christian parents—you must be born again! Vain is your sitting as God’s people sit and standing as they stand in the solemn service of the sanctuary—your heart must be changed! Vain is your observance of the Lord’s Day and vain your Bible reading and your form of night and morning prayer unless you are washed in Jesus’ blood! Vain are all things without living faith in the living Jesus!

Though you had been descended from an unbroken line of saints; though you had no unconverted relatives, your ancestry and lineage would not do you any good—the sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. All the external privileges that can be heaped upon you, though you had sermons piled up and Gospel services heaped on them—as the giants piled mountain upon mountain, Pelion upon Ossa that they might climb to Heaven, would be useless—there is no reaching to salvation by such means. If your reliance is upon external ordinances, or professions, or privileges in any measure or degree—no wonder that the harvest is past and the summer is ended and you are not saved—you will never be saved till doomsday while you look in that direction. Look like sinners to your Savior and you shall be saved, but no other way.

Thirdly, there was another and very powerful reason why these people were not saved, for, with all their religiousness and their national boast as to God’s being among them, they had continued in provoking the Lord. He says in the 19th verse, “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” They lived in sin, disobeying God to His face! They set up new idols and imported false deities from foreign lands and yet they said, “We are not saved.” Would they have the Lord sanction their degrading idolatry by sending them deliverance? Do you know a man who goes frequently into ill company and gets intoxicated and yet comes to hear the Gospel and murmurs that he is not saved? Is he not mad? Let me speak plainly to him. Do you think that you are going to Heaven to reel about the holy streets? Shall the pure heavens be polluted by your profanities? You are dreadfully mistaken if you fancy so!

Another person indulges lust, lives an unclean life and yet he comes in and listens to the Word of God as one who has a loving ear for it and he, also, complains that he is not saved. O unclean man, how can you dream of salvation while you are defiled with filthiness? What? You and your harlot, members of Christ! Oh, Sir, you know not my pure and holy Master! He receives sinners, but He rejects those who delight in their iniquities. You must have done with the indulgence of sin if you would be cleansed from the guilt of it! There is no going on in transgression and yet obtaining salvation—it is a licentious supposition! Christ comes to save us from our sins, not to make it safe to do evil! That blood which washes out the stain brings with it a hatred of the thing which made the stain! Sin must be relinquished or salvation cannot be received.

I spoke very plainly, just now, but some here of pure heart little know how plainly we must speak if we are to reach some men’s consciences, for it shames me when I think of some who, year after year, indulge in secret sin and yet they are regular frequenters of the House of God. You would think they surely were already converted, or soon would be, when you saw them here. But if you followed them home, you would quite despair of them. O lovers of sin, do not deceive yourselves! You will surely reap that which you sow! How can Grace reign in you while you are the slaves of your own passions? How can it be, while you are anchored to a secret sin, that you should be borne along by the current of Grace towards the desired haven of safety? Either you must leave your sin or leave all hope of Heaven!

If you hold your sin, Hell will, before long, hold you! Jesus was not sent to be the minister of sin! He never came into the world to bleed and die to make the way of the transgressors easy by enabling them to be vicious without risk. The Friend of sinners is the Enemy of sin! There is a religion that will let you pay a shilling or two and purchase priestly absolution, but this we protest against. Such a faith may well breed iniquity! What can it be but like Egypt’s Nile, when in the days of Moses it became the fruitful mother of 10,000 unclean frogs? Under the religion of Christ, absolution for the past is only to be obtained through faith in Jesus—and that faith brings with it repentance for former offenses and a change of life for days to come. Why do men say, “We are not saved,” when they are still hugging their iniquities? They may as well hope to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles as to find salvation while they abide in sin! May God deliver us all from the love of sin, for such a deliverance is salvation.

Again, there was another reason why they were not saved and that was because they made being saved from trouble the principal matter. Many make a great mistake about salvation. They mistake the meaning of the term and to them, salvation means being delivered from going down into the pit of Hell—just as to these Jews it meant rescue from Nebuchadnezzar. Now, the right meaning of salvation is purification from evil. These people never thought of this. They never said, “We are not cleansed, we are not made holy,” but, “we are not saved.” If their cry had been, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we have not yet conquered sin,” that would have been a mark of something good and true. But they showed no trace of it. There is not much in a man’s desiring to be saved if he means by that, an escape from the punishment of his offenses!

Was there ever a murderer who did not wish to be saved from the gallows? When a man is tied up to be flogged for a deed of brutal violence and his back is bared for the lash, depend upon it, he repents of what he did—that is to say, he repents that he has to suffer for it—but that is all and a sorry all, too. He has no sorrow for the agony which he inflicted on his innocent victim. He has no regret for maiming him for life. What is the value of such a repentance? Here is the point, my Hearers—do you wish to have new hearts? If you do, you shall have them! Do you wish to leave the sins you have loved? Do you desire to live as Christ lived? Do you wish to keep the Commandments of God? Do you sigh for purity of life? Do you wish, from now on, to be as God would have you be—just, loving, kind, chaste—after the example of the great Redeemer? If so, then truly the desire you have comes from God!

But if all you want is to be able to die without dread that you may wake up in the next world and not be driven down to the bottomless Pit— if that is all—there is nothing gracious in it and it is no wonder that you should say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and I am not saved.” You do not know what being saved means! May God teach you to love holiness and there shall not pass another harvest, no, not another day before you shall be saved! Indeed, that very love is the dawn of salvation! Seek salvation as the kingdom of God within you. Seek it first and seek it now and you shall not be denied.

Again, there was another reason why these people were not saved and could not be. Read the ninth verse and see their fault and folly—“Lo, they have rejected the Word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them?” We hear persons complain that they are not saved though they neglect the saving Word of God. They go to a place of worship and, therefore, wonder that they are not saved—how can they be when that which they hear is not the object of their heart’s attention? Do you read your Bible privately? Did you ever read it with an earnest prayer that God would teach you what you really are and make you to be a true believer in Christ? Have you done that just as earnestly as you studied a book when you were trying to pass an examination?

I do not know what calling you follow, but I will suppose, for instance, that you wish to be a chemist. If so, you go through a course of studies and you acquaint yourself with certain books in order that you may pass an examination. You stick to your work, for you know that you will not pass unless you are well informed as to the matters necessary to your profession. Do you show the same diligence in reference to your soul and your God? Have you ever read your Bible with anything like the same intensity with which a man must study a class book in order to pass his examinations? Have you read it with regard to yourself, asking God to teach you its meaning and to make the sense of it press upon your conscience? Do you reply, “I have not done that”? Why, then, do you wonder that you are not saved?

To put a slighter test than the former—when you hear the Gospel, do you always inquire—“What has this to do with me?” Or do you listen to it as a general Truth of God with which you have no peculiar concern? What a difference is perceptible in hearers! Numbers of persons have come here at this time merely to hear Spurgeon preach and form an estimate of him. Is this a fit errand for God’s Day and for an assembly gathered for worship? Do not imagine that we are flattered by such attention! We do not covet such hearers! What do I care about their estimate? A poor soul that desires to find Christ is a diamond in my eyes, but he who comes to hear me because of public talk is a common pebble that one might sling away—only it is well that even he should hear the Word of God if, perhaps, God might bless him.

Many of you Christian people hear sermons that you may remember— well-turned sentences and pithy sayings—or that you may gauge the preacher’s earnestness and judge whether he is likely to be useful. Hearing for others is a very common amusement. There is a great deal of difference between walking through a baker’s shop when you are well-filled and counting the loaves upon the shelves and rushing in the door to get a bit of bread at once, for fear of dying of starvation! Water seen as a picturesque object by a traveler is one thing, but a living draught swallowed by one dying of thirst is quite a different matter. O that men would treat the Gospel as a necessity of life which they must, each one, feed upon or perish! That is the style of hearing when a man prays that the Word of God may search him and try him!

It is well when the hearer bares his bosom and cries, “Lord, cut this cancer out of my soul, I pray You. I beseech You, let me live!” That kind of hearing ends in saving. “Incline your ears,” says the great Lord, “and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live.” “Hearken diligently unto Me,” He says, again and, in so doing, He certifies that diligent listening shall bring a blessing with it. Alas, with the bulk of hearers, even the Word of God goes in one ear and out the other! The noise of God’s voice is drowned by the din of the world’s traffic. The six days crush the influence of the seventh and it is no wonder that January comes and December goes and yet worldlings are not saved! They never will be while they slumber as they do.

There is another reason why some men are not saved and that is because they have a great preference for slight measures. They love to hear the flattering voice whispering—“Peace, peace,” where there is no peace and they choose those for leaders who will heal their hurt with the least pain. They wish for something very comfortable and, in their folly, they prefer poisoned sweets to healthful salts. “I felt so miserable,” said one, “when I left that place, that I said I would never enter it again.” It was a foolish vow. He who is wise will go where the Word of God has the most power—both to kill and to make alive. Do you want a physician, when you call upon him, to please you with a flattering opinion? Must he say, “My dear Friend, it is a very small matter—you need nothing but pleasant diet and you will soon be all right”?

If he talks thus, smoothly, when he knows that a deadly disease is commencing its work upon you, is he not a deceiver? Do you not think you are very foolish if you pay such a man your guinea and denounce his neighbor who tells you the plain truth? Do you want to be deluded? Are you eager to be duped? Do you want to dream of Heaven and then wake up in Hell? Have I such an idiot here? May Heaven save him from his ruinous folly! For my part, I would like to know the worst of my case! Things must be very bad with any of you who cannot say the same. When a merchant dares not face his books, you know where he is! When he says to his clerk, “No, no, I do not want to know on which side the balance stands! I cannot bear to be worried. I dare say money will come in as well as go out and my credit will raise me another loan. Things will come round and the less we dive into difficulties the better.”

I think we shall hear of that gentleman very speedily in the Bankruptcy Court. He is in the same condition, spiritually, who does not dare to face himself, but would rather not be troubled with questions and examinations. What? Do you dare not look yourself in the face? Have you covered up the mirror? Have you hid the Word of God from yourselves and dare not see how you look? Yes? Then be sure you are in an evil plight! While men will not have the thorough-going Truth of God preached to them. While they prefer some siren strain. While they would gladly listen to soft music and float upon gentle streams that bear them down to destruction, there is little hope but what harvests and summers will come and go and they will not be saved! All this while these people have wondered that they were not saved and yet they never repented of their sins!

The Lord Himself witnesses against them—“I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright: no man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rushes into battle.” “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.” Repentance was a jest with them—they had not Grace enough, even, to feel shame and yet they made a complaint against God, saying, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.” What monstrous folly was this! Where has the Lord given half a promise to those who will not confess and forsake their sins? How can impenitent sinners hope that they should be forgiven? We have said enough upon this unjustifiable complaint!

II. Now, may the Spirit of God help us while we try to lead unconverted persons, for a few minutes, into the CONSIDERATION of this matter. First consideration, “we are not saved.” I do not want to talk, I want you to think. “We are not saved.” Put it in the personal, first person singular. Will everyone here do me the favor of saying to himself if it is true, “I am not saved! I am not saved! I am not saved from sin, I love it still! I am not saved from guilt, I am condemned for my failure to keep the Law of God. I am not saved from wrath, I am not saved from judgment, I am not saved from the eternal curse. I am not saved! My dear child in Heaven is forever happy, but I am not saved.

“My dear wife is a happy Christian, but I am not saved. I am one of a family where many have been converted, but I am not saved! I am a grayheaded old man and I am not saved. I am beloved in my family by my dear mother, for I am yet a child, but though she prays for me I am not saved. I am a member of a Church and am not saved.” Are you obliged to say that, any of you? Be honest! Do not cover up the truth, however terrible it may be—better far to face it. What if someone must confess, “I am a preacher of the Gospel, but I am not saved”? Oh, my Heart, what terror is here! It is an awful thing if anybody here has to say, “I am a teacher in a Sunday school and this afternoon the little ones will gather round me, but I am not saved. People respect me. They say I have all things good about me, but I have not the one thing necessary, I am not saved.”

Teachers, does this touch any of you? I pray you, let it have its due influence. Now you down here in this area and you in these galleries, will you do one of two things? Either say, “By God’s Grace I have believed in Jesus and I am saved,” or else just sigh out silently in your soul, “I am not saved.” It will do you good to end all questions and know, once and for all, whether you are in Christ or not. Furthermore, not only am I not saved, but I have been a long time not saved. Let me put language into the mouths of those who are ruining themselves by delay. “Time flies. How quickly it is gone! I was a young man a very little while ago. Now I am getting into middle age, getting a little bald, gray hairs are upon me here and there. Why, dear me, here are grandchildren—it seems but yesterday that I was married! Yes, harvests have passed, vintages have been gathered and I am not saved.

“Twenty years ago I sat listening to this same preacher and I was not saved then. And I remember how he touched my conscience, but all those years have gone and I am not saved! The world has had its opportunities and used them—they sowed and they reaped their harvests. The vinedresser used the knife and the vine was pruned and in due season he gathered the clusters, but I have had no harvest—I have known no vintage. I have made money. I have got on in business, or at least I have paid my way and supported my family, but I have had no spiritual harvest. No, for I never sowed. I have had no spiritual vintage, for I was never pruned. I never went to the great Farmer and asked Him to dig about me and make me fruitful to His name. What opportunities I had! I have been through revivals, but the sacred power passed over me. I remember several wonderful occasions when the Spirit of God was poured out and yet I am not saved.”

Worse, still, habits harden. “If I was not saved during the last 20 or 30 years I am less likely to be impressed now. I do not feel as I once did. Sometimes the vile unbelief which now taints the very air creeps over me and I am half a skeptic. Considerations that used to thrill me and make my flesh creep are now put before me, but I seem like a piece of steel— no, I do not even rust under the Word of God—I am unimpressible. Harvests have dried me, summers have parched me, age has shriveled my soul—my moisture is turned into the drought of summer—I am getting to be old hay, or as withered weeds fit for the burning.”

It is a dreadful consideration for a man to turn over in his mind, but it is a very necessary one, for it is an undoubted fact that every year fixes the character and engraves the lines of evil deeper in the nature. Harvests and summers leave us worse if they do not see us mend. As true as you are alive, unless the God of Infinite Mercy awakens you out of your present condition to seek and immediately find Christ and obtain everlasting life, some of you will settle down into a condition which will be the eternal state of your hearts! O for Grace to repent at once, before yet the wax has cooled and the seal is set forever! The last summer will soon come and the last harvest will soon be reaped and you, dear Friend, must go to your last and final home.

I will apply it mainly to myself—I must go upstairs for the last time and I must lay down upon the bed from which I shall never rise again! If I am unsaved, my room will be a prison chamber to me and the bed will be hard as a plank. If, unsaved, I have to lie there and know that I must die—that a few more days or hours must end this struggle for existence and I am bound to stand before God—O my God, save me from an unready deathbed! Save these people from dying and passing into Hell! You will have no doubts about it then, you know. You will see clearly that you are bound to stand before God. This naked spirit of mine, disrobed of its body, must appear before the Judge! What shall I do? What shall I say? Before my Maker’s burning eyes—stripped naked to my shame—what shall I do? And when I, speechless, stand before Him—by my silence acknowledging my guilt—what shall I do?

The gate of Heaven is shut, I cannot enter there! I have not the password. I have rejected the way there. I have rejected Christ, who is the King of the place. Oh where must I go? I will not paint the picture. Souls, I charge you by everything that is rational within you, escape for your lives and seek to find eternal salvation for your undying spirits! You are not dogs nor cats, nor horses nor cattle as men tell you! You are nobler things and an immortality awaits you! And today you shall make that immortality the most awful curse that can fall upon you, or an infinite, unutterable privilege! It is a grand alternative! God help us, by His infinite mercy, to choose eternal holiness and everlasting joy and choose it now! Come, let us consider a little longer, a few practical Truths of God which may be of service.

It is quite clear that if you are to get right, you must not go on in the old way. The harvest is past and the summer is ended and, by the way in which you have been going you are not saved. There must be a change of tactics. Salvation must be thought of in another light and sought for in another spirit. Come, my Friend, if you are to find salvation, you must be more earnest about it! You must be more intense about it! There must be a greater valuing of this salvation and a more solemn resolve that if Heaven or earth or Hell can yield it to you, you will have it, for, “the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Never did a man sleep himself into eternal life! Salvation is all of Grace, but sluggards have no Grace! The Lord does not work in us to sleep and to slumber, but to will and to do. Men reach the Celestial City, not by drowsiness, but by their spirits being stirred to feel that there is nothing else that is worth a thought compared with going on pilgrimage to Heaven!

There is one thing certain, that, as the harvests have past and the summer is ended and we have not been saved, we must have been looking in the wrong place. Very likely we have been looking to something on earth for salvation. If so, we have not found it because it is not there! The Prophet enquires—“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” He knew that there was none in that region which could meet his people’s dreadful hurt. There was a balm in Gilead, but it was the resin of a tree. There were physicians there, but they were mostly quacks that duped the people! If there had been any true balm and any real physician there, the health of the daughter of his people would have been recovered. No, my Hearer, there is no balm in Gilead for you! The balm of Gilead was only good for certain bodily wounds and sores, but not for cuts and wounds and sores like these, for these are in the soul! The physicians of Gilead could only heal some few complaints and seldom enough did they heal even these, but all the physicians of Gilead in a row cannot heal your complaint! I will tell you of another and better health resort than Gilead—it is Calvary. Where Jesus bled you will find a balm! Where Jesus lives you will find a Physician!

Another thing must have suggested itself to you while I have been preaching, dear Friend, if you have listened in earnest and it is this—the great point must be that if I am to be saved I must get rid of sin. I will again speak for those whom I address. “I have been thinking that I should undergo some strange transformation and some kind of mysterious shock, or have a vision or see some strange sight and then I could say I am a converted man. This morning I discover that the main point is to get rid of sin—it must be driven out of my heart. I have not only to leave off the act of it and the thought of it, but all love to it must go. I cannot be a saved man unless that is the case.”

If you have kept pace with the preacher so far, I think the next thought will come—“Then this is deep water! This is a place where my own strength utterly fails me! If I must have a new heart—well, I cannot make myself a new heart. If the very love of sin has to go, I cannot accomplish that! I can stop outside the theater, but I cannot prevent my desiring to go in. I can renounce dishonesty, but I cannot help having an itching palm. Even if I dare not transgress, yet I may feel the wish to do so if the punishment could be escaped. This makes the matter too hard for unaided nature since it is true that unless the love of sin is gone, nothing is done. God must help me or this will never be accomplished!”

This is the center of the truth! Your great Creator must come and make you over again. His dear Son must come and end your captivity to the power of evil. He has come! He has died! Nothing can ever take out the stains of your past sin but the blood of the Son of God! Nothing can take from you the love of sin but the application of the atoning blood and the work of the Spirit upon your entire nature, creating you anew in Christ Jesus. “Oh,” says one, “I see it all now. I seem to have come up against a rock wall and I can go no further. I wonder not that the summers have gone and the harvests have ended when it is like this, for now I am brought up before a dread impossibility. What can I do?”

You can do this, God helping you—trust Christ to do it all! Throw yourself down at His feet. “Savior, Savior, from the highest Heaven look down, here is a sinner in his blood. I read of others, that when they were in their blood, You said to them, Live! Say that to me! Here is one condemned and near to die. Save him! Forgive him! Impute Your righteousness, make me to be accepted in the Beloved. I trust You!” Do you, indeed, trust Jesus? Is it true that you believe on Him? Then you are saved! His merit is yours! His blood has cleansed you the moment you believe in Him! It is done—you shall not love sin again.

You shall be tempted and often have to groan because of secret lusts that will linger in you, but you have a new life, now, for you have believed in Jesus and that new life will abhor sin and will fight it! That new life will conquer it and God will help you! And the Spirit will dwell in you and you shall get sin more and more under your feet—yes, you shall bruise Satan under your feet, before long—and you shall triumph and one day you shall burst this shell which holds you in and you shall shine, in the image of Christ, “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Yes, you, sinful man, shall be made perfectly holy, even you, now full of iniquity, transgression and sin!

You are a God-provoking rebel this morning, but if you trust in Christ Jesus you shall be washed and made God-pleasing this very day! You are black as Hell today, but you shall, by infinite mercy, be made as bright as a seraph before God and all because you trust the Savior! O God, grant us Your saving Grace for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #150 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

INDIA’S ILLS AND ENGLAND’S SORROWS  
NO. 150

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” Jeremiah 9:1.**

SOMETIMES tears are base things. The offspring of a cowardly spirit. Some men weep when they should knit their brows and many a woman weeps when she should resign herself to the will of God. Many of those briny drops are but an expression of child-like weakness. It were well if we could wipe such tears away and face a frowning world with a constant countenance. But oftentimes tears are the index of strength. There are periods when they are the noble things in the world. The tears of penitents are precious—a cup of them worth a king’s ransom. It is no sign of weakness when a man weeps for sin. It shows that he has strength of mind no more—that he has strength imparted by God which enables him to forswear his lusts and overcome his passions and to turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

And there are other tears, too, which are the evidences not of weakness but of might—the tears of tender sympathy are the children of strong affection and they are strong like their parents. He that loves much, must weep much—much love and much sorrow must go together in this vale of tears. The unfeeling heart, the unloving spirit may pass from earth’s portal to its utmost bound almost without a sigh except for itself. But he that loves has dug as many wells of tears as he has chosen objects of affection. For by as many as our friends are multiplied, by so many must our griefs be multiplied, too, if we have love enough to share in their griefs and to bear their burden for them.

The largest hearted man will miss many sorrows that the little man will feel but he will have to endure many sorrows the poor narrow-minded spirit never knows. It needs a mighty Prophet like Jeremiah to weep as mightily as he. Jeremiah was not weak in his weeping. The strength of his mind and the strength of his love were the parents of his sorrow. “Oh that my head were Waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” This is no expression of weak sentimentalism. This is no utterance of mere whining presence. It is the burst of a strong soul, strong in its affection, strong in its devotion, strong in its self-sacrifice. I would to God we knew how to weep like this. And if we might not weep so frequently as Jeremy I wish

that when we did weep, we did weep as well.

It would seem as if some men had been sent into this world for the very purpose of being the world’s weepers. God’s great house is thoroughly furnished with everything. Everything that can express the thoughts and the emotions of the inhabitant, God has made. I find in nature plants to be everlasting weepers. There by the lonely brook, where the maiden cast away her life, the willow weeps forever. And there in the graveyard where men lie slumbering till the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken them, stands the dull cypress mourning in its somber garments.

Now as it is with nature, so it is with the race of man. Mankind has bravery and boldness—they must have their heroes to express their courage. Mankind has some love to their fellow creatures. They must have their fine philanthropists to live out mankind’s philanthropy. Men have their sorrows, they must have their weepers. They must have men of sorrows who have it for their avocation and their business, to weep—from the cradle to the grave to be ever weeping, not so much for themselves as for the woes of others. It may be I have some such here. I shall be happy to enlist their sympathies. And truly if I have none of that race, I shall boldly appeal to the whole mass of you and I will bring before you causes of great grief.

And when I bid you by the love you bear to man and to his God to begin to weep, if you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now. Come, let me show you why I have taken this as my text and why I have uttered this mournful language. And if your hearts are not as impassive as stone, surely there should be some tears shed this morning. For if I am not foolish in my utterances and faint in my speech, you will go home to your chambers to weep there. “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

I want your griefs this morning, first, for persons actually slain—“the slain of the daughter of our people.” And then I shall need your tears for those morally slain, “the slain of the daughter of our people.”

I. To begin—with ACTUAL MURDER AND REAL BLOODSHED. My Brethren, our hearts are sick near unto death with the terrible news brought us post after post, telegraph after telegraph. We have read many letters of the Times, day after day, until we have folded up that paper and professed before God that we could read no more. Our spirits have been harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty. We, perhaps, may not have been personally interested in the bloodshed, so far as our own husbands, wives, brothers and sisters have been concerned—but we have felt the tie of kindred very strongly when we have found our race so cruelly butchered in the land of the East.

It is for us today humbly to confess our crime. The government of India has been a cruel government. It has much for which to appear before the bar of God. Its tortures—if the best evidence is to be believed—have been of the most inhuman kind. God forgive the men who have committed such crimes in the British name. But those days are past. May God blot out the sin. We do not forget our own guilt. But an overwhelming sense of the guilt of others who have with such cold-hearted cruelty tormented men and women, may well excuse us if we do not dilate upon the subject.

Alas! alas, for our Brethren there! They have died. Alas for them! They have been slain by the sword of treachery and traitorously murdered by men who swore allegiance. Alas for them! But, O you soldiers, we weep not for you. Even when you were tortured, you had not that high dishonor to bear to which the other sex has been obliged to submit. O England! Weep for your daughters with a bitter lamentation. Let your eyes run down with rivers of blood for them. Had they been crushed within the folds of the hideous boa, or had the fangs of the tiger been red with their blood, happy would their fate have been compared with the indignities they have endured!

O Earth! You have beheld crimes which antiquity could not parallel. You have seen bestial lust gratified upon the purest and the best of mortals. God’s fairest creatures stained—those loved ones who could not brook the name of lust—given up to the embraces of incarnate devils! Weep, Britain, weep, weep for your sons and for your daughters! If you are cold-hearted now, if you read the tale of infamy now without a tear, you are no mother to them! Surely your heart must have failed you and you have become less loving than your own lions and less tender than beasts of prey, if you do not weep for the maiden and the wife.

Brethren, I am not straining history. I am not endeavoring to be pathetic where there is no pathos. No. My subject of itself is all pathos. It is my poor way of speaking that does spoil it. I have not today to act the orator’s part, to garnish up that which was nothing before. I have not to magnify little griefs—rather I feel that all my utterances do but diminish the woe which every thoughtful man must feel. Oh, how have our hearts been harrowed, cut in pieces, melted in the fire! Agony has seized upon us and grief unutterable, when, day after day, our hopes have been disappointed and we have heard that still the rebel rages in his fury and still with despotic might does as he pleases with the sons and daughters, the husbands and the wives of England.

Weep, Christians, weep! And you ask me of what avail shall be your weeping eye bid you weep today, because the spirit of vengeance is gathering? Britain’s wrath is stirred. A black cloud is hanging over the head of the mutinous Sepoys! Their fate shall be most dreadful, their doom most tremendous, when England shall smite the murderers, as justly she must. There must be Judicial punishment enacted upon these men, so terrible that the earth shall tremble and both the ears of him that hears it shall tingle! I am inclined, if I can, to sprinkle some few cooling tears upon the fires of vengeance.  
No, no, we will not take vengeance upon ourselves. “Vengeance is

Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Let not Britain’s soldiers push their enemies to destruction through a spirit of vengeance. As men, let them do it as the appointed executioners of the sentence of our laws. According to the civil code of every country under Heaven, these men are condemned to die. Not as soldiers should we war with them but as malefactors we must execute the law upon them. They have committed treason against government and for that crime alone the doom is death! But they are murderers and rightly or wrongly, our law is that the murderer must die the death. God must have this enormous sin punished and though we would feel no vengeance as Britons, yet, for the sake of government, God’s established government on earth, the ruler who bears the sword must not now bear the sword in vain.

Long have I held that war is an enormous crime. Long have I regarded all battles as but murder on a large scale—but this time, I, a peaceful man, a follower of the peaceful Savior, do propound war. No, it is not war that I propose but a just and proper punishment. I will not aid and abet soldiers as warriors but as executioners of a lawful sentence which ought to be executed upon men, who, by the double crime of infamous debauchery and fearful bloodshed, have brought upon themselves the ban and curse of God. They must be punished, or truth and innocence can never walk this earth.

As a rule I do not believe in the utility of capital punishment but the crime has been attended with all the horrid guilt of the cities of the plain and is too bestial to be endured. But still, I say, I would cool down the vengeance of Britons and therefore I would bid you weep. You talk of vengeance but you know not the men with whom you have to deal. Many a post may come and many a month run round and many a year may pass before you hear of victory over those fierce men. Be not too proud. England talked once of her great deeds and she has since been humbled. She may yet again learn that she is not omnipotent. But you people of God, weep, weep for this sin that has broken loose, weep for this Hell that has found its way to earth.

Go to your chambers and cry out to God to stop this bloodshed. You are to be the saviors of your nation. Not on the bayonets of British soldiery but on the prayers of British Christians, do we rest. Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, lament most bitterly, for this desperate sin. And then cry to God to save! Remember, He hears prayer—prayer moves the arm of the Omnipotent. Let us proclaim a fast. Let us gather a solemn assembly. Let us cry mightily unto Him. Let us ask the God of armies to avenge Himself. Let us pray Him so to send the light of the Gospel into the land, that such a crime may be impossible a second time. And this time, so to put it down that it may never have an opportunity of breaking loose again.

I know not whether our government will proclaim a national fast. But certain I am it is time that every Christian should celebrate one in his own heart. I bid all of you with whom my word has one atom of respect. If my exhortation has one word of force, I do exhort you to spend special time in prayer just now. Oh, my Friends, you cannot hear the shrieks, you have not seen the terror-stricken faces, you have not beheld the flying fugitives. But you may picture them in your imagination—and he must be accursed who does not pray to God and lift up his soul in earnest prayer—that He would be pleased now to put His shield between our fellow-subjects and their enemies.

And you, especially, the representatives of many congregations in various parts of this land, give unto God no rest until He is pleased to bestir Himself. Make this your cry—“O Lord our God arise and let Your enemies be scattered and let all them that hate You become as the fat of rams.” So shall God, through your prayers, perhaps establish peace and vindicate justice and, “God, even our own God, shall  
bless us and that right early.”

II. But I have now a greater reason for your sorrow—a more disregarded and yet more dreadful source of woe. If the first time we said it with plaintive voice, we must a second time say it yet more plaintively— “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night,” FOR THE MORALLY SLAIN of the daughter of my people.

The old adage is still true, “One-half of the world knows nothing about how the other half lives.” A large proportion of you professing Christians have been respectably brought up. You have never in your lives been the visitants of the dens of infamy. You have never frequented the haunts of wickedness and you know but very little of the sins of your fellow creatures. Perhaps it is well that you should remain as ignorant as you are— for to be ignorant is to be free from temptation, It would be folly to be wise. But there are others who have been obliged to see the wickedness of their fellows. And a public teacher, especially, is bound not to speak from mere hearsay but to know from authentic sources what is the spirit of the times.

It is our business to look with eagle eyes through every part of this land and see what crime is rampant—what kind of crime and what sort of infamy. Ah, my Friends, with all the advancement of piety in this land, with all the hopeful signs of better times, with all the sunlight of glory heralding the coming morn, with all the promises and with all our hopes we are still obliged to bid you weep because sin abounds and iniquity is still mighty. Oh, how many of our sons and daughters, of our friends and relatives are slain by sin! You weep over battlefields, you shed tears on the plains of Balaklava. There are worse battlefields than there and worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword.

Ah, weep for the drunkenness of this land! How many thousands of our race reel from our sin-palaces into perdition! Oh, if the souls of departed drunkards could be seen at this hour by the Christians of Britain, they would tremble. Lift up your hands in sorrow and begin to weep! My soul might be an everlasting Niobe, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and the destruction brought on them by that one demon and by that one demon only! I am no enthusiast, I am no total abstainer—I do not think the cure of England’s drunkenness will come from that quarter. I respect those who thus deny themselves, with a view to the good of others and should be glad to believe that they accomplish their object.

But though I am no total abstainer, I hate drunkenness as much as any man breathing and have been the means of bringing many poor creatures to relinquish this bestial indulgence. We believe drunkenness to be an awful crime and a horrid sin. We look on all its dreadful effects and we stand prepared to go to war with it and to fight side by side with abstainers, even though we may differ from them as to the mode of warfare. Oh, England! How many thousands of your sons are murdered every year by that accursed devil of drunkenness, that has such sway over this land!

But there are other crimes, too. Alas, for that crime of debauchery! What scenes has the moon seen every night! Sweetly did she shine last evening. The meadows seemed as if they were silvered with beauty when she shone upon them. But ah, what sins were transacted beneath her pale sway! Oh, God, only You know—our hearts might be sickened and we might indeed cry for, “A lodge in some vast wilderness,” had we seen what God beheld when He looked down from the moon-lit sky! You tell me that sins of that kind are common in the lower class of society. Alas, I know it. Alas, how many a girl has dashed herself into the river to take away her life because she could not bear the infamy that was brought upon her!

But lay not this to the poor. The infamy and sin of our streets begin not with them. It begins with the highest ranks—with what we call the noble classes of society. Men who have defiled themselves and others will stand in our senates and walk among our peers. Men whose characters are not reputable—it is a shame to speak even of the things that are done by them in secret—are received into the drawing rooms and into the parlors of the highest society—while the poor creature who has been the victim of their passions is hooted and cast away! O Lord God, You alone know the awful ravages that this sin has made.

My God, Your servant’s lips can utter no more than this—he has gone to the verge of his utterance, he feels that he has no further license in his speech, still he may well cry—“Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” If you have walked the hospital, if you have seen the refuges, if you have talked with the inmates—and if you know the gigantic spread of that enormous evil, you may well sympathize with me when I say that at the thought of it my spirit is utterly cast down. I feel that I would rather die than live while sin thus reigns and iniquity thus spreads.

But are these the only evils? Are these the only demons that are devouring our people? Ah, would to God it were so. Behold, throughout this land how are men falling by every sin, disguised as it is under the shape of pleasure. Have you ever, as from some distant journey returned to your houses at midnight, seen the multitudes of people who are turning out of casinos, low theatres and other houses of sin? I do not frequent those places, nor from earliest childhood have I ever trod those floors but, from the company that I have seen issuing from these dens, I could only lift up my hands and pray God to close such places.

They seem to be the gates of Hell and their doors, as they very properly themselves say, “Lead to the pit.” Ah, may God be pleased to raise up many who shall warn this city and bid Christian people by day and night, “for the slain of the daughter of our people”! Christians, never leave off weeping for men’s sins and infamies. There are sins by day. God’s own day—this day—is defiled, is broken in pieces and trod under foot. There are sins committed every morning and sins each night. If you could see them you might never be happy. If you could walk in the midst of them and behold them with your eyes, if God would give you grace, you might perpetually weep—for you would always have cause for sorrow. “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

But now I must just throw in something which will more particularly apply to you. Perhaps I have very few here who would indulge in open and known sin. Perhaps most of you belong to the good and amiable class who have every kind of virtue and of whom it must be said, “One thing you lack.” My heart never feels so grieved as at the sight of you. How often have I been entertained most courteously and hospitably, as the Lord’s servant, in the houses of men and of women whose characters are supremely excellent. They have every virtue that could adorn a Christian— except faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They might be held up as the very mirrors and patterns to be imitated by others. How has my heart grieved when I have thought of these, still undecided, still godless, prayerless and Christless.

I have many of you in this congregation today—I could not put my finger upon one solitary fault in your character—you are scrupulously correct in your morals. But alas, alas, alas for you, that you should still be dead in trespasses and sins because you have not been renewed by Divine Grace! So lovely and yet without faith. So beautiful, so admirable and yet not converted. O God, when drunkards die, when swearers perish, when harlots and seducers sink to the fate they have earned, we may well weep for such sinners. But when these who have walked in our midst and have almost been acknowledged as Believers—are cast away because they lack

the one thing needful—it seems enough to make angels weep!

O members of Churches, you may well take up the cry of Jeremiah when you remember what multitudes of these you have in your midst— men who have a name to live and are dead. And others, who though they profess not to be Christians, are almost persuaded to obey their Lord and Master but are yet not partakers of the Divine life of God. But now I shall want, if I can, to press this pathetic subject a little further upon your minds. In the day when Jeremiah wept this lamentation with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, Jerusalem was in all her mirth and merriment. Jeremiah was a sad man in the midst of a multitude of merry makers.

He told them that Jerusalem should be destroyed, that their temple should become a heap and Nebuchadnezzar should lay it with the ground. They laughed him to scorn. They mocked him. Still the viol and the dance were only to be seen. Do you not picture that brave old man, for he was bravely plaintive, sitting down in the courts of the Temple? And though as yet the pillars were unfallen and the golden roof was yet unstained, he lifted up his hands and pictured to himself this scene of Jerusalem’s Temple burned with fire, her women and her children carried away captive and her sons given to the sword. And when he pictured this, he did, as it were, in spirit set himself down upon one of the broken pillars of the Temple and there, in the midst of desolation which was not as yet—but which faith, the evidence of things not seen, did picture to him—cry, “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears.” And now, today, here are many of you, fakes and merry makers in this ball of life— you are here merry and glad today and you marvel that I should talk of you as persons for whom we ought to weep. “Weep for me!?” you say, “I am in health, I am in riches, I am enjoying life! Why weep for me? I need none of your sentimental weeping!”

Ah but we weep because we foresee the future. If you could live here always we might not, perhaps, weep for you. But we, by the eye of faith, look forward to the time when the pillars of Heaven must totter. When this earth must shake, when death must give up its prey. When the Great White Throne must be set in the clouds of Heaven and the thunder and lightning of Jehovah shall be launched in armies. And the angels of God shall be marshaled in their ranks to swell the pomp of the grand assize— we look forward to that hour and by faith we see you standing before the Judge. We see His eye sternly fixed on you, we hear Him read the book.

We mark your tottering knees while sentence after sentence of thundering wrath strikes on your appalled ear. We think we see your blanched countenances. We mark your terror beyond all description when He cries, “Depart, you cursed!” We hear your shrieks. We hear you cry, “Rocks hide us. Mountains fall on us!” We see the angel with fiery brand pursuing you—we hear your last unutterable shriek of woe as you descend into the pit of Hell. And we ask you if you could see this as we see it, would you wonder that at the thought of your destruction we are prepared to weep? “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep” over you who will not stand in the judgment but must be driven away like chaff into the unquenchable fire!

And by the eye of faith we look further than that. We look into the grim and awful future—our faith looks through the gate of iron bound with adamant. We see the place of the condemned. Our ears, opened by faith, hear, “The sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts!” Our eyes anointed with Heavenly eye salve see the worm that never dies. We behold the fire that never can be quenched and see you writhing in the flame! O professors, if you believed not in the wrath to come and in Hell eternal, I should not wonder that you were unmoved by such a thought as this. But if you believe what your Savior said when He declared that He would destroy both body and soul in Hell, I must wonder that you could endure the thought without weeping for your fellow creatures who are going there.

If I saw my enemy marching into the flames, I would rush between him and the fire and seek to preserve him. And will you see men and women marching on in a mad career of vice and sin, well aware that “the wages of sin is death,” and will you not interpose so much as a tear? What? Are you more brutal than the beast, more impassive than the stone! It must be so, if the thought of the unutterable torment of Hell does not draw tears from your eyes and prayer from your hearts. Oh, if today some strong archangel could unbolt the gates of Hell and for a solitary second permit the voices of wailing and weeping to come up to our ears—oh, how should we grieve! Each man would put his hand upon his loins and walk this earth in terror. That shriek might make each hair stand on end upon our heads and then make us roll ourselves in the dust for anguish and woe—

*“Oh, doleful state of dark despair,  
When God has far removed,  
And fixed their dreadful station where  
They must not taste His love.”*

Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for some of you that are going there this day. Remember, again, O Christian, that those for whom we ask you to weep this day are persons who have had great privileges and consequently, if lost, must expect greater punishment. I do not today ask your sympathies for men in foreign lands. I shall not bid you weep for Hottentots or Mohammedans though you might weep for them and you have goodly cause to do so—but I ask this day your tears for the slain of the daughter of your own people. Oh, what multitudes of heathens we have in all our places of worship! What multitudes of unconverted persons in all the pews of the places where we usually assemble to worship God.

And I may add, what hundreds we have here who are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world. And these are not like Hottentots who have not heard the Word—they have heard it and they have re

jected it. Many of you, when you die, cannot plead as an excuse that you did not know your duty. You heard it plainly preached to you. You heard it in every corner of the streets. You had the Book of God in your houses. You cannot say that you did not know what you must do to be saved. You read the Bible, you understand salvation—many of you are deeply taught in the theory of salvation. When you perish, your blood must be on your own head and the Master may well cry over you today, “Woe unto you, Bethsaida, woe unto you Chorazin! For if the mighty works that were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

I wonder at myself this day. I hate my eyes. I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets because they will not weep as I desire, over poor souls who are perishing! How many have I among you whom I love and who love me! We are no strangers to one another. We could not live at a distance from each other, our hearts have been joined together long and firmly. You have stood by me in the hour of tribulation, you have listened to the Word, you have been pleased with it. I bear you witness that if you could pluck out your eyes for me you would do it. And yet I know there are many of you true lovers of God’s Word in appearance and certainly great lovers of God’s servant but alas for you, that you should still be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity!

Alas, my Sister, I can weep for you! Woe, woe, my Brother, I can weep for you! We have met together in God’s house, we have prayed together and yet we must be separated. Shepherd, some of your flock will perish! O sheep of my pasture, people of my care, must I have that horrid thought upon me, that I must lose you? Must we, at the Day of Judgment, say farewell forever? Must I bear my witness against you? I shall be honest. I have dealt faithfully with your souls. God is my witness, I have often preached in weakness. Often have I had to groan before Him that I have not preached as I could desire. But I have never preached insincerely. Nobody will ever dare to accuse me of dishonesty in this respect.

Not one of your smiles have I ever courted. I have never dreaded your frowns. I have been in weariness oftentimes, when I should have rested, preaching God’s Word. But what of that? That were nothing. Only remember there is some responsibility resting upon you. And remember, that to perish under the sound of the Gospel is to perish more terribly than anywhere else. But, my Hearers, must that be your lot? And must I be witness against you in the Day of Judgment? I pray God it may not be so. I beseech the Master that He may spare us each such a fate as that.

And now, dear Friends I have one word to add before I leave this point. Some of you need not look round in this congregation to find cause for weeping. My pious Brothers and Sisters, you have cause enough to weep in your own families. Ah, mother! I know your griefs. You have had cause to cry to God with weeping eyes for many a mournful hour because of your son. Your offspring has turned against you. And he that came forth of you has despised his mother’s God. Father, you have carefully brought up your daughter. You have nourished her when she was young and taken her fondly in your arms. She was the delight of your life, yet she has sinned against you and against God.

Many of you have sons and daughters that you often mention in your prayers but never with hope. You have often thought that God has said of your son, “Ephraim is given to idols. Let him alone.” The child of your affection has become an adder stinging your heart! Oh, then weep, I beseech you. Parents, do not leave off weeping for your children—do not become hardened towards them, sinners though they are. It may be that God may yet bring them to Himself. It was but last Church Meeting that we received into our communion a young friend who was educated and brought up by a pious minister in Colchester. She had been there many years and when she came away to London the minister said to her, “Now, my girl, I have prayed for you hundreds of times and I have done all I can with you. Your heart is as hard as a stone. I must leave you with God!”

That broke her heart. She is now converted to Jesus. How many sons and daughters have made their parents feel the same! “There,” they have said, “I must leave you, I cannot do more.” But in saying that, they have not meant that they would leave them unwept for but they have thought within themselves that if they were damned, they would follow them weeping to the very gates of Hell if by tears they could decoy them into Heaven. How can a man be a Christian and not love his offspring? How can a man be a Believer in Jesus Christ and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the kingdom, towards his children? I have heard of ministers of a certain sect and professors of a certain class who have despised family prayer, who have laughed at family godliness and thought nothing of it.

I cannot understand how the men can know as much as they do about the Gospel and yet have so little of the spirit of it. I pray God deliver you and deliver me from anything like that. No, it is our business to train up our children in the fear of the Lord. And though we cannot give them grace, it is ours to pray to the God who can give it. And in answer to our many supplications, He will not turn us away but He will be pleased to take notice of our prayers and to regard our sighs.

And now, Christian mourners, I have given you work enough—may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do it. Let me exhort you, yet once again, to weep. Do you need a copy? Behold your Master. He has come to the brow of the hill. He sees Jerusalem lying on the hill opposite to Him. He looks down upon it, as He sees it there—beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth—instead of feeling the rapture of some artist who surveys the ramparts of a strong city and marks the position of some magnificent tower in the midst of glorious scenery, He bursts out and he cries, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings but you would

not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Go now your ways and as you stand on any of the hills around and behold this huge city lying in the valley, say—“O London, London! How great your guilt. Oh, that the Master would gather you under His wing and make you His city, the joy of the whole earth! O London, London! Full of privileges and full of sin, exalted to Heaven by the Gospel! You shall be cast down to Hell by your rejection of it!” And then, when you have wept over London, go and weep over the street in which you live, as you see the Sabbath broken and God’s laws trampled upon and men’s bodies profaned—go and weep! Weep, for the court in which you live in your humble poverty, weep for the square in which you live in your magnificent wealth.

Weep for the humbler street in which you live in competence, weep for your neighbors and your friends, lest any of them, having lived godless, may die godless! Then go to your house, weep for your family, for your servants, for your husband, for your wife, for your children. Weep, weep, cease not weeping, till God has renewed them by His Spirit. And if you have any friends with whom you sinned in your past life be earnest for their salvation. George Whitfield said there were many young men with whom he played at cards in his lifetime and spent hours in wasting his time when he ought to have been about other business. And when he was converted, his first thought was, “I must by God’s grace have these converted, too.”

And he never rested, till he could say that he did not know of one of them, a companion of his guilt, who was not now a companion with him in the tribulation of the Gospel. Oh, let it be so with you! Let not your exertions end in tears—mere weeping will do nothing without action. Get on your feet, you that have voices and might—go forth and preach the Gospel, preach it in every street and lane of this huge city. You that have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor and sick and needy and dying, the uneducated, the unenlightened. You that have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness. You that have power in prayer, go forth and pray. You that can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity— everyone to his post—everyone of you to your gun in this day of battle for God and for His Truth.

For God and for the right let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under His banner! O God, without whom all our exertions are vain, come now and stir up Your Church to greater diligence and more affectionate earnestness that we may not have in future such cause to weep as we have this day! Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus. He has died, look to Him and live and God the Almighty bless you! To God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be glory forever and ever.

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GOD’S PEOPLE MELTED AND TRIED  
NO. 2274

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1891.

**“Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” Jeremiah 9:7.**

OBSERVE, here, that God represents Himself as greatly concerned to know what to do with His people. Of course, He speaks after the manner of men, for, as the infinitely wise God, knowing all things from the beginning, Jehovah knew what He would do. But yet, in order that we may understand something of the workings of the Divine mind, He represents Himself as brought to a non-plus and saying, in the words of our text, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” There are some men and women in the world who seem to greatly perplex those who love them and who desire their welfare. They are a great perplexity to those with whom they live and who labor for their good—and it seems as if God, Himself, regarded it as a matter of perplexity when He said, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

But notice, next, the Lord is so resolved to save His people that He will use the sternest possible means rather than lose any of those whom He loves. He says here, “I will melt them, and try them; I will cast them into the furnace, and put them into the melting pot. I will make the fire so hot that their iron hearts shall melt and, though they are like Hell-hardened steel, devoid of feeling, I will make it so hot for them that they shall be melted. As men assay metal, pouring out the molten mass in a red-hot or white state, I will melt them and try them.”

Sinners, that God may save you, He will do the roughest things with you! He will not spare you any kind of sorrow here, or any sort of loss, or any measure of despair of spirit, so that He may bring you to Himself. He asks the question as though He were very anxious to avoid using His rough ways, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” But He answers the question with all the severity of almighty love, “Behold, I will melt them, and try them. There is nothing else to be done with them, so I will do that by which alone they can be saved.”

Observe, once more, in our preface, that God’s concern about His people, and His resolve to use strange ways with them, springs out of His relationship to them, for He says, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” “My people.” They were His, though they were very far away from Him through their evil ways. Though they had gone from evil to evil, though their lives provoked Him to the highest degree, yet He did not disown them! He remembered the Covenant that He made for them with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob—and because of that Covenant, He thought upon them for good and resolved to somehow save them. When God has chosen a man from before the foundation of the world, and when He has given that man over to Christ to be a part of the reward of His soul’s travail, He will adopt strange means to accomplish His sacred purpose. And He will carry out that purpose, let it cost him what it may!

We are going to apply these principles in three ways. First, to the matter of conversion. Secondly, to the matter of Christian life and thirdly, to the Church of God in its corporate capacity.

I. First, these principles may be applied to THE MATTER OF CONVERSION. There is a very simple way of being saved. It should be. I hope it is the common way. It is the simple way of following the call of Grace. This should be your way. I hope it is. The Gospel is preached, you believe it. Christ is set before you, you accept Him, you trust Him, you are saved. Without any violence, your heart is opened, as with the picklock of Grace. God puts the key into the door and steps into your heart without a word. “Whose heart the Lord opened,” we read of Lydia. Even if you have known nothing of the terror of the Lord, if you have had no strange convulsion of feeling, no earthquake, tempest and thunder—God is in the still small voice—and you are saved by His Grace as much as those who have had a deeper experience.

This is the way of salvation, but there are some who will not come this way. There is the Wicket Gate. They have but to knock and it will be opened, but they prefer to go round about through the Slough of Despond, or to get under the care of Mr. Worldly Wiseman who leads them round by the house of Mr. Legality, who dwells in the village of Morality. And there they go with their burdens on their backs, which they need not carry even for a single hour, for they would roll off directly if they would but look to Jesus and believe in Him. But they will not do this. There are some of whom God has to say, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” Why is this?

Well, some of them have a crooked sort of mind. They never can believe anything straight—they must go round about. I know a friend whose conversation is always of this kind. If he were in King William Street and I were in the Borough, he could not come across London Bridge to me—he would find it necessary to go at least as far as Hamrnersmith before he crossed the river—and then he would come round to me. That is how he always talks. I sometimes get a little tired of that style and I wish he would come to the point at once. There are some minds of that sort. You say to some people, “Believe and live.” Then they begin scratching their heads a bit and saying, “What is it to believe, and what is it to live? And how can a man live by believing, and does he believe first, or does he live first? And if he lives before he believes, then how does believing make him live?”

I could puzzle away like that all night if I liked—any fool can put stools in the way for people to tumble over. There are some minds that seem to be made with what I may call a circumbendibus that cannot take the Truth of God as God puts it, believing Him as a child believes his father. They must somehow twist it about, wrest it, distort it, contort it. Oh, that the Lord would give them another mind! “Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” O you wise people, you deep and subtle people, you very thoughtful folk who cannot think that God means what He says when He says that a sinner has only to look to Christ and live—but imagine that there must be some particular kind of spectacles to be worn through which you are to look, or that you are to get to some point of the compass from which to look, or that you are to do something else beside look—oh, that you would lay aside all this, for you are making the work of your salvation needlessly difficult! It is of such as you that God says, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

But some others are obstinate in sin. They are not happy in it, but they will not give it up. They have had some very serious talks with their conscience and they know that they are wrong, yet they persist in continuing to be wrong. They mean to be right, some day, but not yet. They wish, somehow, that they had overcome the difficulty, but they cannot face it— they cannot give up their evil habits. They still cling to them and, though often persuaded, threatened and moved, they still stand where they always stood—obstinately continuing in sin—while God repeats the enquiry, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

Some others are unwilling to confess sin at all. They think themselves wrong, but they try to make excuses. They are wrong, but not so very wrong. They are such poor, frail creatures, and so greatly tempted, it cannot be very wrong for them to sin. The mind is so easily led astray—surely that is the fault of heredity, or the fault of environment, or the fault of— well, they really make it out that it is the fault of God! So they say in their thoughts, if they do not dare to put it into words. But as for confessing that they are sinners, they will not come to that! I expect, before they will cry, “Father, I have sinned,” they will have to be melted. Before they will ever come to confess their iniquity, they will have to pass through the melting pot.

Then there are some people who are not saved, but who are outwardly very religious. They have never omitted going to Church, or, perhaps, to the Meeting House, whichever they think the better of the two, and they have been brought up carefully—they have said their prayers regularly— and they have had family prayer, too. They have a Bible. They do not read it much, but still they have one. They are very nice people. Everybody thinks that they are Christians, yet all this religion of theirs is not worth a single farthing, for there is no heart-work in it, no repentance of sin, no love to God, no faith in Christ. The robe of their self-righteousness clings to them and prevents their coming to rest in Jesus. Sinful self is bad enough to get rid of, but righteous self is even worse! Self-righteousness is a kind of mud that will not be brushed off. The man who is spattered with it does not let it get dry—he renews it every day. The self-righteous man thinks he is too good to go to Heaven by the way a sinner goes—and so he never goes at all.

Some, who have no forms of religion, are, nevertheless, wonderfully self-righteous. They are not Christians, but in their own opinion they are quite as good as Christians. In fact, they think they are a great deal better! Yet their conscience must tell them that this is a lie. Still, they flatter themselves in their own conceit and hide away in a refuge of lies till God, Himself, says, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?” And we cannot answer the question unless it is in the words of the text, where the Lord says, “Therefore I will melt them, and try them.” They will have to go into the fire and be melted down before they will be meet for the Master’s use.

There are some others who will not come to Christ because they are so full of levity and fickleness. They are all froth, all fun. They live like butterflies—they suck in the juices from the flowers—and flit from one to the other. They are easily impressed, one way and another, but there is no heart in them. “Ephraim is a silly dove without heart.” They have no stability, they are fickle. They are like the morning cloud that is soon blown away—as the early dew that melts in the beams of the rising sun—so is their goodness soon departed from them. How are they to be saved? Some of you have been awakened 50 times, already, and if you had been at some places of worship, you would say that you had been converted a dozen times! But I hope we will never flatter you into that delusion. I have heard some people say that they have been converted ever so many times. How can a person be born again more than once? I have heard of being born again, and I know that it is possible—but to be born again, and again, and again, must be impossible—that cannot be! Yet people of this sort are good, bad, or indifferent, just as the fit takes them, for they are fickle, changeable—one does not know where to find them.

And in addition, there is another class of persons that are insincere. There is no depth of earth about them. They do not really feel what they think they feel. And when they say that they believe, they do not really believe in their heart. They promise, too, when they are ill, what saints they will be if the Lord will but raise them up—but when they get well, again, they are not saints. How many have promised and vowed that if they but escaped in such an accident, or their lives were spared in such a disease, they would seek the Lord—yet they have done nothing of the kind! So again, tonight, the question has to be asked about them by God, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

Now, having brought before you these characters, or held up the mirror of God’s Word so that you might see yourselves in it, I want you to notice how God very often deals with such people. According to my text they will have to feel the furnace.

I have noticed, during a considerable period of time, some of the selfrighteous and the outwardly-religious put into the fire and melted by being permitted to fall into some gross and open sin. I knew a young man, an excellent and worthy young fellow he was to all appearance. But he was entirely wrapped up in his own righteousness—and there was no getting at him. Under the stress of a sudden temptation in the workshop, he distinctly told a lie. It was a very sorrowful business. Nobody but he knew that he had done so. It was never found out, but he knew that he had told a distinct and willful lie—and he felt so ashamed of himself that all his pretty buildings of self-righteousness vanished away in a moment! And instead of being great and grand, as he had been, he had to come to Christ with the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

He had such a sense of right and wrong that he condemned himself outright. He came to me in an awful state of mind. There were thousands of men who would have done what he had done and never thought the worse of themselves for it—but he had a conscience and a truthful spirit— and he felt mean as dirt for having told his master a falsehood. God blessed that experience to him! He was melted right down and, in the bitterness of his spirit, he cried, for weeks, for mercy and, by God’s Grace, he was to find it at the Savior’s feet. I pray God that none of you selfrighteous people may be left to go into an open sin, but it may be that the Lord may leave you to yourselves—to let you see what you really are—for you probably have no idea what you are. I, as the servant of God, might flood my face with tears and weep over you if I could prophesy what you will yet do if restraint is taken from you—for in your heart there are the eggs of all manner of sins—and it only needs favorable circumstances for these to be hatched out into a very cage of unclean birds. That is one way in which I have seen men melted.

Some, again, have been melted down by temporal calamities. I have seen a very great man, with his diamond ring flashing on his finger—I was almost going to say, “and with bells on his toes”—for he would almost have liked to wear them there if he could, to call attention to his superior position and his eminent rank. He was a gentleman. He felt that he was and, as to preaching to him as a poor sinner, he was offended at the idea! He had good health and strength, too, and he was not going to die. He counted it one of the wisest things to “drive dull care away.” He was merry-hearted, full of spirits, and the Gospel had no power over him. “Take it to the dying,” he said, “take it to the poor people down in the slums. It is the right thing for them, but I—I do not need it.”

Yes, but when his fortune melted, he began to melt a little. And when his health went and he found himself on a sick-bed—and those who once did him reverence, forgot him, and he was almost without a friend—then he wanted to come round to God by the back door, somehow, and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Oh, yes, there are some who cannot be saved as long as they have a silver spoon in their mouths! But when they are brought to poverty, it is the nearest way round to the Father’s House, round by the far country where they would gladly fill their bellies with the husks that the swine eat!

Some years ago a young gentleman, whose father was a godly man, told me that he was keeping racehorses, and betting. I said to him, “That is right, bet all your money away, and when you have nothing left, you will come to your father’s God. Maybe that is the way home for you—an empty pocket, a ragged coat, and a sick body. Then, perhaps, you will turn to God.” The Lord has often done so with men. Am I speaking to any who are passing through such a trial as that? God grant that your poverty shall lead you to the best riches! And your sickness conduct you to eternal health!

At other times, without any overt sin, without any temporal trouble, God has ways of taking men apart from their fellows and whipping them behind the door. It has been my lot to meet with, not merely hundreds, but I think I may say, thousands of souls in this condition. Wherever I go, I feel an intense happiness in meeting with miserable, brokenhearted souls, because I believe they are on the way to the possession of a new heart and a right spirit! God is dealing with them in a way of love, though His way seems to them to be very rough. I have tried to cheer them. I have prayed with and for them. They have told me that their sin haunts them day and night—they cannot hope for mercy and cannot think that God will ever blot out their transgressions. Their Bible seems to thunder at them as they read it. Their heart is heavy, their friends think them melancholy—talk about putting them in an asylum—and I do not know what, besides! They are ground down and brought low. This is all meant to work for their good—they would not come to God any other way. It is by such an experience that God is fulfilling His Word, “I will melt them, and try them.”

In all this God has one great objective . It is just this, first, to hide pride from men. God will not save us and have us proud. He will not let any one of us throw up his cap and glorify himself for his own salvation. Grace must have the glory of it from first to last! Beside that, God means to take us out of our sin, and to do that, He makes it to be a bitter and an evil thing to us. All that He is doing is to make our sin too heavy for us to carry, to make us sick of sin, fond of Christ and earnest after holiness. Blessed is the blow that almost crushes you if it breaks off the connection between you and sin!

The drift of all this experience is to bring us to Christ, to the Great Sacrifice—and none will ever come to Christ but those who have nowhere else to go. No man ever puts into this port except under stress of foul weather. Souls try to go anywhere except to Christ—but when they cannot go anywhere else, when they are done for, when they are ruined and lost—then it is that they fly to Him and take Him to be their All in All! Therefore it takes a long time to get even a child of God to fully understand the way of salvation by sacrifice.

I went to see my venerable friend, George Rogers, yesterday. He is close upon 92 and cannot leave his bed. He has to lie there and can do nothing for himself—but his mental faculties are as bright as ever. I was not long with him before he said to me, “They do not seem to savor, now, the Sacrifice of Christ and,” he added, “you know that Peter believed in the Deity of our Lord and he made such a delightful confession of the Deity of Christ that the Master said, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.’ But,” said Mr. Rogers, “although Peter knew the Deity of Christ, and knew it well, he did not know Christ’s Sacrifice, for no sooner did his Master begin to tell him that He was to be crucified, and so on, than, ‘Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord; this shall not be unto You.’ He could not believe it. He could not see the Sacrifice and his Lord had to call him, ‘adversary,’ and to say to him, ‘Get you behind Me: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.’”

My dear old friend said, “Until we can see the Sacrifice of Christ, we have not seen things as they really are in God’s sight. And any Gospel, even if it appears to glorify Christ and has His Deity in it, savors of the things of men and not of the things of God if it leaves out Christ’s Sacrifice.” Mr. Rogers was right! There must be the Sacrifice of Christ—it is that savor which we are to make known in every place. That is a sweet savor unto God which we are never to cease to give forth as long as we can speak. But, oh, it takes such a time with some to bring them to smell that blessed savor of the Sacrifice of the Son of God! When they do perceive it, they get peace, and light, and love, and liberty! But, until then, God Himself seems to say concerning them, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

I have dwelt so long upon the matter of conversion that my time is largely gone. I beg you who can pray to join me in asking God to bless the word I have spoken.

II. But, in the second place, I want to say something to Christians, for, IN THE MATTER OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, God seems to say, “What shall I do for the daughter of my people? I will melt them, and try them.”

Some Christians go from joy to joy . Their path, like that of the light, shines more and more unto the perfect day. Why should you and I not be like that? Why should we not simply believe and keep on believing, and go on rejoicing, serving God with all our heart, and resting in the precious blood of Jesus?

There are other Christians who appear to make much progress in Divine things, but it is not true progress. Some appear to have a great deal of knowledge. They talk as if they knew everything, but when you come to examine them closely, you find that they do not know hardly anything that they ought to know. Some, too, get a very wonderful experience. You see them swagger about. You hear them brag of it until you are disgusted with them. That experience which a man boasts of is an experience he ought to be ashamed of! Some, too, seem to have great ability. To hear them talk of what they can do, you would imagine that they could drive the Church before them and drag the world behind them, and I do not know what besides! Paul said, “When I am weak, then am I strong,” but these people are so strong that they never know what weakness means!

As for the progress that some professors make in sanctification, why, just look at some of them, and listen to their tall talk! They have not sinned for years! The very principle of sin seems to have died out of them! Poor deluded souls! This is what they say, mark you, not what I believe. As for their graces, they have all things and abound. They are as patient as martyrs. They believe as strongly as John Knox or Martin Luther. You ordinary Christians cannot attain to their stature. If they were to stand bolt upright, they would strike the stars from their places, they are so great and tall! And yet—and yet, there is nothing in their boasting, after all. I do not say that they know that much of their wonderful religion is false. No, but they have wrong ideas, confused notions, addled brains, and so they do not know their own real state. Whereas they say that they are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing, they are all the while naked, blind, poor and miserable!

The worst thing about their condition is that some of them do not want to know their real state. They half suspect that it is not what they say it is, but they do not like to be told so. In fact, they get very cross when anyone even hints at the truth. No one’s temper is so imperfect as the perfect man! He soon shows his imperfection. He is the Brother who must not be touched. You must stand a long way off and look at him with reverence, or else he is soon sorely grieved at you. Some do not want to know their real condition. They have an idea that, perhaps, they are not what they seem to be, but they would not have their dream roughly broken. Instruction is not desired by them. Why are they to be instructed? They know a great deal more than anybody else can teach them and they like the man who will speak flatteringly to them—and who will make them believe that what they say is all Gospel! Now, there are such people in all our congregations, of whom God might well say, “How shall I deal with the daughter of My people?”

This is what He will do with a great many who are now inflated with a false kind of Grace—“I will melt them, and try them,” says the Lord of Hosts. He will put them to a test. Here is a man who has a quantity of plate and he does not know the value of it, so he takes it to a goldsmith and asks him what it is worth. “Well,” he says, “I cannot exactly tell you, but if you give me a little time, I will melt it all down and then I will let you know its value.” Thus does the Lord deal with many of His people. They have become very good and very great, as they fancy, and He says, “I will melt them.”

This is a natural test for silver and gold, the very best kind of test for precious metal! But in the process of melting, if it is with you, my Brothers and Sisters, as it is with me, the bulk is very much reduced. When God begins to melt us by letting fierce corruptions burn within us, or by allowing our spirits to be depressed and our minds to be darkened, oh, what a shrinkage there seems to be almost immediately in that melting pot! What fear takes hold upon us, then, lest we should shrink to nothing and disappear altogether!

Then, also, the fashion of the precious metal is marred—its beauty soon departs. That silver vase was beautifully fashioned, but when it is melted, nothing of the design remains. All that is of human fashioning is lost in the melting pot. Were you ever in the melting pot, dear Friends? I have been there and my sermons with me, and my frames and feelings and all my good works. They seemed to quite fill the pot till the fire burned up—and then I looked to see what there was unconsumed—and if it had not been that I had a simple faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, I am afraid I should not have found anything left! This is what God will do with all His people unless they walk very humbly with Him. “He that is down needs fear no fall.” He that is pure gold will lose nothing in the melting. But he that is somebody in his own opinion will have to come down a peg or two before long. It is well that it is so, for if it were not, we should soon grow proud, worldly and careless—and even licentious—for it is strange, but it is true, that the next thing to a boast of perfect holiness has almost always, throughout history, been intense licentiousness! How it comes to be so, perhaps they who study metaphysics can tell, but so it has constantly been in the history of mankind. When you fancy that you are out of gunshot, there is an enemy close at hand. When you dream that the road is safe, there is a pitfall just before you. When you say, “I am perfectly holy,” the very pride that makes you say so is an indication of a deadly cancer of self-righteousness that is eating into your very soul!

Now, Beloved, the result of melting is truth and humility. The result of melting is that we arrive at a true valuation of things. The result of melting is that we are poured out into a new and better fashion. And, oh, we may almost wish for the melting pot if we may but get rid of the dross, if we may but be pure, if we may but be fashioned more completely like unto our Lord!

If any of you who have been converted are undergoing a melting just now, do not be staggered by it. It is no strange thing that has happened to you and it is no evil thing. You have, no doubt, needed it. You were growing too gross, too careless—and it was necessary for you that you should be melted. Now God has given you the highest proof of His love in this melting, this scourging, this suffering, this breaking down, this annihilating of carnal confidence, this hanging up of Mr. Presumption by the neck that he may die—that self may fall—and that Jesus may be All in All. God grant that it may be so!

III. I was going to speak about this principle in THE MATTER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ITS CORPORATE CAPACITY, but I will speak of that at another time if the Lord permits. This you may take for granted, that, if God has chosen us, but we are not willing to go in His way and humbly trust in Jesus, and have Him to be our All in All, the Lord will not give us up, but He will melt us, and try us till we are fit to run in any mold that He likes to use.

God bless you, and save you, and comfort you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **JEREMIAH 9.**

Verse 1. Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Jeremiah foresaw that the Chaldeans would come up and so many would be slain that the nation would be almost destroyed.

2. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. He mourned because of the doom that awaited them, but he equally mourned because of the sin that would bring that doom upon them. He wished that he could get away into one of those refuges which were provided in lonely places, where travelers might lodge for a night.

3. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies. They made use of the tongue, as if it were a bow, to shoot out lies. It is a very graphic description of the men of Jeremiah’s day. He dips his pen in his heart’s blood as he writes about them.

3. But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. Oh, no! No one stood up for the Truth of God in those days. No man was willing to suffer for it, to argue for it, or even to acknowledge it.

3. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not Me, says the LORD. They grew worse and worse. It is the way of wicked men to ripen into greater sin. They proceeded from evil to evil—and Jeremiah had Jehovah’s testimony for it that, though they knew a great many things, they did not know the LORD—“They know not Me, says the LORD.”

4. Take you heed, everyone, of his neighbor, and trust you not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will walk with slander. It was an evil time, indeed, when, even in the domestic circle, there could be no brotherly confidence. “Every brother will utterly supplant.” Jacob’s name, you remember, was, “supplanter,” and all these men were Jacobs, each one ready to supplant his brother, to throw him on one side that he might occupy his place. As to neighborly conduct, there was none—the neighbors were all gossips and slanderers of one another.

5. And they will deceive, everyone, his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. What a sad state they were in! Their tongues spoke lies without any teaching and they schooled them till they were masters of the art of lying. They each had a D.D.—Doctor of Dissembling—they understood the art thoroughly! They had taught their tongue to speak lies and they had committed so much evil that they even tired themselves in the doing of it!

6. Their habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me, says the LORD. Putting forth all their critical ingenuity to get rid of God, His Word, Inspiration and the Divine Sacrifice, doing all they could that they might not know God!

7, 8. Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I deal with the daughter of My people? Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaks deceit: one speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he lies in wait. Do you wonder that Jeremiah wept? With so true a spirit, so tender and sympathetic, he could not bear it when man had become man’s worst enemy and no man could be relied upon—for all practiced and spoke deceit.

9. Shall I not visit them for these things? says the LORD: shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Divine Justice sets the fire of indignation burning. Nothing excites God’s wrath more than continued lies and deceit, unkindness, unbrotherly conduct and unholiness of life. Put all these evils together and you have more than enough God-provoking sins calling for an avenging visitation!

10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone. The Prophet pictures what the Chaldeans would do. They would not only destroy the cities, but they would even rob the hills of their cattle and sweep the fields till there would be nothing left that men could gather.

11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant. Jeremiah had to live to see all this. The thought of it pulled up the sluices of his tears and made him wish that all the clouds and seas and rains would come and dwell in his eyes, for his grief had need of all the watery things that Nature could produce. George Herbert sings, and I quote his lines to illustrate the depth of Jeremiah’s grief—

*“Let every vein  
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,  
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies, To bear them out, and with my state agree.”*

12. Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it, for why does the land perish and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passes through? The land would never have been desolate if it had not been for the wickedness of the people. Sin—sin it is that does the mischief! There are some who cavil at the punishment that God puts upon sin—they would do better if they found fault with the sin which brings its own punishment with it. There is nothing arbitrary in God’s justice—He allows sin, itself, to ripen, and when it is finished, it brings forth eternal death.

13, 14. And the LORD says, Because they have forsaken My Law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim. After many Baals, is the meaning—many are the gods that men make for themselves when they turn away from Jehovah.

14, 15. Which their fathers taught them: therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. You cannot sin without suffering. If you will not drink of the waters of obedience, but will drink of the waters of rebellion, they shall be bitter.

16. I will scatter them, also, among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. A patriot for man, a Prophet for God, do you marvel that he wept?

17. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Consider you, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come. These were the hired mourners, the women who were paid to go to funerals and simulate grief. “Send for your weepers now,” said the LORD of Hosts, “for if you ever needed mourners, you need them now.”

18, 19. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion. These were no mock mourners—but real weepers who had cause to mourn.

19. How are we plundered! We are greatly confounded. Why did they not say, “How we have sinned”? No, men will think of the punishment they suffer—but they will overlook the sin they commit!

19. Because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. Why did not they say, “Because we have forsaken the LORD, because we have cast off the worship of Jehovah”? You cannot bring men to that point. They quarrel with the rod rather than with the hand that holds it. They mourn over the result of sin—but to the sin, itself, they still cling.

20, 21. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O you women, and let your ears receive the word of His mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and everyone, her neighbor, lamentation. For death is come up into our windows. It did not wait to come in by the door. In time of war or pestilence, death comes how it will through every casement, closed or open.

21. And is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. Generally, in war, they spare the children, and they carry the young men away as captives. The Chaldeans were cruel—they killed the little ones—and they slew the young men.

22. Speak, Thus says the LORD, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them. So dreadful was the devastation that was worked by these Chaldeans on account of the people’s sin, that dead bodies lay like heaps of dung that the farmer strews upon the field!

23, 24. Thus says the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD which exercises loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the LORD. This was the God who turned, again, to His rebellious people and who would have been glad if they had but known Him. He would have made them richer than the rich, and wiser than the wise, and mightier than the mighty—but they would not have the things in which Jehovah delighted.

25. Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised. If they sin like others, they shall die like others, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized.

26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom. You see that Judah is sandwiched in between Egypt and Edom. Those who were the people of God are put in the same category with the accursed nation because they had forsaken Him and mixed up with them.

26. And the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart. If the heart is not right with God, vain are all external rites!

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**“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”  
Jeremiah 10:23.**

THIS declaration follows after Jeremiah’s lamentation over the Lord’s ancient people who were about to be carried away captive into Babylon. The Prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, Brothers and Sisters, to know the Truth of God and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was of no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not remember it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, “O Lord, I know,” and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a Supreme Authority to theirs and a power which rules, overrules and works according to its own beneficent will—whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country, but the Prophet consoled himself with the reflection that whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation! This was Jeremiah’s consolation, “I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do, but I do know that ‘the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.’ I know that, in God’s eternal purposes, every step of Judah’s way is mapped out and in the end He will make it all work for His own Glory and the good of His chosen people.”

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly and what they do is done of their own free will—and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we can never forget, for the freeagency of man is a self-evident Truth of God. But, at the same time, God is Omnipotent and He is still working out His wise designs, as He did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny—all the while displaying His Sovereign Will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his own will!

This Truth of God ought to be remembered by us because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why should you, O Believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man who is but a worm? You are, as a child of God, under Divine Protection, so who is he that shall harm you while you are a follower of that which is good? Remember that ancient promise, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.” The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God’s permission! God can put a bit into the mouth of leviathan and do with him as He pleases. The Almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands!

And while this Truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that He gave to His people by Covenant? It is God who permits it, therefore do not think so much of the instrument employed by Him as of the hand in which that instrument is held! Are you afflicted, poor Soul, by some hard unkind spirits? Remember that God permits you to be so tried, so be not angry with that which is only the second cause of your trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to you for your good and, therefore, submit yourself to Him! A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick. If he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there is any contention, it is really against God—and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker! Rather, say, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.” Let your back be bared to the rod and look up into your Heavenly Father’s face and say, “Show me why You contend with me.”

This Truth ought to also strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly, but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God’s Providence and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a Prophet to praise the Lord. But it was quite another matter to trust God when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities and, by-and-by, took them and gave them up to utter destruction and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God then, was not so easy, yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith! Faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true, but winter faith that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep and the North Wind blows, is the faith of God’s elect! It proves that it has Divine vitality in it because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood!

It is a severe trial to a child of God when he is mocked at home—when someone who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of Grace—when Ishmael mocks Isaac and continually grieves him. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this Truth of God, that God has all things in His hands and that this trial is only permitted, in His wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards His own child. It is still true that, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” and that, “no good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly.” If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise.” May the Holy Spirit help you to do so! The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all!

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavor to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text—“It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” And, first, I will try to prove to you that these words are true. And secondly, that these words are instructive.

I. First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE—“It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”  
For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount and which will change the whole course of his life. He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that and that he will go here or there—but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life. There may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call, “accidents,” which are really Providences, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do.  
Take the case of a young man who is just beginning business life— though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct my steps! I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me, but my first plans and purposes were not realized. I am not, today, where I hoped to have been. There were difficulties in the way which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business and he says, “I shall work my way up till I get to the top.” Yet how frequently it happens that something occurs which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself and he has to go in quite a different direction. The path he had chosen was apparently a very proper one for him to choose—perhaps he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer—yet he finds, as many others have found, that “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”  
It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account, but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances! He could not foresee what was going to happen so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market—but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise—and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea—one may be much tossed about and possibly may be wrecked before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.  
Another man fails in health. He might have prospered, but, just when the full vigor of his physical strength was needed and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid and, perhaps, of a poor man. Yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man who would soon have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, “I will do this,” or, “I will do that,” because something or other may occur which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart and he can find his way! He knows where the shoals are and the quicksands, and the rocks and where the deep channels run—but you do not know anything about your future life—you are sailing over a sea that no ship’s keel has ever sailed before! God knows all about it—everything is present to his all-seeing eyes, but it is not present to your eyes. It is not possible for a man to absolutely direct his own way, for he has not the power to do it—let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this!  
Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God, but, whether you should turn to the right hand or to the left, you do not know.  
Now you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before—that is, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” You cannot direct your own way! You are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one is taken, it involves one form of trouble, and if the other course is chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord and ask Him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case! That ought to be the constant habit of your soul—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless wastes of life!  
In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will because his will is naturally evil. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, Sirs, if you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction! He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusts to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it forever and ever. If a man, starting out in life says, “I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, ‘You shall be indulged.’ And to my desires, ‘Eat, drink and be merry.’ And to my soul, ‘Trouble not yourself with solemn and serious things—leave eternity till it comes and make the best you can of time!’ I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me.” If you, Sir, talk like that, I pray you remember that “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” And it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him and to others, also—and which will make him miss the chief end of his being which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!  
I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause and lift up his heart to Heaven and say, “Gracious Spirit, You shall be my Guide from this time and forever.” For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks before long if you take the tiller of your life’s vessel into your own hands! With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the Grace of God. The Doctrine of the Depravity of the Human Race is not merely an article in the creed—it is a matter of everyday experience! There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to put darkness for light and light for darkness! And though you may think that you have a preference for good— and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered sooner or later and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin! I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost Paradise for us all, there is no hope that in your fallen state you can find your way back to Paradise! No, but you will keep on wandering further and further and further from the way of peace and holiness, for, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.”  
Let me give another meaning to the text and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not and it ought not to be in man who walks to direct his steps because not only is he naturally inclined to evil, but even when Grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you. And now the living and incorruptible Seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right—but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows! Ah, my Brother, you are an experienced Christian and others look up to you and ask direction from you. But if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, “God helping me, I can direct you, but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God.”  
Does not every man who is truly wise feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from Divine Guidance? And is it not a token of growth in wisdom and Grace when a man’s self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear Friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that! It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grossest mistakes. In what he considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian always has resort to God in prayer—but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear and which he thinks he can himself decide—then his folly is speedily discovered! He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites. They said, in effect, if not in words, “We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country—and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and dried—they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread—did you notice that? It has the blue mold all over it—we would not like to eat a mouthful of it— yet they told us that it was quite fresh when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them and make a covenant with them.”  
And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel of God. And therein Israel made a great mistake. So, Brothers and Sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure to say, “Let us pray about it.” You know the old proverb, “When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like.” So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying, then, unless I say it in the spirit of the proverb which would imply that you would be sure to pray. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, “Reach down yon Bible”—and when that was brought down and the Scripture read, and prayer offered—the good man felt that he could see his way and could go with firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. “It is not in man who walks to direct his steps,” for his judgment is fallible!  
I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from Divine help. How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the Grace of God for every step he takes? O Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord were to help us, by His Grace, until we got up to the doors of Heaven, we would never be able to get in unless He gave us the Grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps for you are a cripple and cannot take even one step except as strength is given you from on high! You are like a ship upon the sea—you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your boat. How can you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence and not to talk of directing your own steps!  
I must give you just one more thought under this head. He that walks need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him. What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot—but we may bow before the Lord and say, “You shall choose our inheritance for us.” The choice is difficult for you, my Brother. Then do not choose your own way, but leave it to Him who sees the end from the beginning and who is sure to make a wise choice! The burden of life is heavy, my Sister, then do not try to carry it, but “cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you.” “Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” Let it not be your choice, but let it be God’s choice! That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman when she was asked whether she would choose to live or die. She said that she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. “But,” said one, “suppose the Lord put it to your choice—which would you select?” “Neither,” she replied, “I would ask Him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as He willed, not as I willed.” Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosing and say to the Lord, “Not as I will, but as You will,” how much more happy we might be! We would not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we would be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, “Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not, You teach me.”  
II. Time fails me and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. It seems to me that they are instructive if we use them thus.  
First, avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do, remembering that, “it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” Do not forget what the Apostle James says about this matter, “Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow.” If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil and have your eraser handy so that you can rub them out quickly. Much mischief comes of making them in ink and regarding them as permanent—and saying, “This is what I am sure I shall do.” Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast iron regulations for your life! Do not say, “that is my plan and I shall keep to it whatever happens.” Be ready to alter your plan as God’s Providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change—I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, “As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.” So, do not be in a hurry to wander! On the other hand, I have known some persons who have resolved that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but remember that although “a rolling stone gathers no moss,” it is equally true that “a sitting hen gets no barley”—and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what He would have you do.  
The next thing is never be too positive in your expectations. I suppose we must have expectations—that old-fashioned benediction, “Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed,” is very difficult to gain. Expect that if God has promised you anything, He will be true to His Word—but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon, for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, that it is said, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.” But if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came! As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed—“having food and raiment, be therewith content”—and never cherish too optimistic expectations.  
Next, avoid all security as to the present. If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word, “mortal,” plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour and the light of life be gone from them! Your beloved one and you are, alike, mortal—and either of you may soon be taken from the other. Have you property? Remember that wealth has wings and that it flies away like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvelous mercy it is that—

*“A harp of thousand strings*

*Should keep in tune so long”—*  
and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose, hand, but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip! Grasp Christ in the power of the Spirit! Grasp God, who is your everlasting Portion and your unfailing Joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, “it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none...and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away.” Of everything below, it is wise for us to

say, “This is not my abiding portion.” It is very necessary to say this and to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime— and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds—mind that you do not get bird-limed! There is nothing permanent for you here! Your home is in Heaven—your home is not here—and if you find your treasure here, your heart will also be here—but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart and let Christ be your Treasure— and let Him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this— Bow before the Divine Will in everything. “It is not in man who walks to direct his steps.” Why should it be? O Lord, You are Master, You are King! Then why should we wish to have our own way? Is it right that the servant should take the master’s place? There are some of you who are in trouble and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord’s will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God! If you had directed your own way and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you made, you might have cause to be distressed. But as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear Friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme. You must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, “Your will, not mine, be done.” You will have to say it sooner or later! And if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once!

I heard one who I thought was a Christian, say, “I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me.” I replied, “My Sister, you must not talk like that.” Perhaps someone else says, “I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me.” Yes, my dear Friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as He pleases and He always does what is right—therefore you must submit to His will—whatever He pleases to do.

My last observation is— Pray about everything. Remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Pray about everything! I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jabbok, but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing that is not prayed over may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you who love the Lord may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do so myself, saying, “My Master, here I am. Take me and do as You will with me. Use me for Your Glory in any way that You please. Deprive me of every comfort if so I shall the more be able to honor You. Let my choicest treasures be surrendered if Your Sovereign Will shall so ordain.” Let every child of God make a complete surrender, here and now, and ask for Grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord—so may you never prove untrue to it!

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

Verses 1, 2. Hear you the word which the Lord speaks unto you, O house of Israel: Thus says the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of Heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. Among the heathen, if certain stars were in conjunction, it was considered unlucky. And certain days of the week were also regarded as unlucky, just as to this day there are people who think that it is very unfortunate to commence anything on a Friday. There are a great many foolish superstitions floating about this silly world, but you Christian people should never allow such follies to have any influence upon you. Neither the fiends of Hell, nor the stars of Heaven can ever injure those who put their trust in God!

3, 4. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. Those ancient Prophets seemed to take delight in heaping scorn upon the god-making of the heathen. Even the heathen poets made sport of the god-making! One of them very wisely said that it would be more reasonable to worship the workmen who made the god than to worship the god which the workmen had made!

5. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must need be borne, because they cannot go. Pretty gods they must be! They cannot move and cannot even stand till they are nailed up! They cannot stir unless they are carried from place to place.

5-8. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto You, O LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might. Who would not fear You, O King of nations? For to You does it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nation, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities. To teach people to worship mere stocks and stones may well be called, “a Doctrine of vanities.”

9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men. Step into any Roman Catholic shrine in England, or on the Continent, or for that matter, into any Anglican shrine, for they are all very much alike, and you will see that the modern “gods” are no better than those upon which the Prophets of old poured scorn! And I think it is our duty to pour scorn upon these saints, Madonnas and bambinos and I know not what besides!

10-13. But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures. To what a height of sacred imagery does Jeremiah mount! He seems to shake off his usual melancholy spirit when he comes to sing the praises of the Lord! He uses very similar language to that of Job, his fellow-sufferer.

14. Every man is brutish in his knowledge. Every idolater proves that he knows no more than a brute beast when he worships a stock or a stone.

14, 15. Every founder is confounded by the engraved image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The next verse brings out very vividly the contrast between these false gods and the one living and true God—

16. The Portion of Jacob is not like they: for He is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: The LORD of Hosts is His name. What a blessed name that is for God—“The Portion of Jacob”! And the other side of the Truth is equally blessed—“Israel is the rod of His inheritance.” God belongs to His people and they belong to Him! If we can but realize that these blessings are ours, we are building on the solid foundation of the richest possible happiness! The form of the prophecy now changes, for God was about to send His people, because of their sin, into a long and sad captivity. So the Prophet says, in the name of the Lord—

17, 18. Gather up your wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once, and will distress them, that they may find it so. They had fled to their fortresses for shelter, for the Babylonians were coming up against them. But no hope of deliverance was held out to them and they were told to pack up their little bundles, to put their small stores as closely together as they could, for they had to go away into a far distant country as captives of the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar. God compares their captivity to the forcible ejection of stones from a sling—“I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at once.” How severely God chastened His people in Jeremiah’s day! Yet, when we think of their innumerable provocations and of how they revolted again and again against the Lord, we are not surprised that at last the Lord sent them into captivity. Now listen to Jeremiah’s lamentation over the people whom he looks upon as already in captivity. He speaks in the name of the nation and says—

19. Woe is me for my hurt! My wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief and I must bear it. Ah, child of God, you also must learn to say that! There are some trials and troubles which come upon you against which you may not contend, but you must say, “Truly this is a grief and I must bear it.”

20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains. Alas, poor Israel! She was like a tent removed with none to set her up again. There are some churches in the present day that are in this sad condition—the faithful fail from among them, there are no new converts and no earnest spirit, so that the church has to say—“My tent is spoiled and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains.” Yes, poor afflicted church, that may be all true, yet your God can visit you and make the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children! And you who have lost your dearest one and seem to have no stamina left— your children are all taken from you—but your God can build you up! Is He not better to you than ten sons? And has He not said to you, “Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name”?

21, 22. For the pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come. “Bruit” is an old Norman word—one wonders how it got in here. It might be rendered, “The noise of the tumult is come.”

22-24. And a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. What a suitable prayer this is for a sick man, for a tried Believer, for the child of God in deep despondency of soul! I scarcely know any better words that any of us could use. The suppliant does not ask to go unchastised, but he says, “O Lord, correct me, but with judgment: not in Your anger; lest You bring me to nothing.”

25. Pour out Your fury upon the heathen that know You not, and upon the families that call not on Your name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate. So he asks God to, instead of smiting His own children, to smite His enemies. And knowing what we do about the Babylonians, we do not wonder that Jeremiah put up such a prayer as that.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—215, 208.  
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SINS OF OMISSION  
NO. 838

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.” Jeremiah 11:8.**

JEREMIAH was commissioned of God to bring a solemn accusation against rebellious Israel and he commences by solemnly mentioning their sins of omission. Observe that neglect of the Divine command is the charge brought in the text. In the next verses, the Prophet goes on to mention their sins of commission, but he very properly gives the first place to their shortcomings in positive service. He reminds them of what they had not done which they ought to have done and how constantly and persistently they had refused to render active obedience to the righteous will of the Most High.

Brothers and Sisters, it is well for us to have our sins brought to our remembrance. This morning we may spend a little time most profitably by looking into the glass of Holy Scripture to discover the spots upon our countenances. Perhaps some of your sins have never been forgiven because you have never sought to have them pardoned—you may have never been sufficiently conscious of the danger in which they placed you— may you be, by the Holy Spirit, this morning convicted of sin and led to Jesus!

While I shall be trying to speak of your great omissions, perhaps conscience may be at work, and the Holy Spirit may work through conscience so that you may be led to repentance, and to faith, and through faith to salvation. “It is a consummation devoutly to be wished.” Others here who have been pardoned—who rejoice everyday in the perfect forgiveness which they have found at the foot of Christ’s Cross—will, nevertheless, be benefited by being reminded of their sins, for thus they will be humbled. Thus they will be led to prize more the great atoning sacrifice. Thus they will be driven again to renew the simplicity of their faith as they look to Him on whom Jehovah made to meet the iniquities of all His people.

God grant that also, for His name’s sake, I shall, this morning, take rather the spirit of the text than the words of it. The subject will be sins of omission.

I. First, I would call your attention to THE GREAT COMMONNESS OF THESE. Their commonness in the wide world. Their frequency in our own circle of society. And to each man, to each woman, I would say to their abundance in your own heart. Here it is observed at the outset that in a certain sense all offenses against the Law of God come under the head of sins of omission, for in every sin of commission there is an omission—an omission, at least, of that godly fear which would have prevented disobedience.

Our Lord has told us that the whole law is summarized in these two Commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself.” Since, then, every sin must be a breach of this all-comprehensive Law, every sin must, from a certain aspect, be a sin of omission. Consider, then, how multitudinous have been your omissions and mine! Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart? Perhaps you have omitted to love Him at all. You who have loved Him have omitted to love Him with “all your heart.” And if at any time you have loved with “all your heart,” yet you have omitted to continue in this.

There have been slowing downs and intermissions—and every omission of obedience becomes a distinct act of disobedience to the Most High. We have not served Him with “all our mind,” any more than with all our heart. That is to say we have not yielded up our understanding to His infinite wisdom and authority. We have even dared to re-judge His judgments and murmur against His Providences. We have not surrendered our wills to His will, but have desired things contrary to His purpose and to His Truth.

Neither has our strength been entirely devoted to His service. We have not done unto You, Creator and Preserver, at all according to the benefits which we have received. Take the first four Commandments, which make up the first table, and what sins of omission have we all committed there! We have omitted to make God the Chief, the First, the Foremost, the only Lord of our spirit, and we have too often had other gods before Him. We have omitted to treat His name with the reverence which He demands. And if we have not committed profanity or blasphemy, yet that name has not always been hallowed by us as it should have been.

As for His day, it has not always been sacredly guarded as a day of mental as well as bodily rest. We have done servile work in our minds, if not with our hands, by our many cares and fretfulness and so have failed to honor our God with the joyful worship which He deserves. Think, dear Friends, especially you who know God, and rejoice in Him, how ill you have treated the Father of your spirits! He deserved, since He has bought you with the blood of His dear Son, to be served with an all-consuming earnestness. He rightly claims the cream of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and that our souls should always be diligent in His service. But alas, we have been sluggards and idlers! We have not spoken well of His name. We have not sounded abroad His Glory. We have not been obedient to His will. We are unprofitable servants. We have not done what it was our duty to have done towards our God.

The other portion of the Law, our Savior tells us, is contained in these words, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Which of us has done that? We must plead guilty even before we come to details. Take the command as it stands and there is no man of woman born who shall dare to say that he has been perfect in this. Especially let me remind you of those sins of omission which daily occur in our various relationships. We have oftentimes omitted to act lovingly towards our neighbor. We have failed to do the kind thing towards the sick and the poor in relieving them—the right thing towards the ignorant in seeking their instruction.

I am afraid that many of us have the blood of our neighbors upon our garments because we have left them in ignorance and have not told them the Gospel. And if they die in their sins they might well, with their dying breath, upbraid us that, having the light, we have not carried it to them. You cannot, I think, look out of your window and say, “I am clear concerning all those who abide around me. I have, to the utmost of my ability, done for them what I shall wish to have done when I come to die.” Brothers and Sisters, have you not fallen into sins of omission against your own children? They have grown up now, some of them—did you, for them in matters towards God, do as you could wish now that you are done?

Or your little ones that are around about you—are you sure that you are always doing everything that God would have you do to train them up in His fear? Are there no omissions in the household? For my own part, I dare not think of my relationships towards this Church, towards the world, towards other Churches of Jesus Christ, towards my own household without the blush and the tear! Brethren, our sins of omission are not to be numbered! Their number grows, as we examine ourselves, till they are more in number than the hairs of our head. And if we had to be justified by our own works, we dare not look up, but must bow our head as guilty culprits and submit to the sentence of God.

Look at sins of omission in another light. How many there are who have omitted yet to perform the first and all essential Gospel commands! Wherever the Gospel goes, it cries, “Repent and be converted.” And yet again, “Repent and he baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” And yet again, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Now, I will not speak of the neglect of Baptism, though the mass of the Church and the world have renounced Baptism and have adopted a ceremony of their own invention. But I will speak to you of the neglect of repentance, for many of you in this house have been urged, again and again, to repent and consider your iniquities, but you have refused the sacred counsel.

There was, indeed, room enough for repentance, and cause enough for a change of mind—but, though you have heard the arguments for penitence, your heart still remains hard towards God and no true sorrow for sin is found within your spirit. How often have these lips declared to you that faith in Jesus Christ is both your duty and your privilege—that it, alone, can save you? Yet that faith you have neither sought nor desired! You know in theory what saving faith means. You could explain to others what it is to believe in Jesus, and yet you remain hearers of the Word and not doers of it, deceiving your own souls.

Throughout this huge city of ours, dense masses of men know the Gospel, but obey it not. They have heard it, or might hear it if they would, but they have not obeyed the Gospel. As Isaiah says, it has been a hardening to them, and not a gracious means of renewal. O unbelievers, the lack of faith is a sin of omission which will sink you to the lowest Hell! This is the most damning sin of all, and above all others fills the gates of Hell—that men believe not on Jesus Christ, but love darkness rather than light!

Again, what sins of omission cluster round religious duties! A large proportion of our fellow citizens neglect altogether the outward worship of God. God forgive them and send a change in the manners of the people by which the Houses of Prayer shall be thronged! Alas, it is not with these we need to deal just now if we would find sins of neglect. Are there not with you, my Hearers, even with you, sins against the Lord our God? What omissions we are guilty of as to prayer? How some live as if there were no God, or as if atheistic views had bewitched them! From morning to night multitudes forget the Most High, and call not on His name! And if, perhaps, they do remember to bow the knee in outward supplication, how few really adore their Maker?

How lax in devotion are the most of us? How ready to be excused from communion with God? How short we make our prayers and how little of our hearts do we throw into them? And that Bible, as it lies open before us, how, with silent but solemn eloquence, it accuses us! Can you look at it, my Hearers, without shame? Unread is that book from day to day while the ephemeral newspaper—the mere record of the flying hour and its trivialities—is read with eagerness to the neglect of the great things of God’s Law!

Truly, we cannot even look around upon the place where we assemble for worship without our omissions accusing us—for when we have been here we have not set our thoughts upon God—we have not sung His praises with heart-music! When the time of prayer has come our thoughts have been gadding here and there after vanity. Brothers and Sisters, whatever part of religious worship comes under review we must confess that we have left undone the things which we ought to have done! And so take the whole stretch of human life, from the cradle to gray old age. We failed to honor our parents in our youth. We have been slow in honoring God throughout our manhood. And at the close of life the same omission in different forms may be charged upon us.

God deserves of us that we should serve Him. That we should, to the utmost of our abilities, contribute to the revenue of His Glory. But our talents have been wrapped in a napkin. Our service has been given to self— we have lived to please ourselves, or to win our fellow creatures’ applause—while our blessed God has had only the dregs of our thoughts, the remnants of our time, the refuse of our actions. The roll of our omissions is very long, and if it were read by a tender conscience it would seem black with multiplied lamentations. Who among us, apart from the Atonement, can endure the thought that God records all our failures of duty as well as our actual transgressions? Who, I say, could dare to look up if it were not for those streaming wounds of that blessed Son of God who has blotted out our iniquities and washed away our scarlet stains?

Our omissions frown upon us and thunder at us! They lie upon the horizon of memory like masses of storm clouds accumulating for a horrible tempest! None of us dares turn our eyes in that direction until first we have seen the Lord’s appointed Propitiation and found our rest in Him.

II. Brethren, I call you to a second thought—what is THE CAUSE OF THIS EXCESSIVE MULTIPLICITY OF SINS OF OMISSION?  
Of course, my Brethren, the great cause lies in our evil hearts. That we do not bring forth fruit unto God is because our depraved nature is barren towards Him. Man is, by nature, dead in sin—and how can the dead in sin perform actions which express spiritual life? Can we expect to gather grapes or figs from withered trees? “You must be born-again,” and until this inward change—this thorough regeneration of our nature has been accomplished—we remain barren and unprofitable and unaccepted of God. Lack of the new nature is the great root of the matter in the ungodly. And the absence of a new heart and a right spirit mean men will never obey the Lord’s commands till the Holy Spirit takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. May the Lord do that for you, O you unsaved ones, and His shall be the praise!  
I suspect that the unnoticed superabundance of sins of omission may result, also, from the fact that the conscience of man is not well alive to sins of omission. If any of you had committed theft, he would most likely feel much ashamed. If another had fallen into an act of unchastity, it would probably stick in his conscience for awhile, unless, indeed, habit had rendered him callous to it. But while conscience will chastise most men for direct acts of wrong, it is not in every case sufficiently alive to rebuke us for so much as one in 10 of our omissions. And, indeed, even our memory willfully refuses to file the record of duties left undone.  
Yet, Beloved, there is as much sin in not loving God as in lusting after evil! There is as much rebellion in not obeying God as in breaking His commands. Measure for measure—put into the scales together—it may even happen that a sin of omission may turn out to be more sinful than one of commission! A sin of omission argues a state of mind sinful and corrupt, while a sin of commission may only be occasioned by the violence of a temptation, while, after all, the soul is at heart, right with God. Those sins of ours which we have never confessed or noticed, which have slipped away with the hours, and have gone as a dream are recorded in the book of God. And in the day when unforgiven sinners with awakened consciences shall be made to hear that book read out before an assembled universe, woe unto them, woe unto them, that they refused to be obedient to the Lord!  
No doubt, sins of omission are also multiplied through indolence. Some men have not enough force of character in them to be downright wicked— they are mere chips in the porridge with nothing of manhood in them. They are so idle that they are not even good enough to be diligent servants of Satan. There are some who would, if they could, I think, lie in bed and rot of slothfulness, to whom it would be their most supreme bliss to have nothing to do forever, and nothing to think of except maybe a little eating and drinking by way of variety. Because this indolence abounds, many men sleep on and awake not to righteousness and to the service of God.  
For them to repent is troublesome. To believe in Jesus Christ requires the exercise of thought. To be a Christian is too laborious. To watch their conduct and conversation is too much to require of them. If Heaven could be reached in a sound sleep, and sleeping cars could be run all the way to the Celestial City they would be among the best of pilgrims! But they cannot rub their eyes even to see Jesus, or leave their couch to win Heaven itself! How these simpletons will wake up one day when they find that their life of trifling has brought them within the fast closed gates of Hell! God is not to be trifled with! He does not make immortal beings that they may sport like butterflies from flower to flower. He does not create souls and give them lives to spend in child’s play, fashionable frivolities, and killing of time!  
Yet in the face of eternity, life, death, Heaven and Hell, multitudes upon multitudes are ruined simply because they neglect the great salvation and are absolutely too idle to concern themselves about eternal matters. They doze into damnation! They sleep into eternal fire! But what a waking! O my fellow Men, run not the risk, run not the risk! Ignorance, too, is a more excusable and, perhaps, less fruitful cause of sins of omission, but still a prominent one. Some men neglect to serve God because they do not know His Word, His mind or His Gospel. But with many the ignorance is willful.  
In every land the subject is supposed to know the law—and though our magistrates very rightly are often lenient to prisoners who commit the first offense against a new law, yet such leniency lasts only for a case or two. And if, after the law has been made for years, a prisoner pleaded that he did not know a law, he would be told that he ought to have known it. Especially is this the case with us who have the Law here in the Bible, and who have it moreover written upon our consciences, so that when we sin we sin not as the heathen do, but sin against light and knowledge.  
If a man sins through ignorance, he is so far excusable as the ignorance is excusable, but no further. And, in this country, an ignorance of Christ, an ignorance of Gospel duties, an ignorance of the Law of God is without excuse, since in almost every street Jesus Christ is preached, and the Word of God is within every man’s reach! If he is but willing and desirous to know the mind of God, he may soon discover it. Yet, I doubt not, ignorance in many, many cases—willing, witting ignorance—does cause many sins of omission.  
Sins of omission, again, are very plentiful because men excuse themselves so readily about them by the pretense of a more convenient season. “I have not repented,” says one, “but then I mean to do so. I have not believed, but I shall do so before long. It is true I neglected prayer today, but then I intend, by-and-by, to give myself to supplication.” So that men imagine that God is to be served by them at their own times and seasons! God is to wait until it pleases them to do His bidding! And when they have a more convenient season, then will they hearken to His Word and to His Spirit! Ah, but, Sirs, the excuse of some future improvement is pitiful—it holds no water—for we are always bound to serve God at once, and the postponement of service is the perpetuation of rebellion.  
Many neglectors of God’s will excuse themselves by the prevalence of the like conduct. To omit to love and serve the Lord is the custom of the majority. Wherever custom endorses a good thing, then it becomes unfashionable as well as sinful to break through the rule—and there are thousands of people who would sooner be wicked than be unfashionable! But when a right thing is not commonly observed in society, men straightaway begin to think that it is not necessary, and so they leave it undone. As if a prisoner brought before the bench should say, “It is true I am a thief, but then all the people in the court where I live are thieves, too! Therefore I ought not to be punished. It is true, Sir, that I could not keep my hands from picking and stealing, but then none of my family ever could. They were brought up to it, and you would not have a man forsake the customs of his father and mother—my father and mother were professional thieves—therefore I cannot be blamed for following their example.”  
But enlightened conscience warns us that custom is no excuse for sin. To your own Master each one of you will stand or fall! And, Sirs, however graceless may be the parish in which you live, you have not to account for the parish, but for yourselves! And however covetous may be the times in which your lot is cast, you are not accountable for the times, but for yourselves! I charge you, in the name of God, let not custom ever be an excuse to your soul for sin, for custom will be no plea at the bar of God, nor will the multitude of those who are lost be any alleviation to your pain when you, too, are cast away with them into outer darkness!  
Need I multiply reasons for the commonness of sins of omission? They grow on every plot of wasteland in our hearts, and their seeds are carried everywhere—as the down of the thistle—and as many as the seed of the poppy.  
III. I come now, in the third place, to say a few words by way of setting forth THE SINFULNESS OF SINS OF OMISSION. I wish I had the power to speak upon this subject as I would, for I long to see broken hearts among us convinced of their innumerable shortcomings. Broken hearts are God’s sacrifices. There are some among us who complain that they cannot believe in Jesus because they do not feel their need. I only wish they might be made to feel their need while, this morning, they are reminded of what they have left undone.  
Now I pray the Holy Spirit to make you feel the guilt of omissions as they are seen in the following light. Consider, for a moment, what would be the consequences if God were to omit, for one minute, to supply you with breath—if the Lord should omit, for a second, to supply you with life! Suppose the infinite God should omit His long-suffering mercy for an hour! Suppose He should refuse for an hour to restrain the axe of judgment—where were you then? Suppose that the great Preserver of all should make but one day’s intermission of goodness in His dealings with the universe? The sun would not shine. The air would fail to fill the lungs. Life would forget to be! The world would cease to exist, and the whole universe would subside into the nothingness from which it sprang! One moment’s forgetfulness on God’s part would be annihilation to all His creatures!  
Suppose that Jesus had left an omission in the plan of salvation? If only one part of our salvation had been left unfinished, then all must be forever accursed! Then must you put your hands upon your loins, this morning, and go up and down through this hopeless world in desperate sorrow, saying one to the other, “There is no hope! Salvation is unfinished, and consequently unavailable! The Savior omitted one necessary item and none of us can, therefore, be saved!” If you will digest these two thoughts, you may, perhaps, taste the blessedness which lies in neglect of necessary

hings. Omissions cannot be trivial, if we only reflect what an influence they would have upon an ordinary commonwealth if they were perpetrated there as they are in God’s commonwealth.  
Think a minute—if one person has a right to omit his duty, another has, and all have—then the watchman would omit to guard the house; the policeman would omit to arrest the thief; the judge would omit to sentence the offender; the sheriff would omit to punish the culprit; the government would omit to carry out its laws. Then every occupation would cease and the world die of stagnation. The merchant would omit to attend to his calling. The farmer would omit to plow his land! Where would the commonwealth be? The kingdom would be out of joint. The machine would break down, for no cog of the wheels would act upon its fellow. How would societies of men exist at all?  
And surely, if this is not to be tolerated in a society of men, much less in that great commonwealth of which God is the King—in which angels and glorified spirits are the peers, and all creatures citizens! How can the Lord tolerate that here there should be an omission, and there an omission, in defiance of His authority? As the Judge of all the earth, He must bring down His strong right hand upon these omissions and crush out forever the spirit that would thus revolt against His will. Think for a minute of how you would judge omissions towards yourselves. You have said to yourself, “So long as I do not drink or swear, or curse, or lie, or steal, it is a small matter that I neglect to be devout towards God.”  
Now listen. There is your servant—he has never stolen your goods, he has never set your house on fire, he has never held a pistol to your ear— and yet you have discharged him. Why? “Why,” you say, “because the fellow neglects everything about the house! I do not find that any command which I give him is carried out. He must be master or I must—and if he will not do what I tell him, of what service is he? Let him go his way.” That is how you judge your servant, is it? And is God to let you neglect His service and yet to suffer you to go unpunished? Take a soldier in the army. To commit an act of mutiny it is not necessary for the soldier to fix his bayonet and kill his colonel. When he is ordered out on guard, he can just stop at home. Or when the battle rages, he may, if he chooses, just ground his arms, and say, “No, I am not going out to fight.” Who could tolerate such mutiny—how could it be allowed?  
The omission is as vicious as the commission. Your child, the other day, smarted beneath the rod, and why? He had not lied or pilfered. There was no direct vicious act—but you had told him to go on an errand and he had refused to go. And when you told him again and again, (and remember, God has commanded you a great many more times than you ever told your child), there he stood in stolid obstinacy and would not move. And, then, very rightly he was made to feel that such things could not be permitted in your household.  
Now, if in our house we cannot tolerate this from a child, much more shall the great Father not endure these obstinate omissions from us! Ah, “But,” you say, “I have not omitted towards God to go to Church or to meeting regularly. I have not omitted the form of singing and prayer, and so on. All I have omitted is the spiritual matter, I have not loved Him.” And suppose, dear Friends, suppose you have a wife, and the only thing that she has omitted is that she has omitted to love you—what do you think of that? Well, the house and domestic arrangements may show great cleanliness and order, but she is no wife to you if she has no love for you! The omission of love you feel to be a fatal one! And so that absence of love to God is such a dreadful absence, too! It is such a taking away of everything that I only wish you could feel, you who have not loved Him, how guilty you are!  
It may also help us, if we will consider for a moment, what God things of omissions. Saul was ordered to kill the Amalekites, and not to let one escape. He saved Agag and the best of the cattle, and for that, though he had positively done nothing but simply stayed his hand and refused to do so, the Lord said, “I have put you away from being King over Israel.” Ahab was commanded to kill and slay Benhadad on account of innumerable cruelties. Benhadad was taken captive, but Ahab treated him with great leniency—and the result was, “Because you have let this man go, therefore your life shall be for his life.” Non-obedience ruined Ahab.  
Our Lord Jesus Christ was the gentlest of all Men, and yet there was one miracle which He performed which had a degree of vengeance in it— and what was that? He stood by a fig tree and saw leaves but no fruit, and He said, “Henceforth there shall be no fruit on you forever,” as if to show that fruitless things provoked His anger—not so much brambles which bear their thorns—but fig trees which ought to bear figs and do not. Remember, too, the parable which we read this morning in your hearing. The man with the one talent was condemned, if you remember, and his condemnation was for this—not that he had squandered his lord’s money, but that he had not increased it. So that, in God’s opinion, the not doing of good is sufficient to condemn men even if they have not committed positive evil.  
When the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, what is the special sin which He reveals? The sin of adultery? The sin of robbery? No, of an omission—“Of sin, because they believe not on Me.” Omitting to believe in Jesus is the master sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world. Remember that solemn question of Paul when he asks, “How shall we escape if we—what? If we swear? If we frequent the tavern? No—“if we neglect so great a salvation?” The life-long neglect of salvation involves us in danger from which there is no escape.  
V. Much more might be said, but time fails me and therefore let me remind you very solemnly of what will be THE RESULT AND PUNISHMENT OF SINS OF OMISSION. Sins of omission will condemn us. Take the parable with which we closed our reading this morning—the King said to those on His left hand, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink.” He did not say to them, “You were frequenters of evil houses. You were common drunkards. You were dishonest. You were fraudulent bankrupts. You were neglectors of the Sabbath. You were common profane swearers.” No, but He said, “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat.”  
It was the absence of virtue, rather than the presence of vice, which condemned them. “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” “But, Lord, the man has no vice about him. He has not plunged himself into the kennel of open iniquity.” “Ah, but that suffices not! If there is not the positive fruits of the Spirit producing in him holiness of life, he shall not see the Lord.” O Sirs, let none of us deceive ourselves! God will not accept our profession of religion because it simply keeps us chaste and decorous, and makes us civil to our neighbors! We must have worked in us, by the Holy Spirit, a righteousness better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees or we shall by no means enter into the kingdom of Heaven!  
There must be worked in us as a work of Divine Grace—a deep abhorrence of sin, an earnest clinging to purity, a resolute pursuit of everything that is peaceful, and lovely, and of good repute—or else let us prate as we may, we shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God! I preach not salvation by works in any sense or degree, or shape, or form, but salvation by Grace alone! Yet still I hear in my ears the echo of the Baptist’s words, “Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”  
Not only the tree that brings forth bad fruit is burned, but the tree which is barren and unprofitable is hewn down and cast into the fire! If we bring not forth the fruits of true saving faith, we may be sure that such faith is not in our possession! Sins of omission not only bring condemnation, but if persevered in they effectually shut against us the possibilities of pardon. I mean that sins of omission against the Gospel deprive us of Gospel privileges. “He that believes not”—is there pardon for him? “He that believes not”—is there rescue for him? No! He “is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”  
He that repents not—will Divine Grace reach him? Will the mercy of God blot out sins that are unrepented of? No, not so! As long as we cling to sin, sin will cling to us as the leprosy did to the house of Gehazi. God forgives all sins through Jesus Christ and He is willing to forgive the vilest of us if we come to Him trusting alone in Jesus. But if we have no faith in Jesus Christ it is not possible for us to receive from the Lord the forgiveness of sins which He promises only to those who believe in Jesus! In the marriage feast of which we read in the Gospels, there were many who would not come and they perished because they would not come. They are not charged with having actually committed anything wrong—but they perished for not coming.  
There was one who came to the feast but he had not on a wedding garment. I do not read that he had put on rags, or had decorated himself with anything offensive to the master of the house—but he had failed to put on the wedding garment—that was the deadly sin. And what was the sentence? “Bind him hand and foot, and deliver him to the tormentors.” So I could not charge some of you, today, with anything outwardly contrary to morality, but, O Sirs, if you have not—mark this—if you have not put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ by a living faith in Him, the tormentors must have you at the last!  
O that this Truth of God might sink into your ears and into your hearts! There is pardon for all omission to be found in the flowing wounds of Jesus! There is life in a LOOK at Him! Over the heads of these multiplied shortcomings, God’s mercy will come to Believers. But, oh, remain not in your unbelief! May the Holy Spirit, by His own mighty power give you Grace now to repent and to believe—and yours shall be the salvation—and God’s the glory, world without end! Amen.

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ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE?

NO. 635

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

**“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”  
Jeremiah 12:5.**

CANAAN may be considered as a type of two states or conditions in the Christian’s life. It was the land of rest to the children of Israel after a weary pilgrimage in the wilderness. Now it is written that “we who believe do enter into rest.” A true Christian possessed of strong faith will not have a wilderness state on earth so much as a land flowing with milk and honey because his faith will give him the substance of things hoped for and be the evidence of things not seen. Many disciples live a life of depression, wretchedness, and discomfort which would be completely changed if they had faith in God and lived a higher life of devotedness and love.

Canaan may be fairly considered as a type of that better state of Christianity which some enjoy. It is not altogether free from ills. The Canaanite dwells in the land and there are still wars and fights, but there is rest and there is the spirit of service developing itself in the cultivation of the promised land. But Canaan is generally used to shadow forth “the rest which remains for the people of God” beyond the skies. Heaven is thus frequently described as corresponding to the earthly inheritance of the Jews.

It is our hope—the end of our pilgrimage. It contains our Jerusalem and the temple “not made with hands.” When this is the view taken of the type, then Jordan is not unnaturally likened unto death. Its dark waters are made to picture forth to our minds the chill stream through which we wade in our dying hour. It is a beautiful emblem and we have all doubtless often sung Dr. Watt’s hymn with much feeling*—*

*“There is land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign.  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.  
There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers.  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.”*

Taking “the swelling of Jordan” to represent the precise time of death, the question really is what shall we do when we come to die? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”  
I. We notice, in the first place, that this is an EXCEEDINGLY PRACTICAL QUESTION. “How will you do?” is the enquiry. There are some subjects which are more or less matters of pure faith and personal feeling. And though all Christian doctrines bear more or less directly upon the Christian life, yet they are not what is commonly meant by practical subjects. Our text, however, brings us face to face with a matter which is essentially a matter of doing and of acting—it asks how we mean to conduct ourselves in the hour of death.

We sometimes hear the remark made by those who object to doctrinal preaching that we are too speculative and utter our own opinions which feed men’s fancies but do not regulate their life. Now we believe that every promise leads to a precept and every doctrine has its duty—so we will not admit the justice of the insinuation even if we did preach doctrine entirely to the exclusion of the Commandments—which we emphatically deny. But here we have, at any rate, a topic practical enough. I am only afraid it will be a little too much so for some! They will turn it into a sentiment and a feeling and not act upon it so as to put it into practice and exemplify its power in after days.

Christians may differ with me on some points, but I am sure that here we are united in belief—we must die and ought not to die unprepared. There is a divergence of opinion as to what we ought to do at the commencement of our Christian life—I maintain that we ought to follow Christ and be immersed in water, “for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” Others oppose that as being unnecessary, inexpedient, or what not. We differ at the beginning of life, but we agree in the end—we must die. And we all want to die the death of the righteous and to have our last end like his.

II. We notice, in the second place, that it is UNDOUBTEDLY A PERSONAL QUESTION. How will you do? It individualizes us and makes us, each one, to come face to face with a dying hour. Now we all need this and it will be well for each one of us to look for a minute into the grave. We are too apt to regard all men as mortal but ourselves. Somehow we can see frailty of life as well as all the other frailties which we possess in common much more clearly in other people than we can in ourselves.

We are far too much blind to our own weakness and shall do well to ask ourselves, each of us, “My Soul, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” The ancient warrior who wept because before a hundred years were passed he knew his immense army would be gone and not a man remain behind to tell the tale, would have been wiser if he had wept also for himself and left his bloody wars alone and lived as a man who must one day die and find after death a day of judgment! Each one of you must die. If I were addressing an assembly of the sages of the world, I should say, “All your combined wisdom cannot lengthen the days of one of you even a single minute. You may reckon the distance of the stars and weigh worlds, but you cannot tell me when one of you will die, nor how many grains of sand are left behind in the hourglass of time which shows the exit of each spirit from the world.”

I say now to you, the wisest of you must die! And you know not but that you may die before long. So with the mightiest and the richest of men. Samson was mastered by a stronger than man and the wealthiest of men cannot bribe Death to delay his dart for a single hour. We all come into the world one by one and will go out of it alone, also. Loved ones come to the brink of the dark stream, but there they shake hands and say, “farewell,” and we go on alone. The Prophet’s companion and successor followed his master till the fiery chariot came to take his leader away. And when the messengers of God came they left the servant behind, vainly crying, “My father, my father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.”

We had better, therefore, take the question up as individuals—seeing that it is one in which we shall be dealt with singly and be unable, then, to claim or use the help of an earthly friend. I put to the young, to the old—to the rich, to the poor—to each one of this vast assembly! I put it as if we were alone before our God—“How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

III. As a third thought we call attention to the fact that it is one of the MOST SOLEMN questions. Death and life are stern and awful realities. To say that anything “is a matter of life and death” is to bring one of the most emphatic and solemn subjects under our notice. Now the question we are considering this morning is of this character and we must deal with it as it becomes us—as a subject involving the everlasting interest of souls. The question is of infinite importance to all, but there are some whose case is manifestly such that they need to gird up the loins of their minds and address themselves to its consideration with intense thought and care.

Let me call attention to one or two cases—for while I wish to stir up all—I am bid to have special compassion on some, making a difference, so that I may pluck them as brands out of the fire. I have been curious enough to think that I should like to ask that question of a Jew, of one who rejects Christ as the Messiah. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” According to the Law, and it is that under which every Jew is born, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.”

Now there never was and never will be any man who did, or could, “continue in all things written in the book of the Law to do them”! And consequently every man becomes accursed. And it must be a dreadful thing for a man to think of dying under the curse and ban of his own religious faith! And yet every Jew is so cursed by his own book of Law— accursed forever! What comfort will that yield him when he comes to the swelling of Jordan? I have thought, too, that I should like to ask the atheist, the unbeliever, this question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

He tells me, perhaps, that he believes in annihilation—he will need comfort when he is lying upon that last weary bed. Will he get it out of that well? The dreary blank of total destruction, of ceasing to be—is there anything to help a spirit when it lies where it most wants consolation, tossing to and fro in pain and weakness? I think not. I should like also to put the question to a Roman Catholic—how will he do “in the swelling of Jordan?”

Some time ago, you will remember, a Prince of the Catholic Church departed—where did he go? I am not versed in such matters and should not like to judge anybody’s soul, but on the coffin of the Cardinal we find a request that we would pray for his soul—and there have been masses said for its repose. It is evident, therefore, that the Cardinal’s soul went somewhere where it needs praying for and to some place where it is not in repose. Now if this is to be the lot for a Cardinal Archbishop, there is but a poor outlook for an ordinary professor of the same faith! If a prince in the church dies and does not go to Heaven as we have been hoping, not to eternal rest—but to a place where he needs our intercession and where he has no repose for his soul—why then it must be dreadful work to die with such a creed as that!

I would sooner have beneath my head the most prickly thorn bush than have that for my dying pillow! Oh, we want something better than this! We desire a hope more rapturous, more Divine, more full of immortality than the certainty of going to a place where there is no repose and where our souls need the prayers of sinful men on earth! But I do not know that we have very much to do with any of these—they must “gang their am gait”— they must go their own way. And if they are found wrong at the last, we are sorry that it should be so. Our own business is certainly the first matter in hand. Therefore, forgetting them, let the question come to each of us, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

IV. Remember, in the fourth place, that this question was put by way of REBUKE to the Prophet Jeremiah. He seems to have been a little afraid of the people among whom he dwelt. They had evidently persecuted him very much, mocking him and laughing him to scorn. But God tells him to make his face like flint and not to care for them, for, says He, “If you are afraid of them, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

This ought to be a rebuke to every Christian who is subject to the fear of man. I do not believe that any preacher will be long in his pulpit without having the temptation to be afraid of some man or another. And if he does not stand very firmly upon his integrity he will find some of the best of his friends getting the upper hand with him. And this will never do with God’s minister. He must deal out God’s Word impartially to rich or poor, to good or bad. And he must determine to have no master except his Master who is in Heaven—no bit nor bridle for his mouth except that of prudence and discretion—which God Himself shall put there.

If we are afraid of a man that shall die and the son of man that is crushed before the moth, how fearful shall we be when we have to talk with the grim king of terrors! If we are afraid of puny man, how shall we be able to face it out before the dread ordeal of the Day of Judgment? Yet I know some Christians that are very much abashed by the world’s opinion—by the opinion of their family circle—or of the workshop. Now what does it matter, after all? There is an old proverb, that “he is a great fool that is laughed out of his coat.” And there was an improvement on it, that “he was a greater fool who was laughed out of his skin.”

And there is another, that “he is the greatest fool of all who is laughed out of his soul.” He that will be content to be damned in order to be fashionable pays dearly, indeed, for what he gets. Oh, to dare to be singular, if to be singular is to be right! But if you are afraid of man, what will you do in the swelling of Jordan? The same rebuke might be applied to us when we get fretful under the little troubles of life. You have losses in business, vexations in the family—you all have crosses to carry—but my text comes to you and it says, “If you cannot bear this, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? If your religion is not equal to the ordinary emergencies of common days, what will you do when you get to that extraordinary day which will be to you the most important day of your being?”

Come Friends, be not bowed down with these things! Bear them cheerfully since there is much sterner work to do than any that you have met with in the battle of life. And the same reproof might come to us when we get petulant under pains of body. There are some of us who, as soon as we get a little sick, become so fretful that those who like us best are farthest from us! We can scarcely have a little depression of spirit but straightway we are ready to give up all for lost and like Jonah, say, “We do well to be angry even unto death.” Now this ought not to be! We should quit ourselves like men and not be perturbed with these little rivulets—for if these sweep us away, what shall we do when Jordan is swollen to the brim and we have to pass through that?

When one of the martyrs, whose name is the somewhat singular one of Pommily, was confined previous to his burning, his wife was also taken up upon the charge of heresy. She, good woman, had resolved to die with her husband and she appeared, as far as most people could judge, to be very firm in her faith. But the jailer’s wife, though she had no religion, took a merciful view of the case as far as she could do so and thought, “I am afraid this woman will never stand the test. She will never burn with her husband—she has neither faith nor strength enough to endure the trial.” Therefore, one day calling her out from her cell, she said to her, “Lass, run to the garden and fetch me the key that lies there.”

The poor woman ran willingly enough. She took the key up and it burned her fingers, for the jailer’s wife had made it red hot. She came running back crying with pain. “Yes, Wench,” said the jailer’s wife, “if you cannot bear a little burn in your hand, how will you bear to be burned in your whole body?” And this, I am sorry to add, was the means of bringing her to recant the faith which she professed, but which never had been in her heart.

I apply the story thus—If we cannot bear the little trifling pangs which come upon us in our ordinary circumstances which are, as it were, the burning of our hands, what shall we do when every pulse beats pain and every throb is an agony and the whole tenement begins to crumble about the spirit that is so soon to be disturbed? Come, let us pluck up courage! We have yet to fight the giant! Let us not be afraid of these dwarfs! Let the ordinary trials of every day be laughed to scorn! In the strength of Divine Grace, let us sing with our poet—

*“Weak as I am, yet through Your strength,*

*I all things can perform.”*  
For if we cannot bear these, how will we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is what the text was originally meant to teach. We will now use it for a further purpose.

V. The question may be put as A MATTER OF CAUTION. In this assembly there are some who have no hope, no faith in Christ. Now I think if they will look within at their own experience they will find that they are by no means completely at ease. The pleasures of this world are very sweet, but how soon they sour if they do not sicken the appetite! After the night of merriment there is often the morning of regret. “Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine.”

It is an almost universal confession that the joys of earth promise more than they perform and that in looking back upon them the wisest must confess with Solomon, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Now if these things seem to be vanity while you are in good bodily health, how will they look when you are in sickness? If vanity while you can enjoy them, what will they appear when you must say farewell to them all? If it were vanity to the rich man while he was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, what greater vanity it must have been when it was said, “This night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?”

How will you do in Jordan when these joys shall vanish and there shall be a dreary blank before you? Moreover, you feel already that conscience pricks you. You cannot live without God and be perfectly at ease unless you are one of those few who are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. You could not take an hour quietly to think about yourself and your state and yet go to your bed easily. You know right well that the only way some of you can keep your peace of mind at all is by going from one gay assembly to another and from one party of frolic to another, or else from business to business and from care to care.

Your poor soul, like the infant which is to be cast into Moloch’s arms, cries, and you do not hear its cries because you drown it with the noisy drums of this world’s pleasures and cares. But still you are not at rest— there is a worm in your fair fruit—there are dregs at the bottom of your sweetest cups and you know it. Now, if even now you are not perfectly at peace—if in this land of peace wherein you have trusted you are getting weary of these things—then “how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

Moreover, you sometimes have, if I am not mistaken, very strange apprehensions. I have known some of the most reckless sinners who have had fearful times when nobody could cheer them when a certain fearful looking of judgment has haunted them. The most superstitious people in the world are those who are the most profane. It is a strange thing that there is always that weak point about those who seem to be most hardened. But you that are not thus hardened—you know that you dare not look forward to death with any pleasure—you cannot! To go to the grave is never very joyous work with you. Yes, and if you were certain that there could be no more death, it would be the best news that you had ever heard! But to some of us it would be the worst that could ever come.

Ah, well! If the very thought of death is bitter, what will the reality be? And if to gaze at it from a distance is too hard a thing for your mind, what will it be to pass under its yoke—to go through its dark valley, to feel its dart—to know that the poison is rankling in your veins? What will you do? “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Well, I shall not describe what you will do, though I have seen it and you must have seen it, too. Sometimes a man dies at ease, like a sheep, because he has been dosed with the opium of self-confidence. At other times the man is awakened and sees the dreadful doom to which death is driving him and starts back and shrinks from the wrath to come and cries and shrieks—and perhaps swears that he will not die! And yet die he must—dragged down to that place where he must lift up his eyes to see nothing that can give him hope—nothing that can take away the sharpness of his anguish.

I leave this point. God make it a caution to many now present. Some of you men and women here may be nearer death than you dream of. I wish you would answer the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

VI. But now I intend to use the question as EXCITING MEDITATION in the breasts of those who have given their hearts to Christ and who, consequently, are prepared to die whenever the summons may come. Well, what do we mean to do—how shall we behave ourselves when we come to die? I sat down to try and think this matter over, but I cannot, in the short time allotted to me, even give you a brief view of the thoughts that

passed through my mind.

I began thus, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Well, as a Believer in Christ, perhaps I may never come there at all, for there are some that will be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man and these will never die For so says the Apostle—“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.”

This thought we wish to keep ever before us. My real hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would far rather see the Master return than see the messenger, Death. I regulate my life as one who is looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man. I will not pay more attention to the servant than to the Lord of All. “Come, Lord Jesus! Yes, come quickly,” is the prayer of our hearts continually. And as the bride of Christ, we ought to have our hearts filled with rapture at the thought of His return to claim us as His own. If He sends for us, “It is well.” But best of all, if He comes Himself again the second time without sin unto salvation. A sweet truth, which we place first in our meditation. I may not sleep, but I must and shall be changed!

Then I thought again, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” I may go through it in the twinkling of an eye. Remember that good man who some time ago was getting ready to preach as usual, but the sermon was never delivered on earth? I mean the President of the Wesleyan Conference—how speedily was he taken to his rest! And how happy it is just to close one’s eyes on earth and open them in Heaven! Such, also was the death of one of God’s aged servants, Mr. Alleine, who had battled well for the Truth of God. He was suddenly taken ill and was advised to retire to bed. “No,” he said, “but I will die in my chair. And I am not afraid to die.”

He sat down and only had time to say, “My life is hid with Christ in God,” and he closed his eyes with his own hands and fell asleep. When Ananias, a martyr, knelt to lay his white head upon the block, it was said to him as he closed his eyes to receive the stroke, “Shut your eyes a little, Old Man, and immediately you shall see the light of God.” I could envy such a calm departing. Sudden death, sudden Glory! Taken away in Elijah’s chariot of fire—with the horses driven at the speed of lightning so that the spirit scarcely knows that it has left the clay before it sees the brightness of the beatific vision! Well, that may take away some of the alarm of death—the thought that we may not be even a moment in the swelling of Jordan!

Then again, I thought if I must pass through the swelling of Jordan, yet the real act of death takes no time. We hear of suffering on a dying bed. The suffering is all connected with life, it is not death. The actual thing called death, as far as we know, does not cost a pang—it is the life that is in us that makes us suffer—death gives one kind pin’s prick and it is all over. Moreover, if I pass through the swelling of Jordan, I may do so without suffering any pain. A dying bed is sometimes very painful with certain diseases, and especially with strong men it is often hard for the body and soul to part. But it has been my happy lot to see some deaths so extremely pleasing that I could not help remarking that it were worth while living only for the sake of dying as some have died!

We have seen consumption for instance—how gently it takes down the frame very often. How quietly the soul departs. And in old age and debility how easily the spirit seems to get away from the cage that was broken, which only needed one blow and the imprisoned bird flies straight away to its eternal resting place! Well, then, as I cannot tell in what physical state I may be when I come to die, I just tried to think again, how shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? I hope I shall do as others have done before me who have built on the same Rock and had the same promises to be their succor.

They cried, “Victory!” So shall I, and after that die quietly and in peace. If the same transporting scene may not be mine, I will at least lay my head upon my Savior’s bosom and breathe my life out gently there. You have a right, Christian, to expect that as other Christians die, so shall you. How will you die? Why, you will die as your sainted mother did! You will die as your father did. When the time came for the “silver cord to be loosed and the golden bowl to be broken, for the pitcher to be broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern,” the pitcher was broken and the cord loosed and their spirits went to God who gave them. How will you die?

Why, as I mused on this I took down my little book of “Promises,” for I thought I shall certainly do as God says I shall. Well, how is that? “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you.” And again, “Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And again, “He shall swallow up death in victory.” And again, “He shall make all your bed in your sickness.” And yet again, “Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God. I will never leave you nor forsake you.” You know what a many dying pillows God has made for His dear people in the hour of their departure! “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, manfully, patiently, if God shall keep His promise as we know He will!

Now let me speak to you all again—I mean you that are in Christ. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Why, you will do as a man does who has had a long day’s walk and he can see his home. You will clap your hands. You will sit down upon the next milestone with tears in your eyes and wipe the sweat from your face and say, “It is well, it is over. Oh how happy it is to see my own roof-tree and the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell. I shall soon be at Home—at Home forever with the Lord.”

How will we do? Why we will do as a soldier does when the battle is fought! He takes off his armor, stretches himself out at length to rest. The battle is all over. He forgets his wounds and reckons up the glory of the

victory and the reward which follows. So will we! We will begin to forget the wounds and the garments rolled in blood and we will think of the “crown of life that fades not away.” How will we do in the swelling of Jordan? We will do as men do when they launch for a foreign country. They look back upon those they leave behind and wave their handkerchiefs as long as they can see them—but they are soon gone.

And we will bid adieu to dear ones. They shall have the tears, but we shall have the joy—for we go to the islands of the blest, the land of the hereafter, the home of the sanctified—to dwell with God forever! Who will weep when he starts on such a voyage and launches on such a blessed sea? What will we do when we come into the swelling of Jordan? Why I think, dear Friends, we shall then begin to see through the veil and to enjoy the Paradise of the blessed which is ours forever! We will make that dying bed a throne and we will sit and reign there with Christ Jesus! We will think of that river Jordan as being one tributary of the river of Life which flows at the foot of the jasper Throne of the Most High!

We will live in the land of Beulah on the edge of Jordan with our feet in the cold stream, singing of the better land. We will hear the songs of angels as celestial breezes bring them across the narrow stream. And sometimes we will have in our bosom some of the spices from the Mountains of Myrrh which Christ shall give us across the river. And when we come to die, what will we do in the swelling of Jordan? Why we will try and bear our dying testimony—

*“My joyful soul on Jordan’s shore,  
Shall raise one Ebenezer more.”*

Oh, that was a grand thing when Joshua said to the twelve men, “Take up twelve stones and set them down in the midst of Jordan where the priests’ feet stood still. And take up twelve other stones and set them up on the other side of Jordan, where the children of Israel first trod the promised shore.” You and I will do this—we will leave twelve stones in the midst of Jordan. They shall tell our friends and kindred here of the good words we said, the adieu we gave them and the joyful hopes which cheered us—the song we sang when death began to stay our throat. And then we will raise another Ebenezer in Heaven!

There shall be twelve stones there that will tell the angels and the principalities of the love which cleft the Jordan and brought us through it as on dry land. This is how we will do in the swelling of Jordan! We are not looking forward to death with any fear, with any dread. When we get home tonight we shall begin to take off our garments one by one. We shall not shed a tear. Nor shall we when we come to die—

*“Since Jesus is mine, I will not fear undressing, But gladly put off these garments of clay. To die in the Lord is a comfort and blessing, Since Jesus to Glory through death led the way.”*

This is how we shall do in the swelling of Jordan—take off our garments to put on the celestial robes. As the bridegroom longs for the marriage day, and as the bride waits until she is joined unto her husband in wedlock, even so our spirits wait for God. As the exile pants to be delivered and the galley slave to be separated from his oar, so we wait to be set free for Glory and immortality! As she that mourns her absent lord pines for his return. As the child longs to reach his father’s house and to see his father’s face, so do we!—

*“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay,  
Each moment listening for His voice,  
‘Make haste and come away.’ ”*

I must finish, for time has gone. But I meant to have said a word or two by way of warning. I can only do so now briefly, abridging them and compressing the thoughts as tightly as I can. “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” may well be used by way of warning. I think, dear Friends, you ought to ask yourselves one question. Some of you never think of dying and yet you should. You say you may live long—you may— and you may not. If there were a great number of loaves upon this table and you were to eat one every day and if you were told that one of those loaves had poison in it, I think you would begin every one with great caution. And knowing that one of them would be your death, you would take each up with silent dread.

Now you have so many days and in one of these days there is the poison of death. I do not know which one. It may be tomorrow. It may not be until many a day has gone. But I think you ought to handle all your days with holy jealousy. Is not that a fair parable? If it is, then let me ask you to think upon the question, “How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” You grant that you will die and you may die soon. Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do at last?

A man goes into an inn and as soon as he sits down he begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed. There is no delicacy in season which he forgets to request. There is no luxury which he denies himself. He stays at the inn for some time. By-and-by there comes the bill and he says, “Oh, I never thought of that—I never thought of that!” “Why,” says the landlord, “here is a man who is either a born fool or else a thief! What? Never thought of the reckoning—never thought of settling-day!” And yet this is how some of you live! You have this and that and the other thing in this world’s inn, (for it is nothing but an inn), and you have soon to go your way and yet you have never thought of settling-day!

“Well,” says one, “I was casting up my accounts this morning.” Yes, I remember a minister making this remark when he heard of one that cast up his accounts on Sunday. He said, “I hope that is not true, Sir.” “Yes,” he said, “I do cast up my accounts on Sunday.” “Ah, well,” he said, “the Day of Judgment will be spent in a similar manner—in casting up accounts and it will go ill with those people who found no other time in

which to serve themselves except the time which was given them that they serve God.”

You have either been a dishonest man, or else you must be supremely foolish to be spending every day in this world’s inn and yet to be ignoring the thought of the great day of account! But remember, though you forget it, God forgets not. Every day is adding to the score. Photographed in Heaven is every action that you perform. Your very thoughts are photographed upon the eternal mind. And in the day when the book shall be opened it will go ill with you. Perhaps you will say, as one did in the Book of Kings, “Well, I was busy here and there. I was looking after my family and my property. I was looking after politics. I was seeing after such-andsuch an investment. And my soul is gone.”

Yes, but that would not bring it back again. And what shall it profit you, though you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? It is no business of mine what becomes of you, except this—I do desire to talk with you at all times, that if you perish it may not be laid at my door. What would you say to that soldier who should be told by his commanding officer to fight with the foe on the field of battle and the so-called soldier were to reply, “I don’t know anything about battle or fighting. I never thought of the battlefield, I can do anything but fight”?

The general would be sorely amazed. He would want to know what the soldier lived for, if it were not to fight and defend his country in the hour of his country’s need. What do we live for if it is not to prepare for a hereafter life and for the day for which all days were made? What? Are we sent into this world and told that we are to “prepare to meet our God,” and we do everything else but that one thing? This will not be wise. And when the Lord of the whole earth shall come out of His place to judge the sons of men, bitterly shall we rue our folly!

Be wise now! Remember this and consider your latter end. What words shall I use to urge you to consider the subject and take my warning? Is Heaven a place you would like to enter? Is Hell a place you would like to avoid, or will you make your bed in it forever? Are you in love with eternal misery that you run to it so madly? Oh, stop! Turn! Turn! Why will you die? I do pray you stop and consider. Consideration does no man harm. Second thoughts here are for the best. Think and think and think again and oh, may God lead you, through thinking, to feel your danger and may you then accept that gracious remedy which is in Christ Jesus!

For whoever believes in Him is not condemned! Whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Sin is forgiven, the soul is accepted, the spirit is blessed the moment it trusts the Savior. Before I close the subject I must guide your thoughts to what is the true preparation for death. Three things present themselves to my mind as being our duty in connection with the dying hour. First seek to be washed in the Red Sea of the dear Redeemer’s blood. Come in contact with the death of Christ and by faith in it you will be prepared to meet your own. Without giving an opinion upon the merit of that system of medicine which professes to cure diseases by producing an effect upon the system akin to the original malady, or as they put it, “like curing like,” we recommend it in spiritual things.

Come into union with Christ’s death and that will take away the evil and sting of your own. Be buried with Him in Baptism unto death and have part with Him in the reality symbolized in that blest ordinance and you will not dread Jordan’s swellings if the full tide of the Redeemer’s blood has rolled over you so that you are washed and clean. If guilt is on your conscience, it will be as a millstone round your neck and you will sink to endless woe! But if the love of Jesus is in your heart, it will buoy up your head and keep you safe so that although heart and flesh fail you, you will have God to be the strength of your heart and your portion forever!

Again, learn of the Apostle Paul to “die daily.” Practice the duty of selfdenial and mortifying of the flesh till it shall become a habit with you and when you have to lay down the flesh and part with everything, you will be only continuing the course of life you have pursued all along. No wonder if dying should prove hard work if you are completely unused to it in thought and expectation! If Death comes to me as a stranger, I may be startled—but if I have prepared myself to receive him, he may come and knock at my door and I shall say, “I am ready to go with you, for I have been expecting you all my life.”

How beautiful this expression of the Apostle, “I am ready to be offered up and the time of my departure is at hand.” He was waiting for death as for a friend, and when it came I am sure he was well pleased to go. He tells us he had “a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” Even so may we learn to look at the time when we shall hear the summons, “Come up higher,” as to a time to be longed for rather than dreaded. Learn to submit your will to God’s will daily. Learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of the Cross so that when the last conflict comes it may find you able, by the Grace of God, to bear the brunt of the final contest with unflinching courage.

And as the last preparation for the end of life, I should advise a continual course of active service and obedience to the commands of God. I have frequently thought that no happier place to die in could be found than one’s post of duty. If I were a soldier I think I should like to die as Wolfe died—with victory shouting in my ear! Or as Nelson died in the midst of his greatest success. Preparation for death does not mean going alone into the chamber and retiring from the world, but active service—“doing the duty of the day in the day.”

The best preparation for sleep, the healthiest soporific, is hard work and one of the best things to prepare us for sleeping in Jesus is to live in

Him an active life of going about doing good. The attitude in which I wish Death to find me is with light trimmed and loins girt—waiting and watching—at work, doing my allotted task and multiplying my talent for the Master’s Glory. Idlers may not anticipate rest, but workers will not be unwilling to welcome the hour which shall hear the words, “It is finished.”

Keep your eye upon the recompense of the reward. Lay up treasures in Heaven and thus you will be ready to cross the stream and enter the beloved land where heart and treasure have gone beforehand to prepare the way. Washed in the blood of Christ! Accustomed to submit to whatever God wills and to find our pleasure in doing His will on earth as we hope to do it in Heaven! Joined to a life of holy service I am persuaded that we shall be prepared with one of old to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” And with him, calmly and joyfully, to anticipate the crown which fades not away. God bring you to this point, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

TO MY READERS —*DEAR FRIENDS,*Refreshed in body and mind I am on my way homeward to my pulpit and my work. I trust that my absence from labor, so profitable to my own health, may prove to be no loss to you from the stores which I have gathered in my traveling. It is no small strain upon a man’s mental powers to preach to the same people and to publish the sermons for eleven years consecutively. In time the mind which continually labors ceases to be fresh and vigorous and craves for rest. The soil without fallow grows poor. Rest is true medicine.

That rest, I bless God, I have been enabled to enjoy in the most agreeable and instructive manner and trust that it will enable me, by Divine assistance, to avoid the sameness and repetition which are sure signs of exhaustion of mind and poverty of thought. To be in the very best condition to be used of God is my heart’s desire. I would be a bow well-strung. An arrow sharpened by the King. He who works for God should seek to do his work well and should strive to be fit for labor. To feed the saints and gather in Christ’s blood-bought wanderers is my highest ambition resting or working—my eye is on this.

The most indefatigable must sometimes submit to rest in order to avoid being laid aside altogether. But work is the happiest and best state for Believers. And I feel that it is so. Oh that we, like the spirits before the Throne, could serve God day and night without sin or ceasing! May I beg a continued interest in my readers’ earnest prayers. And may I hope that if ever they receive a blessing in reading my discourses they will kindly introduce them to their friends and neighbors. Yours to serve in the Gospel, Bell Alp, Switzerland, June 16th, 1865 *C. H. SPURGEON.*

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THE CAST-OFF SASH  
NO. 1706

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

**“Thus said the Lord unto me, Go and get a linen sash, and put it around your waist, and put it not in water. So I got a sash, according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, Take the sash that you  
acquired, which is around your waist,  
and arise, go to the Euphrates, and  
hide it there in a hole of the rock. So I went, and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take the sash from there, which I commanded you to hide there. Then I went to the Euphrates, and  
dug, and took the sash from the place  
where I had hid it: and, behold, the  
sash was marred, it was profitable for  
nothing. Then the word of the Lord came  
unto me, saying, Thus says the Lord,  
After this manner will I mar the  
pride of Judah, and the great  
pride of Jerusalem. This evil people,  
who refuse to hear My words, who follow  
the dictates of their hearts and  
walk after other gods, to serve  
them, and to worship them, shall even  
be as this sash, which is good for nothing.  
For as the sash clings to the waist of a man,  
so have I caused to cling unto Me the whole  
house of Israel and the whole house of  
Judah, says the Lord; that they might  
be unto Me for a people, and for a  
name, and for a praise, and for  
a glory: but they would not hear.”  
Jeremiah 13:1-11.**

GOD’S servants, in olden times, were very anxious to be understood when they spoke. They were not content because the people listened to them, or because they were to their hearers as “a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.” They reckoned the people’s approval of their style to be proof of its failure. Had it wounded their hearts, it would not have gratified their tastes. They wanted the Truth of God to go home to men, so that they could no longer discuss modes of speech, or methods of action, but would be compelled to remember the message and feel its force. They reckoned that they had done nothing unless they riveted attention, excited thought and impressed the heart.

Oh that all preachers were as solemnly in earnest in all their addresses as Jeremiah was—we might then hope to see more true conversions and less of the flimsy religion of the day! The people of Israel and Judah were so sunk in thoughtlessness that it was absolutely necessary to do something more than speak. Prophet after Prophet had spoken, “but they would not hear.” Even though Jeremiah, the most plaintive of all the Prophets, spoke in such melting tones that it must have been difficult to turn away from him with indifference, yet they remained so hardened that God described them as, “this evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts.”

Though the Prophet wept, entreated and persuaded, yet they regarded him not, but turned on their heels and went, each one, his own way to his merchandise, to his idolatry, to his adultery, or to his oppression. Therefore the Lord bade His servants add to their speech certain symbols which the people would see with their eyes, which would be talked about as strange things and so, would excite attention and command consideration. Perhaps, by this means the Lord would extort from some of them a deeper thought, and bring them penitently to their knees. It is better for preachers to do odd things than for men to be lost!

If plain talk fails, we may even use emblems and signs, for we cannot let the careless ones perish without another attempt to get at them. Oh that by any means we might save some! In many instances the Prophets were told to do singular things and among the rest was this—Jeremiah must take a linen sash, put it about his waist and wear it there till the people had noticed what he wore and how long he wore it. This sash was not to be washed—this was to be a matter observed of all observers—for it was a part of the similitude. Then he must make a journey to the distant river Euphrates and take off his sash and bury it there. When the people saw him without a sash, they would make remarks and ask what he had done with it, and he would reply that he had buried it by the river of Babylon.

Many would count him mad for having walked so far to get rid of a sash—250 miles was certainly a great journey for such a purpose! Surely he might have buried it nearer home, if he must bury it at all. There was the Jordan—he might have gone to its bank, dug a hole and hid the garment there, if he thought it well to do so. There would be a good deal of talk about Jeremiah’s eccentric conduct, but the more thoughtful would endeavor to spell out his meaning, for they would feel sure that he meant much by it. Soon the Prophet goes a second time to the Euphrates and they say one to another—The Prophet is a fool! The spiritual man is mad! See what a trick he is playing. Nearly a thousand miles the man will have walked in order to hide a sash and to dig it up, again! What will he do next?

Whereas plain words might not have been noticed, this little piece of acting commanded the attention and excited the curiosity of the people. Blame us not if we sometimes dramatize the Truth of God—we must win men’s hearts—and to do so we dare even run the risk of being called theatrical! Jeremiah might have been ridiculed as an actor, but he would not have fretted much under the charge if he saw that he had succeeded in teaching the people the Truth which God would have them learn. When our young folks cannot learn by books, we try the kindergarten method, and we will sooner teach them by toys than leave them ignorant! Even so was it with the old Prophets. They would use emblems rather than leave the people in the dark.

The record of this singular transaction has come to us and we know that, as a part of Holy Scripture, it is full of instruction. Thousands of years will not make it so antique as to be valueless! The Word of the Lord never becomes old so as to lose its vigor—it is still as strong, for all Divine purposes, as when first of all Jehovah spoke it! This Bible is the oldest of instructors and yet it wears the dew of its youth! Like the sea, it is ancient as the ages, but time has written no furrow on its brow. It is always venerable, yet ever novel—eternal, yet always fresh. Even the symbol of Jeremiah, which was so strikingly adapted to his age and time, is quite as well suited to this present year of Grace. May the Holy Spirit give us all instruction thereby.

I. And, first, in our text we have AN HONORABLE EMBLEM of Israel and Judah. We may say, in these days, an emblem of the Church of God. I say it is an honorable emblem. I hardly know of one which is more so except when the Church is called a Crown of Glory, or a Royal Diadem, or, better still, the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife. The people were compared to a linen sash with which the Prophet, in the type, girt himself, but which God explains to be His sash, “for as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused to cling unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, says the Lord.”

Notice first, then, that God had taken this people to be bound to Himself. He had taken them to be as near to Him as the sash is to the Oriental when he binds it about his waist. The eastern merchant or worker does not go out without his sash—it is an essential part of his dress, keeping all the rest together—and so the Lord declares that He had taken His people and had bound them about Himself to be near to Him and fastened about Him, so that He would not go forth without them. Often He speaks of them as “a people near to Me.” Had they acted as they should have done, so as to be not only the natural but the spiritual seed of Israel, they would have enjoyed what every true Believer may enjoy, namely clinging unto God as a sash clings unto a man, for the Lord’s own sanctified ones are bound unto God by God, Himself, so as never to be torn away from Him.

I invite you, beloved of the Lord, to consider your choice privilege in thus being, as it were, girt about the waist of God. It is a wonderful metaphor. In infinite condescension the Lord has put it so—the Believer’s place is near his God in intimate, continuous, open fellowship. What can be more intimately associated with a man’s most vital parts than his belt? What can be nearer to the life of God than His living people? The traveler in the East takes care that his sash shall not go unfastened—he girds himself securely before he commences his work or starts upon his journey, and God has bound His people round about Him so that they shall never be removed from Him. “I in them,” says Christ, even as a man is in his belt.

“Who shall separate us?” says Paul. Who shall ungird us from the heart and soul of our loving God? “They shall be Mine, says the Lord.” They are His and always shall be His! Neither shall any tear them away from Him, for by Covenant and by promise are they bound up with the life of God. Yet remember that there are many who, like the Jewish people, bear the name of Israel, but they are not the true Israel. They are bound about God nominally, as it were, but yet they are not spiritually united to Him. And concerning such, this parable tells us much that is worthy of solemn consideration. May the Holy Spirit warn all professors by this instructive image! If we are, indeed, what we profess to be, then we shall cling to God forever, as it is written, “I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me.” Our faith will encompass Christ our Lord! Our love will embrace Him! Our patience will surround Him! Our hope will encircle Him world without end!

In all our service we shall endeavor to cling fast to God. If anything comes between us and God, it will be our sorrow, a trouble not to be endured. Nothing shall seduce the faithful from their hold upon God, for He who bound them about Himself will allow no enemy to unloose His sash. Whatever the world may do by way of bribe, or by way of threats, we shall hold fast to Him and shall not let Him go! And all for this reason—that unchanging Love and infinite Wisdom have bound us too fast for us to be unloosed again. Because the Lord’s own love has bound us to Himself, therefore we bind ourselves to Him by steadfast Covenant—

*“Loved of our God, for Him again  
With love intense we burn!  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
We choose Him in return.”*

And, as nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, so nothing shall separate our love from God whom we love in Christ Jesus our Lord!

What a privilege this is—that the Lord should cause us to cling to Him, to be to Him for a people, for a name, for a praise and for a glory! Pardon me if I speak feebly, my heart loses utterance in contemplating the gracious imagery here set before us. But Jeremiah’s sash was a linen one—it was the sash peculiar to the priests, for such was the Prophet. He was “the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth.” Thus the type represents chosen men as bound to God in connection with sacrifice. The people of the Lord are the very sash of the Most High in this sense, that if there is priestly work to do, He puts us about Him and makes us to be the instruments of this hallowed service.

For us, our blessed Lord girt Himself with a linen sash! For us, He, even now, is girt about the paps with a golden sash and now, for Him, we, also, become priests and kings unto God and His continued priestly work among men is done by us. I mean, not by ministers, alone, but by all the inheritance of God—by all the blood-washed ones, by all the regenerate ones—for you are “a royal priesthood, a peculiar people.” God has made His people to be “a nation of priests” and it is ours to offer sacrifice to God continually, the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. We know of no order of priests, save the whole body of the faithful, who present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

That is why a linen sash was specified rather than any other. We are bound to the Most High, for solemn priesthood, to minister among the sons of men holy things. The Lord Jesus is now blessing the sons of men as Aaron blessed the people—and we are the sash with which He girds Himself in the act of benediction by the Gospel. The sash is also used by God always in connection with work. When eastern men are about to work in real earnest, they gird up their loins. Our garments in this country are close-fitting and convenient, but the Oriental’s robes would always be in his way whenever he had work to do if he did not tightly strap them around him.

Whenever we read of earnest work to be done we read of this sash—so when God comes to do work among the sons of men, we always hear of this sash, which sash we are, or may be, if we are unto God what we ought to be. When the Lord works righteousness in the earth, it is by means of His chosen ones. When He publishes salvation and makes known His Grace, His saints are around Him. When sinners are to be saved, it is by His people. When error is to be denounced, it is by our lips that He chooses to speak. When His saints are to be comforted, it is by those who have been comforted by His Holy Spirit and who, therefore, tell about the consolations which they have, themselves, enjoyed. The sash of the Lord’s workday robes is His people!

He says, “Gather My people unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.” When He comes—not to Judgment, for that is His strange work—but for mercy and salvation, then He comes girt about with His redeemed! Blessed are they whose happy lot it is to be connected with God in His sacred acts and in all His glorious work of salvation! I cannot explain my deep emotion, but my heart would utter weighty words if it could talk without my lips, for I am awe-stricken at the bare idea of our being used as the sash of the Divine Strength, clinging unto God as a sash cleaves unto the waist of a man! How blessed a thing it is to be bound to God, bound for hallowed service, being set apart for the Master’s most personal and honorable use! Blessed are you who were once worthless and useless, but are now made so precious in His sight that you are bound around Him for His use in the highest exercises of His Grace among the sons of men!

Moreover, the sash was intended for ornament. It does not appear that it was bound about the priest’s waists under his garments, for if so, it would not have been seen and would not have been an instructive symbol—this sash must be seen, since it was meant to be a type of a people who were to be unto God, “for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.” Is not this wonderful beyond all wonder, that God should make His people His Glory? Yet so it is, for true Believers become an ornament unto God, adorning the doctrine of God, their Savior, in all things. Is it not written, “You shall also be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hands of your God”? Like as when a man puts on his jewels, or a prince puts on his royal attire, so does God regard His elect “as the jewels of a crown,” and to prove His value of them, He arrays Himself with His people as with a sash!

Can it be so, that God is glorified in His saints? Is it so that Christ, Himself, is admired in them that believe as well as by them that believe? Do we, after all, illustrate the magnificence of God and show to principalities and powers in the heavenly places what God can do? Yes, it is so! You can easily perceive what true glory God has in us if we are sincere. Is it not to His honor that we, who were disobedient and obstinate and hardhearted should, by His love, be subdued to the obedience of the faith? Does not this show His Glory—that we creatures, possessed of the very dangerous possession of a free will, nevertheless, without violating that will, are led to obey His commands with pleasure and delight?

Is it not to the praise of His Grace that we, who are, under some aspects, the meanest of His creatures, seeing that we have been guilty of such gross sin, are, nevertheless, set next to Himself and made to be His dear children? Next to God, the Redeemer, comes man, the redeemed! Yes, God and man are united—wondrously united in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What can more grandly set forth the adorable love and goodness of Jehovah!? What great things God has done for us, already, in having taken us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay! Let this stand as His beautiful sash—that He passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. Let this be His Divine adornment—that He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious. Hallelujah!

But how much greater things He will yet do for us! I know that He has taken us from the dunghill, but then it follows that He has set us among princes, even the princes of His people. We are not always sitting among princes, yet, but we shall be elevated to the throne before long! Our spirits, rid of this clay, shall rise up among spiritual dignities and powers, not second to the most exalted of them—and then shall an astonished universe behold the mercy of the Lord! Yet once more, when the blast of the archangel shall have awakened the sleeping dead, even these poor material bodies, made like unto Christ’s glorious body, shall share the glory of the Son of Man. Truly “it does not yet appear what we shall be” for there are great things, yet, for men—and the race of men to whom God has had a special favor shall yet be highly exalted and have dominion over all the works of His hands and He shall put all things under his feet.

In all this, the exceeding riches of Divine Grace shall be resplendent and thus man shall be as a jeweled sash unto the Lord of hosts. Oh, majesty of love! Infinity of Grace! Here seraphs may admire and adore. My Brothers and Sisters, beloved in the Lord, muse much upon this figure of a sash! Silently meditate upon it and try to understand it. We are the sash that God causes to cling unto His waist and that no mere poverty-stricken sash of a beggar, but the sash of a royal priest, worn by Him in sacrifice and labor, and regarded as His ornament and glory! Oh the splendor of Jehovah’s love to His people!

II. But now, alas, we have to turn our eyes sorrowfully away from this surpassing glory! These people who might have been the glorious sash of God, displayed in their own persons A FATAL MISSION. Did you notice it? Thus says the Lord unto Jeremiah, “Go and get you a linen sash, and put it around your waist, and put it not in water.” Ah, me! There is the mischief—the unwashed sash is the type of an unholy people who have never received the great cleansing. God is pure and holy and He will wear clean garments, but of this garment it is said, “Put it not in water.” The priests of Jehovah were continually washing, but of this sash, we read, “Put it not in water.”

Now, when a man seems to be bound to God, and to be used of God, if he has never undergone the great cleansing, he will sooner or later come to a terrible end. “If I wash you not, you have no part with Me,” is a very solemn word from the Lord Jesus, Himself. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I invite you to meditate upon this for a moment! No nearness to God can save you if you have never been washed by the Lord Jesus! No official connection can bless you if you have never been washed in His most precious blood! No matter though you may seem to be an ornament of the Church and all men may think so, and even good men may bless God for you—if you have never been washed—you are not Christ’s!

If Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, has never enabled you to say, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” then, the great cleansing having been omitted, you will be shut out of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Oh the terror of that sentence— “Put it not in water”! Surely, this is what Satan desires—his malice cannot exceed the wish that we may never be cleansed from our iniquities! How accursed are those of whom Solomon says, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” If that one, first, perfect washing has never exercised its purifying influence upon you, my Brothers, it is all in vain for you to bear the vessels of the Lord and to be thought to be great and to be eminent in His house, for you must be put away!

On the spot let each one of us pray, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” God loves purity and will not keep unholy men in nearness to Himself. Here is the alternative for all professors—you must be washed in the blood of Christ, or be laid aside—which shall it be? The Prophet was bid not to put it in water, which shows that there was not only an absence of the first washing, but there was no daily cleansing. Take heed, Beloved, that you omit not those after-washings which must follow the washing in the blood of the Lamb. When our blessed Lord took a towel and a basin and went to wash the disciples’ feet, He did not perform a superfluous action! Peter was misguided when he said “You shall never wash my feet.” It is necessary that we be washed every day. Even “if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

We are constantly defiling our feet by marching through this dusty world and every night we need to be washed. There is sin within us as well as sin outside us and even if we do not leave our chamber, but have to lie upon a sickbed all day long, impatience is quite enough to defile our feet— and we greatly need to be cleansed. The first grand washing is never repeated—that great bath does its work so effectually that the putting away of guilt is perfected once and for all and forever! When our Lord bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He offered an effectual Atonement by which all the guilt of His redeemed was eternally put away. “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”—and he that has that one washing needs not except to wash his feet.

But the foot-bath is always necessary. Stains of pilgrimage, stains of service, stains of grief, stains of pleasure, stains of our holy things—these must still be put away. What with pride, or doubt, or ill-desire, or imagination, or anger, or forgetfulness or error, we are always being defiled and always need to be put in water to undergo that washing in water by the Word of God of which the Apostle speaks. If, dear Friends, you and I live without washing, we live in a way that renders us unfit for Divine service! And have you not found it so? I know this, that if you suffer a sin to lie on your conscience, you cannot serve God aright while it is there. If you have transgressed as a child and you do not run and put your head into your Father’s bosom and cry, “Father I have sinned!” you cannot do God’s work.

The external part of it you may perform, though there will often be a great weakness even there. But as for the spiritual and vital part, it will be sadly deficient. If you try to write the epistle of life with an unwashed hand, it will tremble and every line you write will be in the shaky handwriting of paralysis. “He that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger,” but the foul hand shall wax weaker and weaker! There must be this washing or there cannot be abundant working. If you do not know yourself to be “accepted in the Beloved.” If you do not know yourself to be clean every whit, you will not be happy with God! And when you are not happy with Him, your mind will be taken off from work for Him to work for yourself. You will be thinking about your own imperfection rather than His perfection—the sin of any single day, though it will not destroy you, will grieve you.

A stone in your shoe, though almost invisible, will spoil a day’s journey. It is not a great rock to grind you to powder. It is only a little stone, but your foot will blister before you have walked many miles. Ah me, how great the pain of a single unconfessed sin! The best thing you can do is to take off your shoe at once and remove the stone before you, again, put down your foot. So it is with every little sin—if it is only a thought, if it is only a look the wrong way—go to your Father and get rid of it! Do not live a day out of fellowship with God, no, nor an hour under the Lord’s frown! You know how it is with your dear child when he has done wrong. He does not expect that you will turn him out of doors and say, “You shall not be my child,” but he does expect you to be grieved with him!

Children are believers in the “final perseverance” of parental love—they expect always to be your children—but if you are a wise father, they do not feel happy when they have done wrong. You have not, perhaps, found out their disobedience, but the kiss at night is not half as warm as usual, for they are afraid that Father will soon know of their fault and will be angry. When God deals with us as a father who has seen his child’s naughtiness, there is no peace or rest in our spirit. Even chastisement, however, is better borne than a sense of having offended. If you gave your naughty child a good whipping at once, it would comfort him, for your displeasure would be over—but as long as you do not chastise him, but only say, “No, my Child, I cannot have dealings with you while you act so. I have no word of love for you, for you are so wicked”—then the dear child will be sorely troubled until your anger is over. He will be ready to break his little heart until you forgive him and comfort him, saying, “I shall put the matter away this time, for I see you are sorry, and I hope you will not behave so badly again.”

Brethren, this holy, filial fear of the Lord is not servitude under the Law; it is not trying to be saved by what we do—it is the discipline of the Father’s house and that is what we attend to when we ask for daily washing. There was a fatal flaw about this sash—it had never been washed— and it is a fatal thing if you and I can go from day to day without being cleansed by our blessed Lord. Oh Lord, purge me by Your continual pardon! Cleanse me this day from every spot, for Your sweet mercy’s sake! But observe, once again, that the more this sash was used, the more it gathered great and growing defilement. It was a Prophet that wore it, but even with such wear the unwashed sash began to be spotted and stained. And as he might not put it into water, the more often the Prophet went out to his daily work—the more the sash was used—the more service it performed, the more worn and dirty it became.

It will be just the same with us if no water is applied and there is no application of the cleansing blood of Christ. Without the Atonement, the more we do, the more we shall sin. Our very prayers will turn into sin! Our godly things will breed evil! We shall be preaching and when we preach we shall preach our condemnation! We shall gather our class about us and talk to them of good things—and all the while there will be in our consciences the thought that we are not acting as we talk, or living as we tell them to live—and we shall be growing blacker and more defiled from hour to hour. Oh, Lord, deliver us from this! Save us from being made worse by that which should make us better! Save us from turning even our service into sin, our prayers into abominations and our Psalms into mockery! Let us be Your true people and therefore let us be washed that we may be clean, that You may gird Yourself with us.

III. Very soon that fatal flaw in the case here mentioned led, in the third place, to A SOLEMN JUDGMENT. It was a solemn judgment upon the sash, looking at it as a type of the people of Israel. First, the sash, after Jeremiah had made his long walk in it, was taken off and put away. It is an awful thing when God takes off the man that has once appeared to be on Him and lays him aside, as He did Saul when He finally gave him up and took the kingdom from him. Yes, and it is a solemn thing, also, when the Lord takes off the man that has been really bound to Him and, for a time, lays him aside and says, “I cannot use you. I cannot wear you as Mine. I cannot work with you. You can be no ornament to Me—you are defiled.” He puts away the spoiled sash—in other words, He works no longer with the backsliding professor.

This is a terrible thing to happen to any man. I would rather suffer every sickness in the list of human diseases than that God should put me aside as a vessel in which He has no pleasure, and says to me, “I cannot wear you as My sash, nor acknowledge you as Mine before men.” That would be a dreadful thing! Is there one here who has come into that condition? Has the Lord left you to your backsliding? Learn the lesson of my text! What you need, my Friend, is to be cleansed in the double stream which John of old saw flowing from the Redeemer’s riven side! You need spiritual cleansing before the Lord can put you on, again, and use you, again, and be one with you, again—and before you can be, again, unto Him a praise and a glory. While you are unclean you are dishonoring Him and He must set you aside.

After that sash was laid aside, the next thing for it was hiding and burying. It was placed in a hole of the rock by the river of the captivity and left there. Many a hypocrite has been served in that way. God has said to His servants, “Put Him out of the Church. He is defiled.” And there has been nothing heard of him any more. He may have been offended at being put aside and have gone into the world altogether—and though he once seemed to be as the very sash of God, yet he has rotted and decayed into corruption and open transgression, for the raw material of hypocrisy soon decays and turns into loathsomeness. The worst things are frequently the rot of the best things and so the worst characters grow out of those who apparently were once the best.

Thus, this sash is put away, hidden and left. God will have nothing to do with it! He has put it aside. And now the sash spoils. It was put, I dare say, where the dampness and the wet acted upon it, and so, when, in about 70 days, Jeremiah came back to the spot, there was nothing but an old rag instead of what had once been a pure white linen sash. He says, “Behold the sash was marred; it was profitable for nothing.” So, if God were to leave any of us, the best men and the best women among us would soon become nothing but marred sashes instead of being as fair white linen. Alas, for certain goodly professors that did appear to be very fine, once, what rotten old rags they come to be when they are put into the hole and left to themselves!

We have seen it. They have only been fit, at last, to be put upon the dust heap with useless things. They have fallen into such a horrible condition of mind that they can do evil without check of conscience—they have forgotten how to blush! The same persons who did run well (what hindered them?) are now found, not only sleeping in the harbors of sloth, but rioting in chambers of wantonness! The glorious sash of God, as the man seemed to be, becomes a mass of rottenness! What does the text say? Let me read the words, for I should not like to say them of myself— “Behold, the sash was marred, it was profitable for nothing.” And again in the 10th verse—“Which is good for nothing.” So may men become who have not been washed! So will they become unless God, in His infinite mercy, gives them speedily expiation through His Son, renewing by His Spirit.

I desire to profit you all and so I want to notice how true this is of the real children of God. I could speak this even weeping. There are certain real children of God whom God greatly honored at one time, so that they were as His sash. But they were proud and were soon defiled with other sins. And so the Lord has laid them aside from His service. They are still His, but He has put them under discipline—and as a part of that discipline He has banished them from His public service. They were once everywhere in the Lord’s battles, but now they are nowhere. He knows where He has put them and they will remain there till their pride is quite gone.

When the Lord has effected this purpose, His wandering servant will come back with an altered tale, and you shall hear him as he laments himself and cries—“I do not feel fit to be in God’s Church! I have walked in such a way that if I were cast off altogether it would be my just deserts. Oh that I may be forgiven.” The deep repentance of returning wanderers makes you feel that they are the children of God though they have dishonored Him—and you welcome their return, saying, “Come with us, and enjoy the means of Grace.” Alas, they answer—

*“The saints are comforted, we know,  
Within the house of prayer;  
We often go where others go,  
And find no comfort there.”*

One man sighs, “I have a Sunday school class, and I teach it, but I do not feel tenderly for the children as I once did. There is no power about me. I am a branch of the tree that appears to have no sap in it. I bear no fruit. Alas,” he cries, “I do not enjoy private prayer and when I pray, and pour out my soul before God, I do not obtain a comfortable answer! I am as one that is forgotten.” Is it at all amazing that God frowns when we disobey? The Lord will not hear those who decline to hear Him! If we are deaf to His Commandments, He will be deaf to our prayers. You have become defiled, for you have not watched your steps, and now the Lord cannot be in communion with you. You have not been careful and so the sash has become foul with public spots and private foulnesses!

And the Lord says, “I cannot use that man; I cannot be in fellowship with him. If I would, it would ruin him.” If God were to be kind and tender to His children when they are living in sin, it would encourage them in evil and they would go from bad to worse! If a Believer grieves God, he must be grieved, himself. The heavenly Father takes down the rod and though it is more pain to Him than it is to us, He will not spare us for our crying. Just because He loves us He will lay on His strokes thick and heavy, one after the other, perhaps in sharp affliction, but very often in a continuous and growing loss of all that made us happy and useful.

Alas! Alas! The sash is marred and the Lord has hid it out of His sight! Oh, what a mercy it is that the Lord can take that sash and wash it and make it as good as new, and even better than at the first! He can give back to the man his old joy with an added experience which will make him humble and tender. He can restore his former usefulness and even increase it by teaching him to deal gently with others that err and, by enabling him to prize and value the mercy of God. Did you ever get into a corner and sing that verse, “Love I much? I’ve more forgiven. I’m a miracle of Grace”? Those sweet lines have often charmed my inmost heart. I have wanted to love my Lord infinitely! I have wished that I could love Him as much as seven million hearts put together could love Him!

I would love Him as much as the whole universe could love Him! I wish I had His Father’s love to Him, for what do I not owe Him for all His wonderful mercy to me? And do you not feel the same? Are you not, also, great debtors to Sovereign Grace? If you do not at any time kindle love and gratitude, I am afraid that you are put in the hole with the sash and that you are rotting away. Sad case for you! Certain of God’s people are marvelously high-minded—they cannot sit anywhere but in the big armchair, or at the head of the table. They cannot mingle with any of us common Christians at all because they are perfect—and we are a long way from making any claim to such a degree of excellence. Some of the hymns that we are glad to sing are not good enough for them, for they cry, “We hate hymns of this style! They are so below our experience.”

These are the dons and grandees of the Court of Arrogance! When I see fine professors coming in with the seven league boots on, I am always afraid that they are not God’s children at all because I have never read of any true saints who said much in praise of themselves and I have read of so many gracious persons whose tone and temper were the very reverse of this lofty boasting! I have seen God’s poor little child like Moses in a basket on the Nile with crocodiles all round ready to devour him—and when I have looked at him, I have always noticed that which the Holy Spirit took pains to record—“Behold, the babe wept.” This was the real Moses—those crystal drops are the tokens of a goodly child! The tears of God’s babes are wonderfully precious and they have great power with Him.

The dragons of Nilus cannot devour a weeping Moses. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” When you are so weak that you cannot do much more than cry, you coin diamonds with both your eyes! The sweetest prayers God ever hears are the groans and sighs of those who have no hope in anything but His love! There is music in our moaning to His kind and tender ears. He can restore you, even though you are as the marred sash. And when He once puts you on again, you will cling to His waist more closely than ever, praying that He will bind you fast about Him. But the worst part of it—and this I finish with—is that this relates undoubtedly to many mere professors whom God takes off from Himself, laying them aside and leaving them to perish.

And what is His reason for doing so? He tells us this in the text—He says that this evil people refused to receive God’s words. Dear Friends, never grow tired of God’s Word! Never let any book supplant the Bible! Love every part of Scripture and take heed to every Word that God has spoken. Let it all be a Divine Word to you, for if not, when you begin to pick and choose about God’s Word, and do not like this, and do not like that, you will soon become like a marred sash—for the base-hearted professor is detected by his not loving the Father’s words.

Next to that, we are told that they walked in the dictates of their hearts. That is a sure sign of the hypocrite or the false professor. He makes his religion out of himself, as a spider spins a web out of his own bowels! What sort of theology it is, you can imagine, now that you know its origin! This base professor grows his theology on his own back as the snail produces her shell! He is everything to himself—his own savior, his own teacher, his own guide! He knows so much, that if the world would only sit at his feet, it would become a wonderfully learned world in a very short time, so great a Rabbi is he! When a man is so puffed up that his own imagination is his inspiration, and his obstinacy holds him fast in his own opinion, then he has become as the sash which was taken from the Prophet’s waist and put into a hole to rot away.

Upon all this there followed actual transgression—“They walked after other gods to serve them and to worship them.” This happens, also, to the base professor. He keeps up the name of a Christian for a little while and seems to be as God’s sash. But by-and-by he falls to worshipping gold, or drink, or lust. Bacchus, or Venus becomes his deity. He turns aside from the infinitely glorious God and so he falls from one degradation to another till he hardly knows himself! He becomes as a rotten sash “which profits nothing.” Neither God nor man are benefited by him. The Lord save you, dear Friends, from being found insincere in the day when He searches the heart. May He also save us from failing to be washed in the most precious blood. Is not this a fit subject for immediate and continuous prayer? See to it! The Lord bless you for His name’s sake. Amen.

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JEHOVAH HAS SPOKEN— WILL YOU NOT HEAR?  
NO. 1748

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He  
causes darkness and before your feet stumble  
upon the dark mountains and, while you  
look for light, He turns it into the shadow  
of death and makes it gross darkness. But  
if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in  
secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall  
weep bitterly and run down with tears, because  
the Lord’s flock is carried away captive.”  
Jeremiah 13:15-17.**

IN this chapter Jeremiah had proclaimed the judgment of God against His sinful people under two very striking figures. Israel had been to God what a sash is to a man—the people had been bound closely about Him in His great love and favor. But on account of their sin, the Lord would put them away and they should be hidden by the Euphrates till their beauty was marred—until, in fact, like a rotten sash, their whole state had become decayed. “Thus says the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.”

Then He spoke to them by a second parable—“Every bottle shall be filled with wine”—and he showed how God’s wrath would come upon the people to fill them with a judicial drunkenness, so that they should become drunk, and in their delirium should strive, one with another, to their mutual undoing. The Lord declared that thus He would “dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together.” Thus, under two homely but exceedingly terrible figures, Jeremiah preached the Law of God to the people, that they might be humbled under a sense of sin.

Had they but felt the force of this teaching, they would have begun to mourn for their sin and, under dread of wrath, they would have cried for mercy. Taking it for granted that this might be the case, though, alas, it did not so happen, the Lord gave to His Prophet an interval for proclaiming mercy. After those two great thunderclaps of judgment came a gracious shower of Grace. The Prophet, in what we may venture to call an evangelistic style, exhorts the people and addresses to them the characteristic Gospel precept—“Hear you, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.”

His words remind us of Isaiah’s exhortation—“Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.” And again—“Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good.” Under the Gospel, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and so Jeremiah does, as it were, in these verses preach the Gospel to the backsliding house of Judah. This is always God’s design in threatening judgment—He desires to prepare the people for His Grace!

I would take up the Prophet’s strain, by the help of the Lord, praying to be a partaker of his earnest and tender Spirit. Oh, that today those who have never heard the voice of the Lord in the inward parts of their being may hear it and live! O Holy Spirit, work to that end!

I. We will enter upon our subject at once, for there is much to speak of. The first head will be this—listen, O my Hearers, with deep attention, for THERE IS A REVELATION. Read the text—“Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken.” If the Lord had not spoken, the silence would have deepened and established your natural darkness. And if you had been inquiring after God, your heart would have cried, “Oh, that He would break this dreadful silence!” How sad would have been our state if the only way to find God depended upon our seeking Him! Shall man, by searching, find God? Who among us could reason ourselves into the knowledge of the Lord? Or imagine the thoughts of His mind?

But here you have the great source of comfort and instruction— “Jehovah has spoken.” Is not this a just call for the attention of all His creatures? The voice which we are bid to hear is a Divine voice! It is the voice of Him that made the heavens and the earth, whose creatures we are! Jehovah has spoken! If it were but the voice of Prophets apart from their Master, it might be but a slight sin to refuse what they say. But since Jehovah has spoken, shall men dare to be deaf to Him? Shall they turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven? He that spoke us into being has spoken to our being! He by whose Word the heavens stand and at whose word both Heaven and earth shall pass away, has spoken, and His voice is to the sons of men! It is God who says, “I have written to him the great things of My Law.” The sacred Scriptures are the record of what God has spoken—receive them with the reverence which they deserve as coming from God, and as being, therefore, pure truth, fixed certainty, and unerring right.

It is a Word most clear and plain, for Jehovah has spoken. He might have taught us only by the works of His hands, in which the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen. What is all creation but a hieroglyphic scroll in which the Lord has written out His Character as Creator and Provider? But since He knew that we were dim of sight and dull of comprehension, the Lord has gone beyond the symbols and hieroglyphs and used articulate speech such as a man uses with his fellows—Jehovah has spoken! A man may act before us his mind in symbols and we may fail to perceive his meaning. But when he speaks, we understand his communications by language, since such modes of expression are suitable to the human intellect.

Speech is the fit manner of commerce between mind and mind and it is, therefore, most delightful that the all-glorious Jehovah should stoop from writing in starry letters across the sky—and from mirroring His form in tempests on the sea—and speak with us as a man speaks with his friends! Jehovah is no dumb Deity—He has spoken to us in sweet and chosen words by His Spirit. Oh, when there is a testimony so clear and plain that he who runs may read, well may the Prophet exhort us, saying, “Hear you, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.” Let it not be said of us, as of the sinners long ago, “I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not.”

Moreover, I gather from the expression in the text that the Revelation made to us by the Lord is an unchangeable and abiding word. It is not today that Jehovah is speaking, but Jehovah has spoken—His voice by the Prophets and Apostles is now silent, for He has revealed all His Truth which is necessary for salvation. The Lord might fitly say to us this day, “What I have written I have written.” He changes not His Word, and, though Heaven and earth pass away, His Word abides. We are not living in a period of gradual Revelation, as some imagine—Jehovah has spoken and He opens not His mouth a second time. He has closed the canon of Scripture with a curse upon him that shall add to or take from the Words of the Book of this prophecy.

Jehovah has spoken! You have not to go on making discoveries of new Truth outside of Scripture. Your duty lies in diligently receiving the completed testimony of the Lord God, for the Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. He has fully told you your relation to your God and the way by which you may be reconciled to Him and be at peace. “Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.” Jehovah has spoken! And it is written in His Law, “You shall not add unto the word which I command you.” Beloved, this Revelation is pre-eminently a condescending and cheering word. The Lord might have trodden us down to destruction without a word when we sinned against Him! He might have left us to that natural testimony which is borne upon the face of creation and which is also reflected in the conscience of all men—and when we rejected those testimonies He might have allowed us to travel on in tenfold night.

But instead thereof, in the plenitude of His Grace, Jehovah has spoken—and be it always remembered that while of old He spoke in sundry times and different manners by the Prophets, He has in these last times spoken unto us by His Son. The very fact that the great God speaks to us by His Son indicates that mercy, tenderness, love and hope are the burden of His utterance! His Son Jesus is full of Grace and Truth and, therefore, that which He now speaks to us is not only Truth, but Grace. It is truthful Grace and gracious Truth which God speaks to us by Jesus Christ. Oh, the richness of that message—the height and depth of love which it contains! Who can refuse to listen to the heavenly music of mercy?

The Lord’s voice on the first day of creation said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And now this second voice, this voice to the spiritual world, gives us light, life, love and every necessary, conceivable, desirable gift! The words of God, as they are recorded in this Book, have a unfathomable fullness about them—they are spirit and life! In Christ, by whom He speaks, there is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge! The Prophet asked no more than was perfectly reasonable when he said, “Hear, and give ear; for Jehovah has spoken.” When the kings who dwell at the utmost ends of the earth hear that Jehovah has spoken, they would do well to quit their thrones and make a journey, like the Queen of Sheba, to hear of the Divine wisdom!

If all workmen should throw down their tools and say, “We will hear what God the Lord shall speak,” and if merchants should close their shops and counting-houses for a while and come together without delay crying, “Everything must stop till we have heard what the Lord has spoken,” would it be any more than right reason would suggest to thoughtful and right-minded men? O Sirs, if God has spoken, every ear should surrender itself to attention, for surely never could the sense of hearing be more honorably and profitably employed! Jehovah has spoken and His Word is true—“The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” There is a way of salvation arranged and determined by the Lord! It is not to be guessed at, but we are to learn it from Infallible Wisdom—Jehovah has spoken!

There is an atonement prepared, provided, designated and set forth. We have not to search for it, or add to it—Jehovah has spoken! There is no point of necessity, nor even of real interest to the heart of man but what Jehovah has spoken to it—and if there is any Truth of God upon which He has not spoken, it is because it is to His Glory to conceal the thing—and for our profit that we do not pry into it! Upon all that is essential to our full preparation for our eternal destination, Jehovah has spoken! He has said it and here it is recorded—in the volume of the Book it is written— and blessed are they that read and keep the Words of the Book of this prophecy!

II. Secondly—and I have already anticipated it—since there is a Revelation, IT SHOULD BE SUITABLY RECEIVED. If Jehovah has spoken, then all attention should be given. Yes, double attention! Incline your ears; listen diligently; surrender your soul to the teaching of the Lord God and be not satisfied till you have heard His teaching—have heard it with your whole being and have felt the force of its every truth! “Hear you,” because the Word of God comes with power. “Give ear,” because you willingly receive it. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I fear that we give far more attention to the distracting voices of the world than to the soul-satisfying voice of the God of All Grace!

How eager men are after the treasure which melts before their eyes— how they will drink in every syllable by which they may learn how to be rich! But when God speaks, who brings in both His hands eternal and abiding riches, men are deaf as the adder, careless as the beasts of the field! He says, “I have called and you refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded.” Is this right or wise? Surely, if Jehovah speaks, we are bound by all that is just, good and grateful to wait in reverent silence till we know His mind! Let a general hush go through the universe and let all ears, with solemn reverence, await the sound of the voice of the Lord!

Then it is added, as if by way of directing us how suitably to hear this Revelation—“Give glory to Jehovah your God.” There ought to be in hearing and reading the Revelation of God a constant giving of glory to the Lord. His speaking is a manifestation of His Glory as when the sun rises his light is spread abroad. You and I are to reflect that light even as the valleys rejoice in his brightness of the noontide. Let us stand, as it were, this morning, to be shone upon by the Lord—ready, each one of us—to reflect that light which comes from on high! Give glory to God at once by worthily hearing His Gospel. How is that to be done? Stand still and hear the Word of the Lord! Glorify the Lord by accepting whatever He says to you as being infallibly true! Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His Prophets, so shall you prosper. Know what the Lord has said and let it stand to you as sure and steadfast truth. Seek for no further reasons to sustain your faith, but let, “Thus says the Lord” stand to you in the place of all arguments.

To me, a sentence of Scripture is the essence of logic, the proof positive, the Word of God which may not be questioned. Eyes and ears may be doubted, but not the written Word, inspired of the Holy Spirit! Blessed are those who sit at Jesus’ feet and receive His Words. It is our wisdom to know nothing of ourselves, but to be taught of the Holy Spirit—to think nothing of ourselves, but to have the mind of God—and think after Him whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! We give glory to God in reference to Revelation when we receive it, every jot and tittle of it, and bow our minds before it.

In these days this virtue is lightly esteemed, for the Savior’s Words are still true—“He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings.” In all its length and breadth, whatever the Lord says, we believe, and we desire to know neither less nor more than He has spoken. We must receive the Word of God, however, in a hearty and honest manner so as to act upon it. We must therefore repent of the sin which the Lord condemns and turn from the way which He abhors. We must loathe the vice which He forbids and seek after the virtue which He commands. We give glory to God when we penitently confess that we have broken His holy Law and grieve because we have done so. Did not Joshua bid Achan give glory to God by confession of his sin? And so must we.

By confession we glorify God’s Justice, Omniscience and Truth—and yet further we glorify His mercy when, confessing sin, we ask for pardon through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus should every human being receive the Revelation of God bringing forth fruits necessary for repentance. Your light has shone upon me, O my God, and therefore I see my darkness! O remove it! You have lit a candle, and by its light I discover my spots and stains. I acknowledge them in Your sight—“Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge.” Thus humbling ourselves on account of sin, we receive the Word of God aright, and give God glory.

But we must go further than repentance and the acceptance of the Truth of God as Truth. We must further reverence the gracious voice of God when He bids us believe on Christ and live. He has couched that message of love in so blessed a form that he who does not accept it must be wantonly malicious against God and against his own soul. For the Lord does not demand that by penances, acts of mortification and feelings of misery and despair we are to purge ourselves from sin—He has graciously declared—“He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” If Jehovah has spoken in such a manner; if the sum and substance of what He has spoken is that, “God has set forth His Son Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” then we must and will listen to Him! He says, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

If this is the heavenly Word of God, how can we refuse to hear it with our whole hearts? Give glory to the Lord by answering, “Lord, I joyfully obey Your call! I am glad of a Savior, glad of the atoning blood, glad to cast myself at those dear feet that were nailed to the Cross for me—and to find, in the Lord Jesus, my salvation and my all.” This is the way in which we ought to receive this Revelation and we ought to go on to complete obedience. We should humbly inquire, “Lord, what further would You have me know; what further would You have me do? Is there still left in me a part of my nature unsubdued? I would humble myself under Your mighty hand. Is there in me anything unrenewed, of pride revolting, or of the flesh rebelling? Then conquer it in me, for I desire Your Word to be my rule, my law, my guide. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! I wish in all things to be obedient to Your gracious will.”

There is no part of God’s Word at which the human mind should kick. If our hearts were in a right state we would fling open all the doors of our mind and say, “Come in, O sacred Truth, come in! You are welcome to my heart of hearts since you come from my God.” If Jehovah speaks, ought we not, instead of quibbling, questioning, disputing and raising difficulties, just say, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”? When the Lord says to us, “Seek you My face,” our heart should at once reply,” Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

I think that point is clear. There is a Revelation and that Revelation ought to be suitably received.  
III. But thirdly, PRIDE IN THE HUMAN HEART PREVENTS SUCH A RECEPTION. The text runs, “Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken.” And further on the Prophet says, “If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” The Prophet, here, puts his finger upon the blot. Why is it, my dear Hearers, that there are any among you this day who have heard God’s Word, year after year, and yet have not received it? The secret reason is your pride! Perhaps pride prompts you indignantly to deny the accusation. In some, it is the pride of intellect. They do not wish to be treated like children—they are not content to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child—and so, when Jesus says, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven,” they reply that they intend to think out a Gospel for themselves.  
To lay the inventiveness of thought on one side and simply to believe what Jesus teaches is not to their mind—they will not humble themselves to a fact so little self-exalting. Well, Sirs, if you shut the door of the Kingdom against yourselves because you are too wise to enter—be this known to you—that the poor have the Gospel preached to them and they receive it! God has hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes. God has chosen things that are despised and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are—that no flesh may glory in His Presence! If your wisdom is greater than the wisdom of God, it were better for you to be foolish! If you will destroy yourself to indulge your own conceit, well, so it must be, but the day shall come in which your regret shall know neither measure nor end! Oh, let none of us be so proud as to lift up ourselves in opposition to that which Jehovah has spoken!  
In some others it is the pride of self-esteem. “No,” they say, “this Gospel which we have heard so often is too simple! We are capable of something more elaborate. It humbles us; it represents us as fallen; as depraved. It says that we can do nothing; it lays us in the very dust; it makes nothing of us—it excludes all hope of boasting and glorying—we cannot stoop so low! Salvation by Divine Grace, is it? Then Free Grace, Sovereign Grace is not to our mind! We care not to be saved like paupers! We care not to be freely forgiven as those who have nothing to pay. That no composition will be accepted, not even a farthing in the pound of our own merit—it is a doctrine too lowering to our dignity!” They set the Gospel on one side because it sets them on one side. They are too great to be saved!  
O Sirs, if you must be proud, at least do not throw away your souls to indulge that propensity! Surely, something less costly may suffice for a sacrifice to the demon of vainglory! It is a dreadful thing that men should think it better to go to Hell in a dignified way than to go to Heaven by the narrow road of a child-like faith in the Redeemer! Those who will not stoop even to receive Christ, Himself, and the blessings of eternal life, deserve to perish! God save us from such folly! It may well make us weep to think that any man should be so far gone astray from right reason as to throw away eternal bliss in order to walk with haughty steps through this poor life.  
Some have a pride of self-righteousness. They are good. They have kept the Commandments from their youth up. They have attended to religion; they have seen to it that all rites and ceremonies have been duly performed upon them and they thank God that they are not as other men are! This righteousness of theirs is a garment respectable enough for them to wear and, therefore, they reject the righteousness of God! O you proud fool! I would to God you knew that you are naked, poor and miserable! I would to God you understood that your fig-leaf righteousness will never cover your nakedness in the sight of God, for if you knew this, you would seek after the perfect righteousness of Christ and be robed and adorned with it! While sin ruins many in the outside world, I fear selfrighteousness ruins more among those who attend places of worship. They say, “we see,” and, therefore, their eyes are not opened. They cry, “we are clean,” and, therefore, they are not washed from their iniquity. Oh that they would cease from this vanity and give glory to the Lord their God instead of taking glory themselves! How can they believe while they seek honor, one from another?  
In some, too, it is the pride of self-love. They cannot deny their lusts. To cut off right-hand sins and pluck out right-eye iniquities cannot be endured by them. Their hearts are set upon a certain evil pleasure and they cannot give it up. The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands of those who receive it that they shall be saved not in their sins, but from their sins! It comes to give us renewal as well as rest, purity as well as pardon, sanctity as well as safety. But there are many who, because of their foolish selfindulgence, cannot deny themselves any seeming joy, but must fill themselves with the poisoned sweets which delight the flesh. O Friend, I wish that this pride were taken from you and that it seemed wisdom to you to deny yourself life, itself, for the present, rather than miss the hope of eternal life!  
The pride of self-will also works its share of ruin among men. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” is the cry of many beside Pharaoh! The unrenewed heart virtually says—“I shall not mind these commands. Why should I be tied hand and foot and ruled, and governed? I intend to be a free thinker and a free liver—I will not submit myself.” Just so, and you are free to lose all hope of Heaven, my Friend! Free to destroy yourself. If this is your choice, then who is to hinder you in it? I know that I cannot. Oh, that the Lord will lead you to a better mind. Would God that the Lord would change your will and renew your heart! But if you are so proud that you reject the testimony of God against yourself, then who is to blame when you fall into eternal destruction? Who is to blame but yourself?  
And so I pass from mournfully considering this great evil which prevents the Revelation of God from being properly received.  
IV. Fourthly, THERE COMES AN EARNEST WARNING. The Prophet has put it—“Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains.” I desire to explain this with deep humiliation of spirit on my own part—and with much trembling lest anyone of you should ever, by experience, know the truth of these words. Listen, my Friend, you who have rejected God and His Christ till now! You are already out of the way, among the dark mountains! There is a King’s highway of faith and you have refused it. You have turned aside to the right hand or to the left, according to your own imagination. Being out of the way of safety, you are in the path of danger even now.  
Though the sunlight shines about you and the flowers spring up profusely under your feet, yet you are in danger, for there is no safety off of the King’s road. If you will walk according to His bidding, you shall be quiet from fear of danger, for no lion shall be there, but, inasmuch as you are now your own keeper and your own law and you follow in your own ways, you are in great peril. The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. Escape, I pray you, while you may, and enter upon that one road which is strait and narrow, but leads to eternal life —the way of faith in Jesus! If you will still pursue your headlong career and choose a path for yourself, I pray you remember that darkness is hovering around you. The day is far spent! Around your soul there are already hanging mists and glooms—and these will thicken into the night-damps of bewilderment!  
Thinking, but not believing, you will soon think yourself into a horror of great darkness. Refusing to hear what Jehovah has spoken, you will follow other voices which shall allure you into an Egyptian night of confusion. You will go on meditating and carefully thinking, or criticizing and trifling till you are enveloped in a cloud of doubts, wrapped as in a dense smoke of speculation and well near smothered in exhalations of unbelief! You shall not know what to do, nor what to think, nor what to say, nor what to do with yourself, for you will have renounced your Guide and quenched your torch. At the same time, it may be there will come upon you a darkness of distress—you will be sick and sorry; you will be faint and weary; you will be tried and troubled—and your soul will see no help or deliverance.  
To which of the saints will you turn? Upon whom will you call in the day of your calamity? And who will help you? Then your thoughts will dissolve into vanity and your spirit shall melt into dismay. “Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself, and to all your friends.” You shall grope after comfort as blind men grope for the wall! And because you have rejected the Lord and His Truth, He, also, will reject you and leave you to your own devices. Meanwhile, there shall cloud over you a darkness bred of your own sin and willfulness. You shall lose the brightness of your intellect. The sharp clearness of your thought shall depart from you. Professing yourself to be wise, you shall become a fool.  
You shall no longer be able to boast of yourself because of the clearness of your judgment, but you shall find your conceptions thrown into confusion. You shall ask of others, but they shall know no more than yourself, or if they know, you shall not understand what they tell you! You shall be in an all-surrounding, penetrating blackness. Hence comes the solemnity of this warning, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness.” While as yet you have not absolutely turned away from the Truth of God and rejected God’s Word, accept it in your heart by a living faith and give Him glory, lest, by continuing a procrastinator and a halter between two opinions, you are gradually made to slide, little by little, away from the brightness of the Truth till you are shut up in a sevenfold night out of which there shall be no escape. For after that darkness there comes a stumbling, as says the text, “before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains.”  
He who is going to think out his own way apart from Revelation will meet with mysteries which he cannot surmount. There are mysteries in Revelation, but these rise before us like hills of light—while to those who trifle with the Word of the Lord there shall arise mountains of gloom. I care not what philosophy you take, whether it is old or new, openly profane or faintly sprinkled with Christianity, you will never get rid of mystery—it is essential to the limited capacity of the human mind confronted by boundless Truths of God. There must be difficulties in every man’s way, even if it is a way of his own devising. But to the man who will not accept the Light of God, these difficulties must necessarily be dark mountains with sheer abysses, pathless crags and impenetrable ravines. He has refused the path which wisdom has cast up and he is justly doomed to stumble where there is no way. Beware of encountering mysteries without guidance and faith, for you will stumble either into folly or superstition and only rise to stumble again. Those who stumble at Christ’s Cross are likely to stumble into Hell.  
There are also dark mountains of another kind which will block the way of the wanderer—mountains of dismay, of remorse, of despair. Woe to that man who finds himself traveling at midnight without a guide, without a road—and in the midst of tremendous mountains impassable to human feet! Ah, when a man comes into the land of doubt, which is a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness—how terrible his case! I say no more—thank God, my Hearers, you are not there yet! Therefore listen to Jehovah’s voice and give glory to God before He sends a thick darkness over your soul—even darkness that may be full and your feet stumble, never to rise again.  
After that stumbling there will come bitter disappointment. The man finding that he cannot discover his way, sits down awhile and says to himself, “I will wait till the moon rises, or the day dawns. Many before me have come to a pause—no doubt light will come.” He looks and looks and looks again, but all in vain, for thus says the Prophet, “While you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death.” Dread word—death! Terrible shade which death casts over men’s minds! That shadow is coming on the man as years advance and he has no light with which to dispel it. The physician cannot remove the death shadow—the disease is incurable. The sinner’s face is pale with anguish and his heart melts like wax in the midst of his insides, for the shadow now upon him chills him to the marrow of his bones!  
What will he do, now that the arrow is rankling in his heart? What will he do, now that eternal night is descending? He cowers down and waits, but nothing comes except the thickening of the death shadows—and the weeping of those whom he must leave. He is anticipating the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth which are to be his endless portion! And now a paralyzing despair seizes him, for God makes the darkness to be, “gross darkness,” black, palpable, as it were a solid thing. The man is shut up and he cannot come forth. The darkness is within the chambers of his soul! It is in his brain! It is in his heart—he is drowning in a Black Sea. This is a just ending this for one who hated the Light of God!  
Oh, I pray you, before any of you pass into that state, give glory to God and receive His Word! I beseech you believe before your doubt has utterly destroyed you! Accept the witness of God before you become hardened in skepticism. I do not know what may ever happen to me in this life— perhaps it shall come to pass that I may be visited with severe physical infirmities and possibly these may cause me mental depression and anguish. But this one thing I know, I have committed my mind, my heart, my whole intellectual nature to His keeping who has promised to preserve His own! I desire to believe nothing but what He tells me; to do nothing but what He bids me and to yield myself to no influence but that which He ordains for my direction! And, therefore, it seems to me that having done this for many a day, I can with unstaggering confidence say, at the last, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.”  
I think I may confidently hope to cast anchor forever in that haven which is no new refuge to me, but the daily travel map of my soul. Can a man be safer as to his soul’s condition than when he has ceased from depending upon himself and has taken the great Lord to be the Shepherd at whose heels he follows? What shield can so well protect you as the Divine faithfulness? Under what rock can you find such shelter as under the truthfulness of God? I am at a pass with all new ideas in religion—I will have none of them! If this grand old Book fails me, I am content to fail! If the Lord shall desert me, I resign myself to be deserted! If God lies, then there is an end of all things and we all alike flounder in chaos!  
But we tolerate no such fears. Believing in God, I am not fearful of the future. Neither dark mountains nor dark death can cause the Believer to stumble, for he cries, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” But oh, if God is true, what will become of you who will not hear Him? If the Bible is true, what must be your portion, who pretend to be wiser than the Holy Spirit? You must assuredly wander into that endless captivity from which there can be no redemption!  
V. So now I have to close, but not till I have delivered my burdened heart once more. If the people would not submit to God, the Prophet determined what he would do. THERE REMAINS FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE IMPENITENT BUT ONE RESORT. The loving Prophet cries, “If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eyes shall weep bitterly, and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock is carried away captive.” He cannot do anything more! He has no other message to deliver. He cannot hope that God will overlook their insults and invent another way of saving them! He has told them the Truth and if they refuse it, he will lay no flattering unction to their souls. He will deliver the Word of the Lord once more and if they, again, refuse, he will go home to mourn for them even as Samuel mourned for Saul when the Lord had put him away.  
Observe that he does not say in the first clause, “my eyes shall weep,” but, “my soul shall weep.” Bitter tears make red the eyes, but what must be the brine of those tears which are wept by the soul itself—a soul in anguish over willful men who persist in destroying themselves! Those soulsorrows showed themselves in floods of tears which drenched the Prophet’s cheeks, for he loved the people and could not bear to look upon the ruin which was coming upon them. Like our Lord in later times, the Prophet beheld the city and wept over it—he could do no less, he could do no more. Alas, his sorrow would be unavailing; his grief was hopeless! He could not help those who would not be helped by God!  
If they refused to hear, he does not speak to them of a “larger hope” yet to be revealed. He speaks not of “purgatory” and another season of probation, or a future Revelation which would override the present Word of God. Ah no, he loved men too well to invent for them fools’ paradises! He dared not imitate the old serpent in the garden by insinuating, “You shall not surely die.” I fear that the garments of many modern divines are steeped in the blood of souls whom they are deluding with their, “larger hope,” which is but a larger snare of Satan! Jeremiah had a brave, though tender heart—he did not bow to men and sing pretty ditties to them, as preachers, nowadays, are prone to do.  
He told them they would stumble in the darkness and that nothing remained for him but to sigh out his soul over their ruin. Let us each one learn to sympathize with this holy man—  
*“Arise, my tender thoughts, arise,  
Though torrents melt my streaming eyes!  
And you, my heart, with anguish feel  
Those evils which you cannot heal!  
See human nature sunk in shame—  
See scandals poured on Jesus’ name!  
The Father wounded through the Son;  
The world abused and souls undone!  
See the short course of vain delight  
Closing in everlasting night  
In flames that no abatement know,  
Though briny tears forever flow.”*  
Observe that the Prophet did not expect to obtain sympathy in this sorrow of his. He says, “My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” He would get quite alone, hide himself away and become a recluse. Alas, that so few even now care for the souls of men! Many ignore their danger, forgetting or else denying it. And few mourn over the ungodly and seek—

*“With cries, entreaties, tears to save,*

*To snatch them from the fiery wave.”*  
Hearts are hardened, pride is flattered, falsehoods are cried up! And what can the faithful do but seek their God and weep in secret places? Solitude and weeping are a poor solace, and yet there is no other.

This also puts a pungent salt into the tears of the godly, that the weeping can do no good, since the people refuse the one and only Remedy. Jehovah has spoken and if they will not hear Him, they must die in their sins! O Sirs, if you will not have Christ—if all the saints in the world prayed for you, yes, all the saints that ever lived, or ever shall live—if they all prayed for you and if in one great river, the tears of the whole Church flowed on forever, they could not help you nor bring you hope of salvation! You must have Christ or die! You must believe in the Lamb of God or perish forever! Does it stand so according to the Scriptures? Then none can change it! Do not dash yourselves against this rock! Fall not upon this stone!

What a burden it is that so many should cause us this unnecessary sorrow, for if men turned to God, our joy would exceed all bounds! O my Hearers, why will you distress me? Turn, turn—why will you die? What excuse can you urge for your folly in choosing to perish? What motive can be strong enough to make you leap into the fire when Christ is waiting to be gracious to you? We have labor enough in preparing and delivering our weighty messages without the added grief of seeing you reject them to your own destruction! Our throes of heart are sometimes grievous enough before we preach a sermon lest we should not preach aright—why must we be driven to this further misery?

We exhaust ourselves while pleading with you! Why should we have to sit down in sorrow because you will not believe our report? O blessed Spirit of God, touch all hearts this day, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE ETHIOPIAN  
NO. 2536

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 15, 1884.

“ **Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Jeremiah 13:23.**

Jeremiah had a friend who was a black man. Ebedmelech, the Ethiopian eunuch, had a great and tender concern for Jeremiah when he was shut up in the miry prison. He took ropes and covered them with rags that they might not cut the poor Prophet’s armpits, and drew him up out of that filthy well into which he had been cast for the Truth of God’s sake. I suppose, from the way Ebedmelech afterwards treated the Prophet Jeremiah, that they were great friends. And as we usually talk of people of whom we are fond, it was natural that Jeremiah should use the Ethiopian as an emblem. I do not know that any other Prophet did so. Perhaps there was no other Prophet who took to a Negro so thoroughly as Jeremiah did, but, anyway, he had that black man’s face imprinted on his mind and when he was speaking to the people, the Holy Spirit moved him to use a simile with which he had become familiar. I wish that every thought and experience I have ever had could be used in speaking for my Lord. I would like to never set my eyes on anyone or anything without trying to turn all to good account for the Master’s work. And if those of us who are teachers of others will only go about with our eyes open, we shall find plenty of illustrations of the Truths we have to proclaim. There will not be a black man cross our path but we shall learn something or other from him.

Let us go at once to our text and notice that it contains a question which admits of only one answer—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” Of course he cannot! And this fact suggests to us a spiritual question— Can a man who is accustomed to do evil, so change himself as to do good? Of course he cannot, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin! When we have talked over that question which admits of only one answer, I shall put another question which admits of the opposite reply. In that latter part of our subject may the Lord be pleased to send comfort to those who are despairing and who know that they can no more change their own nature than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots!

I. First, we are to consider a question which admits of only one answer—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin?”  
No one ever heard of such a thing being done. Very wonderful things have occurred, but no one has ever yet heard of a blackamoor who has been able to wash himself white. It was an old fable of Aesop as to the absurdity of attempting to do anything of the kind and, often, when we want to point out that a thing cannot be done, we use this simile, and say, “You cannot change the blackamoor’s skin.”  
There are some things that men can do. A white man may be made almost black, as far as his skin is concerned. There are certain medicines that operate upon the skin and give it a very strange color—you may have seen a few such cases in your lifetime. But, though you can put the color in, you cannot take it out. The man who is white, or the woman who is very fair, may, either of them, sit in the sun till they become browned so that they might almost say with the spouse in the Song of Solomon, “I am black because the sun has looked upon me.” But you could not turn a black man, white, though you can turn a white man black. You can do what you please by way of spoiling, but you can do nothing by way of mending. You can make yourself filthy by sin, but you cannot make yourself spiritually clean, do what you will! There is an ease about going down—you can jump down a precipice quickly enough, but who could stand at the bottom of a high cliff and leap to the top at one bound? Man can come down against his will, but he cannot go up even with his will. You can do evil all too readily—you can do it with both hands, greedily, and do it again and again and not grow weary of it—but to return to the right path, this is the difficulty!  
As Virgil said about his arduous task when he went down to the land of shades, “Easy is the descent to Avernus, but to return to the clear air again—this is the work, this is the difficulty.” You have all seen persons make themselves black externally—the chimney sweep in pursuit of his lawful calling becomes quite as black as a Negro, yet, with a basin of water, he can change the look of his face very speedily because the blackness is only something outside of him which merely adheres to him for a time. But the question of our text is, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” That is a part of himself and he cannot alter it. The Ethiopian can wash himself clean and he ought to do so, it is his duty to do so. And a man can keep himself moral and he ought to do so, it is his duty. If the Negro is ever so black, he may be clean, but he cannot wash himself white, neither can a sinner cleanse himself from the stains of his guilt.  
But remember, dear Friends, that, even if an Ethiopian could change his skin, that would be a far smaller difficulty than the one with which a sinner has to deal, for it is not his skin, but his heart which has to be changed. There are some creatures in which, if they lose a limb, it will grow again, or another will come in its place, but there is no creature living that could lose its heart and then grow another. There is a tree of a certain sort and you can, if you please, graft upon it and it will produce a different kind of fruit. Or you can take off one limb of a tree and another branch may grow—but you cannot change the tree’s heart. Even if it were possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin, that would be a change, as we say, only skin-deep, and that is no parallel to the sinner and his sin—the leprosy lies deep within. It is the heart that is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” It is the center and source of thought and action which is polluted and a change must be worked there. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” No, but if he could do so, could a sinner change his heart? Assuredly not!  
Observe, dear Friends, that the question is about an Ethiopian changing his skin himself. That cannot be done, certainly, but, if it could be done, a man could not, himself, change his own heart. For an evil heart to make its own self good is inconceivable. Darkness never did beget light. You may sit as long as you like in the sepulcher amid the dry bones, but life will never be born of death—life must come from quite a different source. The earth warms the seeds in her bosom and nourishes them into growth, but if those seeds were dead, all the genial seasons could not make them spring up. And even if the earth could make dead seeds to live, that is not the kind of miracle of which we are speaking— the miracle would be for the dead seed to make itself alive. That is utterly beyond the bounds of possibility! The figure in our text is a very strong one. As I have said before, the Ethiopian cannot change his own skin, but even that figure is not strong enough to express the utter helplessness of human nature as to its own renewal, for the change is greater and deeper—and it is quite impossible that it ever should come from fallen human nature.  
Let me try to set forth, in some small measure, the difficulty of this business. The first difficulty is because the evil that man has is in his nature. If sin were merely an accident, then it might be prevented. But it is not so. If sheep were to fall down into the mud, they might soon be up again, and it would be possible to keep them from falling. But when the swine go down into the mud, they roll in it because they delight in wallowing! As long as there is any mire about and the sow can get there, she will return to her wallowing as long as she remains a sow, for the filthiness is in her nature as well as in that which surrounds her! And it is so with us so far as sin is concerned. The Ethiopian could wash himself clean, but the blackness of his skin is a part of his Ethiopian nature and he cannot get rid of that. The leopard’s spots are not accidental to it, but it has spots because it is a leopard.  
So, sin is not accidental to human nature, but it is part and parcel of ourselves. When you see a man, you see a sinner! And if you could look into his heart, you would see the seed-plot of all manner of mischief which only needs congenial surroundings to fully develop itself. How can a man change his own nature? I do not suppose that, by any possibility, I could ever become an Ethiopian. I do not think that if I were to set my mind to the task, I could ever, by any possibility, turn into a Dutchman because I was not born so—it is not according to my nature. I must remain an Englishman, Essex-born, as long as I live. Only a miracle could make me anything different from that! And the sinner is a sinner right through. Wherever you look at him, he is a sinner, and so he always will be unless a superior power shall intervene to change him.  
Alas also, this evil nature of man brings with it the fact that his will is altogether perverted. A man will not cease to do evil and learn to do well because he has no heart to do it. Sinners do not want to be saved. “Oh,” says one, “I do!” But do you understand what it is to be saved? Every sinner would like to escape from going to Hell, but that is not what is meant by salvation. To be saved means to be saved from loving evil, from seeking after it and living in it. Do you want to be saved from that? Do you want to be saved from falsehood, saved from the indulgence of your passions, saved from strong drink, saved from pride, saved from covetousness? The most of men have not a heart inclined to that—there is some sweet sin of theirs which they would like to sip, at least now and then upon the sly. That is to say, evil, as evil, is not abhorrent to the natural will, but the natural will of man goes after that which is evil as surely as ever children seek after that which is sweet! Sin is sweet to man and he will have it if he can. How, then, can his nature be changed while he has no will to it? The will is, as it were, the rudder of the ship. My Lord Willbe-Will, according to John Bunyan, is the Lord Mayor of the town of Mansoul. And so he is, and he carries it in a very lordly way. He will have this and he will have that—and he will not have the other—and he is the master of the man. Till the will is changed, till what is called, “free will,” is made, in truth, to be free will—free from the chains of evil and the love of sin—the man cannot rise to happiness and God any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin!  
Moreover, in connection with this natural depravity, and the perversity of the human will, there comes to be the power of habit. Oh, what an awful force the power of evil habit has upon a man! It begins at first only like a cobweb—he can break it when he pleases. It grows into a thread and he is somewhat restrained by it. It changes to a cord and he is in a net. It hardens into iron and the iron becomes further hardened into steel—and the man is shut up in it. He becomes like the starling that cried, “I cannot get out! I cannot get out!” The sad thing is that the man is in a cage of his own making! It is a sort of living cage which has grown up all around him and he cannot escape from it! How often is this the case with strong drink! The man at first only took a very little, but how much does he take now? Mr. Wesley, when dining once with a friend of his who had greatly helped him in the district, saw him, after dinner, rise from the table and get just a little brandy and water, Mr. Wesley said to him, “My Friend, what is that?” “I am very much troubled with indigestion,” he answered, “but I only take a tablespoonful of brandy in a little water.” “Well,” said Mr. Wesley, “that is certainly very little, but, my Friend, you will want two tablespoonfuls before long to do for you what you think that one does. And then you will want four. And then you will want eight and, unless you give it up, I fear that you will become a drunk and disgrace the cause of God.” After Mr. Wesley was dead, that man still lived a drunkard—he had lost his reputation, disgraced the people with whom he had been connected and brought untold sorrow upon himself.  
Now, as it is with that one particular sin, so it is with every other! If a sin comes, alone, to your house the first time, it will come the next time with seven other devils more wicked than itself—and those seven will very soon bring seven each and you will have a legion of devils! And when you get one legion, it is highly probable that another legion will come into the barracks of your heart and stay there. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of water—just a little drop trickles through the wall of the dike. Then it becomes a tiny rivulet which a child’s hand can stop—then it increases to a stream and soon the dike begins to heave, break, crack and, by-and-by, it is broken down and a torrent rushes over town and village and carries away multitudes of men with it. Beware! That evil habit is a dreadful thing—he who yields to an evil habit is preparing himself for the bottomless pit!  
In addition to this habit, I grieve to say that there generally springs up a kind of delight in sin. There are, no doubt, some men who, for a time, feel an intense satisfaction in sin. Yes, and not only in their own sins, but they take pleasure in the sins of others. I hope you never hear them talk. If it has ever been your misfortune to do so, you know that they will talk about some piece of filthiness as if it were a brave thing. They will boast about what some boy has done under their abominable tuition and they seem to take a delight in seeing how precocious he is in everything that is vile. Some men are never happy except when they are destroying souls and, while the deepest pleasure under Heaven is to bring a soul to God, the most diabolical pleasure out of Hell is certainly that of helping to damn a soul! Yet there are many who seem to take a delight in that terrible work. How some skeptics endeavor to entrap a youthful Believer! How some licentious persons seem to lay themselves out to try and seduce others! How many there are who have become ripe in iniquity and their evil seed is scattered broadcast, sowing sin and everlasting ruin upon every wind that blows! Can such an Ethiopian as that change his skin or such a leopard as that his spots? Of course he cannot—the case is utterly hopeless so far as his own power is concerned.  
Further than this, the force of sin increases upon men. If a stone is let fall from a tower, it multiplies the pace of its fall in a mathematical ratio. It drops very much faster the last part of its descent than it did at the first. Set anything rolling down a hill and see how the momentum increases. A railway truck has got on a decline—it is running down. It starts slowly enough at first, you might easily stop it. But let it go on

and see how it accumulates force as it rushes along till it breaks through every obstacle. Well, just such is the power of sin in men—they seem as if they cannot sin enough. Having once given themselves up to the demon power, it comes upon them stronger and yet stronger till the appetite grows within them into a passion and a fury—and a fire that burns like the flame of Gehenna that cannot be slowed or quenched. I know what they think at first—that they will go just so far and then stop. Well, try it—no, do NOT try it! It would be an awful experiment to set a house on fire, intending to let it burn just so much and no more. Can you say to the fire, “You shall come this far, but no farther”? Even if you could say it to fire among standing corn, blown by the wind, yet you would say it in vain to sin! Sin swiftly grows from a pigmy to a giant and, ever increasing in its awful power, it crushes down the man who is in its grip and holds him under its dreadful sway.  
There are many drunks who now have within them a compulsion to drink. They seem as if they could not pass by the door of the bar. There is many an adulterer who cannot glance without a lascivious thought. As for the gambler—and I dare to say that there is no sin that does more swiftly send men down to Hell than gambling—having once begun with his shilling and his pound, he will plunge till he has lost his all! There is an awful infatuation about this evil—it is a stream that catches the boat and bears it swiftly along, noiselessly, but with irresistible force, till it comes to the cataract of endless ruin! Oh, that you could escape! But there are some who never can and never will—and there is not one of us who can escape unless He who is mighty to save shall come in with His own right hand and His holy arm and get unto Himself the victory! For when once the force of sin really grasps a man, we may ask concerning him, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” and answer, “No, he cannot.”  
Added to all this there is another horrible evil—after a while the understanding refuses to see. The man who, at first, knew a thing to be wrong, may continue in it till he does not believe it to be wrong at all. There are men who can utter language which would have chilled their blood when they first began to swear. But now it drops from them as an ordinary word. I believe that the filthy talkers of our street, or the most of them, do not mean anything by what they say—they have got so hardened in misusing the Lord’s name and using obscene language that their understanding does not convict them of having done wrong. They have given Mr. Conscience so much opium that he has gone to sleep! Now and then, perhaps, he wakes up and makes a great noise—but they soon lull him to sleep, again—and they go on sinning without compunction. We read of David, on one occasion, that his heart smote him. It is an ugly knock when your own heart smites you, for that blow comes home. But it is also a blessed knock and, if any of you have never felt it, I am very sorry for you. If your heart never smites you, it must be because your conscience has fallen into a dead sleep, or is seared as with a red-hot iron! When a man reaches that stage that he can lie and swear, and then can wipe his mouth and say that there is nothing in it, oh, how shall such a man be changed? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil.”  
Then, again, as a man’s conscience is sent to sleep, so his heart is hardened against every holy influence that might move him. He used to go to a place of worship, once, but he will not go now. He rails at such places and pours contempt upon Gospel ministers and all Christian people. Though he is as bad as he can be, yet he thinks that he is better than they are and he tries to trample under his feet the saints of God. Though such a wretch as he is not worthy, even, to unloose the laces of their shoes, he cannot have sufficiently bad names for them. In former times, when there came sickness into the house, he used to pray. And in time of trouble he sought the Lord. He has had many a trouble, since, but he is not at all disturbed about it—he only gets angry against God and becomes more and more hardened in sin. His dear wife used to have a wonderful influence over him for good, but he has even broken away from that. And there is that dear girl of his—he loves her very much and she has pleaded with her father. And there is somebody else there, for a little child has led him, but now he feels that all that is a kind of weakness and he will get beyond it. Ah, he is hardening himself! As for his Bible—alas, he never reads that. If there is a word spoken to him by some kind friend who takes an earnest interest in his welfare, he lets it go in one ear and out the other—or else he gets into a furious passion and asks who he is that he is to be talked to like that! He is as good as anybody else, though he knows, all the while, that he is rotten right through.  
What is to be done with a man like that? He is determined to go over hedge and ditch to Hell. His father, a dear gray-headed old saint, has blocked the way, but he has pushed him aside. His mother has come and said, “My Boy, do not ruin yourself,” and she has hung about his neck and tried to keep him from sin. But he has shaken her off. In spite of wife, child, and friends, he is determined to destroy himself! And do you tell me that such a man is able to change himself? Yes, when Ethiopians change their skins and when leopards change their own spots, then will it be done, but not till then! The case is hopeless if it remains with the man, himself—the work cannot be accomplished.  
You will say that now, surely, I have gone far enough in my description of this man. And so I have, painfully far, but what can he do by which he can change his nature and make a new man of himself? All outward means are unavailing. He may go and hear sermons. Well, I know that sermons of my preaching will never turn a heart of stone into flesh. Without the Spirit of God there will be no result whatever produced! The man may be christened, or he may be baptized, but what is there in water drops or water floods that can alter his sinful nature? Why, there have been villains upon earth who have gone through every religious ceremony and yet have ended at the gallows! You may scrub an Ethiopian till you scrub his skin away, but he will be as black as ever when you have done with him. So is it with the sinner. You may put him through every form and ceremony of the church—and you may make him think that he has accepted the orthodox creed and you may even alter his outward life to a considerable extent—yet, when it is all done, nothing at all will really have been done towards his soul’s salvation!  
Somebody, perhaps, asks, “Why, then, do you preach to these people?” Well, I do it principally because I am sent to do it. You see, if God were to send me to preach to the mountains and to bid them move, I would go and do it—and expect to see them move! If He were to bid me go and stand on the shore, and say to the salt sea waves, “Turn into fresh water,” I would do it, not because I think the sea, which is salt, can make itself fresh, but because my Lord never sent me on a fool’s errand and He will honor the message He tells me to deliver! I heard somebody say that to tell a dead sinner to live was as if you were to stand at a grave and bid a dead body live. That is exactly it, my dear Friends, and you say it is ridiculous. Yes, it is very ridiculous if you leave God out of it, but as we are told to do it, we leave the responsibility of it with the Lord—and we intend to go on with this thing which men call ridiculous! Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to say, “O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.” Somebody objects that dry bones cannot hear—that does not matter to us—we are bid to tell them to hear and we expect that the Lord will enable them to hear what He has commanded us to say to them!  
Another reason why we do it is because, when we have been preaching the Gospel to these Blackamoors, when we have been holding up Jesus Christ and Him crucified to these Ethiopians, we have seen them turn white! So we shall keep on, dear Friends, for, though they could not turn themselves white, yet when we have come in the name of the Lord and said to the Ethiopian, “Be white,” he has become white before our very eyes. I have seen, not only hundreds, but I have seen many thousands of persons from whose lips I have heard the story that though they were formerly persecutors of Christ and His people, they have become His followers! Or, though they were fond of drink and every evil thing, they have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. So I shall keep on bidding sinners do this impossible thing, for, God working with me, the withered hand shall be stretched out and the dead Lazarus shall come forth from the grave at the bidding of the Lord!  
II. I said that I would finish up with another question and another answer. I have only two or three minutes in which to speak about them. The question of the text is, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” The answer is—No, no, no, no, no, no! Here is the other question—Can the Ethiopian’s skin be changed? The answer to that is—Yes, yes, yes, as emphatically as we have just now said no, no, no! Can the Ethiopian’s skin be changed? Can the sinner’s nature be renewed? Yes, for God can do everything. He changed primeval darkness into light! He changed chaos into order and God can turn that poor ruined man—that wretched drunk, swearer, adulterer, into one who is chaste, pure, ad lovely and honest, for all things are possible with God! He who made us can newly make us! There is nobody who can put your clock in order so well as the man who made it. If your clock has gone wrong, you had better send it to the maker if you can find him. And there is nobody who can put a heart in order like the God who made the heart. Send your heart to Him, for He can make it new by His blessed Spirit.  
Remember, also, that it is provided in the Covenant of Grace that the Holy Spirit should make us new. It is written, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” God the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit, is master of our spirits. My dear Friend with a bad temper, the Holy Spirit can conquer that evil! You who have such a forgetful memory, he can conquer that! You who are so proud, He can make you humble! You who feel so hard, He can dissolve the heart of stone, or take it altogether away! Do not doubt that the Ethiopian can have his skin changed by a power outside him and above him!  
Further, know you this—the Lord Jesus Christ has come to save the lost. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you believe that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, you shall be saved. To put it in other words, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Or, to give you the whole Gospel as Christ told us to preach it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” If you will come, not to do, but to have all done for you—not to merit salvation, but to receive it as a gift of God’s free favor—if you will come just as you are, altogether without desert or anything to plead before God—and you will just say in your heart, “Lord, I adore the love which moved You to give Your Son to die for sinners, and I believe in the great Propitiation which He offered for sin,” go your way, you are saved! If you thus believe, it is not only that you shall be saved, but you are saved.  
Have you anything to trust to beside Christ? Then you are lost, for you have a mingled faith that is not of God’s making! But if you wholly, solely, alone, heartily and entirely fix your hope on the blood and righteousness of Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin— then you are saved and I know that your heart says, “Blessed be God for that! Now that I love God, what can I do for Him?” That is the way!  
I noticed, yesterday, when I was talking to some 40 persons who had recently found Christ, that they were, all of them, either hard at work for the Lord, or they were asking what they could do for Him. Could I tell them something they could do for their dear Lord who had saved them? There is far more done out of love than there is out of law. We will not, cannot do anything to be saved, but, when saved, what is there that we cannot do? Live, and then do! Not, do and live. Live in Christ and then serve Him, but do not put the cart before the horse! Come, dear Friends, and trust in Christ. The Lord bless you by His Divine Spirit leading you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H.**SPURGEON: **PSALM 78:9-72.**

This story of the children of Israel, after they came out of Egypt, is like a mirror in which we may, with great sadness, see ourselves reflected.  
Verse 9. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They had every opportunity of serving their God. He had provided them with fit weapons for the war, but they were cowardly, so they “turned back in the day of battle.”  
10, 11. They kept not the Covenant of God, and refused to walk in His Law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them. Let each one of us ask, “Does the Psalmist describe me?”  
12, 13. Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as an heap. What a marvelous miracle that dividing of the Red Sea was! Did it not make an abiding impression upon them? I will be bound to say that many of them said, “We shall never doubt God again.” Yet, they soon did doubt, murmur and rebel against Him!  
14-16. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. It seemed as if there was nothing that the Lord would not do for them—all that they needed for food and refreshment was given to them freely.  
17, 18. And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. He had given them food for their necessities, but now they must have meat for their lusts.

19. Yes, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? So you see, dear Friends, what speaking against God really is! I am afraid that we, also, have often done that. To question God’s power is to speak against Him. Perhaps you have thought lightly of your unbelieving speeches, but God does not think lightly of them—to my mind it seems that there is hardly anything that so grieves Him as the doubts of His people concerning Him.

20. Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people? There ought to have been no question as to the Lord’s power— the God who could fetch water out of a rock could, if He pleased, make loaves of bread out of the sand under their feet, or cause the very stars to drop with meat for them if necessary.

21. Therefore the Lord heard this, and was angry. He was really angry with His people because they doubted Him. He loved them and because He loved them, it cut Him to the quick that they should have questioned His power to bless them.

21-23. So a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation: though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven. Unbelief is very hard to kill. God opens the doors and windows of Heaven to feed His people yet, nevertheless, the next time they are in trouble, they begin to stagger at the promise. Oh, shameful unbelief!

24-29. And rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels’ food: He sent them meat to the fullest. He caused an east wind to blow in the Heaven: and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire. Yet that was not a blessing to them and, Brothers and Sisters, let us always be afraid of our own desire, unless that desire comes from the Lord. You know how David puts it in the 37th Psalm—“Delight yourself, also, in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” If, however, you find your delight in any earthly thing, it shall be a plague to you to have the desire of your heart! “He gave them their own desire.”

30. They were not estranged from their lust. For the more lust gets, the more lust wants. It is like the daughter of the horse-leech that always cries, “Give! Give!” God can satisfy the longing soul, but all the world cannot satisfy the cravings of lust.

30, 31. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. They received what they pined for, but they had a curse with it. Affliction with a blessing is far better than prosperity with a curse!

32. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for His wondrous works. They were dyed ingrain with unbelief, so that it seemed as if it could not be washed out of them.

33. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. A great part of our trouble is the fruit of our own unbelief. It is like hemlock in the furrows of the field. They who distrust God are making a rod for their own back and, before they have done with it, they will have to rue the day in which they thought themselves wiser than God!

34-36. When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God, their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. Some men are like dull animals that will not go without the whip. Many of us cannot be kept right without constant affliction. If our God gives us a little smooth walking, we go half-asleep, or we trip and stumble. And so He is compelled, as it were, to make our way very rough, and often to strike us with the rod to keep us from falling altogether into sinful slumber. How many there are who, when they seem to turn to God in times of sickness, are not truly penitent! A death-bed repentance may be true, but, oh, what a risk there is that it may be false!

37-51. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His Covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not: yes, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle, also, to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham. This is what God did with their enemies who had oppressed them, that He might set His people at liberty. After all that, ought they not to have trusted Him as a little child trusts its mother, without ever a question or a doubt? While He thus overthrew their enemies, see what He did for His own people.

52-56. But made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen, also, before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies. This sad note seems to come over and over again, as if they never could have too much of grieving God. Yet the Lord was still tender towards them. Well may we sing—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*

57-64. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hands. He gave His people over, also, unto the sword; and was angry with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. They were dumb with excess of grief. When God chastises His children, He does not play at it. Sometimes, when He is angry at their sin, He lays on the blows fast and heavy till their very bones are broken, so that they may hate sin as God hates it, and seek after holiness even as God loves it. So, dear Friends, I pray that if any of us have lost the consolations of God and are feeling the weight of His rod, we may begin to inquire what secret thing it is in us which has angered Him, and go back to Him, and seek to stand before Him as once we did. For, otherwise, He will smite, and smite, and smite yet again and again. But notice that the Lord never delights in chastening His children. He is glad to have done with the necessary correction. So, when their enemies were most cruel with them—

65-69. Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine. And He smote His enemies in the hinder parts. He put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover He refused the tabernacle of Joseph and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He has established forever. You see that we are getting into clear water now—it was all broken water, storm and hurricane, while we heard of what Israel did—but when we come to deal with God in Christ, of whom David is the type, then how sweetly everything goes!

70-72. He chose David, also, His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. Blessed be God who puts away the sin of His people, because He delights in mercy!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—489, 474, 448.  
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THE DROUGHT OF NATURE, THE RAIN OF GRACE AND THE LESSON THEREFROM  
NO. 2115

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1889, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, NOV. 10, 1889.

**“And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty. They were ashamed and confounded and covered their heads. Because the ground is parched, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed,**

**they covered their heads. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are not you He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait upon You: for You have made all these things.” Jeremiah 14:3, 4, 22.**

IT is my heart’s desire and earnest prayer that many in this house may this morning say with the Prophet, “O Lord our God, we will wait upon You.” I shall not be satisfied to have delivered a discourse, nor for you to have heard it, and even approved of it, unless there shall come from it this delightful fruit, that those far off from God shall be drawn near to Him. And that they shall say, in very deed and of a truth, “Therefore we will wait upon You.” In God alone can men live happily. And if they would be recovered from their fallen state, it is to the Lord their God that they must turn, Oh, that they would wait upon Him!

In the last verse we have the word “therefore,” which shows that the speakers had come to this conclusion by an argument. In truth, they had been forced to their resolution by a very painful and personal argument, which God had set before them in the order of His Providence. By their thirst and by their failure to find water anywhere, the Lord had driven them to say, “Therefore we will wait upon You.”

I trust it will not be needful to urge us to conversion by sufferings as terrible. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.” Come willingly, since the argument for coming is clear and cogent. I should like you to go this morning mentally through the process by which the Israelites passed practically when they came to the gracious conclusion, “Therefore we will wait upon You.” Let us begin at once with the argument, praying God to send it home to every heart by His good Spirit, that we may reach the desired conclusion.

I. First, consider that MAN IS A VERY DEPENDENT CREATURE. He is, in some respects, the most dependent creature that God has made. For the range of his wants is very wide, and at a thousand points he is dependent upon something outside of himself. All creation exists by the will of the Lord. And if His will should cease to send forth conserving power to

maintain the created things in existence, they would all cease to be. This great world—the sun, the moon, the stars—would all dissolve. And, as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, they would be lost forever.

At the Lord’s will the universe would be gone, as yonder bubble which your child was blowing but a moment ago, and now has vanished, and left no trace behind. God alone is by his own power—all else is dependent upon Him—

*“Life, death and Hell and worlds unknown, Hang on His firm decree—  
He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

Man as a living creature, is peculiarly dependent upon God as to temporals. We see in the text that when the dews no longer fell and the rains were withheld, then the unhappy inhabitants of Palestine suffered from drought and that drought brought with it failure of the harvest, famine, disease and death.

To quote our common saying, the people died like flies. They fell everywhere by thousands, fainting, famished, doomed. On what a feeble thread hangs human life! Water, though it is itself unstable, is needed to the establishment of human life and without it man expires. Many an animal can bear thirst better than man. Other creatures carry their own garments with them. But we must be indebted to a plant, or to a sheep, for the covering of our nakedness. Many other creatures are endowed with sufficient physical force to win their food in fight. But we must produce our own food from the soil.

Behold, how we come into the world, helpless and without strength— utterly dependent upon others. And when our strength is developed and our manhood is perfected, we only enter upon another phase of dependence upon our surroundings for our food—and therefore, for our life, we are dependent upon drops of rain. We cannot produce food from the earth without the dew and the rain. However cleverly you have prepared your soil, however carefully you have selected your seed, all will fail without the rain of Heaven.

Even though your corn should spring up, yet will it refuse to come to the ear if the heavens are dry. Nor can you of yourself produce a single shower, or even a drop of dew. If God withholds the rain, what can the farmer do? Call together the Parliament! Collect a synod of scientists! Convoke a conclave of princes—what can they do? In vain their acts, theories and commands. When the skies are brass, the earth is iron. When God is angry, then the clouds scatter no blessings over our field and earth yields not her increase to the husbandman.

Yes, and life itself would vanish as the food of life ceased. It would be an instructive calculation if it could be accurately worked out—to estimate how much bread—food, there is at any time laid up upon the surface of the earth. If all harvests were to fail from this date. If there were no harvests in Australia during our winter, no harvests early in the year in India and the warm regions, if there were no harvests in America and in Europe, I have been informed that, by the time of our own harvest months, there would be upon the face of the earth no more food than would last us for six weeks.

How dependent we are for each year’s crop! Should there be universal failure, starvation would be closely within sight. God does, indeed, give us bread as we need it. Even as, in the wilderness, He gave the manna. We are every hour dependent upon His generous care. The bottles of Heaven contain the juices of human life—if these were utterly stopped, none of us could endure the burning drought and the consequent famine.

See, then, the absolute dependence upon God, not only of the Eastern nations but of all peoples of our race. Whatever may be our trade or profession, we are all fed by the fruit of the field. And whatever may be said about laws of nature, the God of nature is not bound and limited by methods of procedure. He can operate exactly as He pleases and fill our barns full, or stop the supplies of grain by the simple method of giving or withholding rain. Our breath is in our nostrils—He takes away that breath and we die. Apart from His preserving, the whole race of man would be turned to dust and cease from the land of the living.

In spiritual things this dependence is most evident. Brethren, if God shall bless us with His saving health and with the visitation of His Spirit, we shall be as a field that God has blessed and our lives shall be glad with a harvest to His praise. But apart from God, what can we do? In this realm of spiritual things we are absolutely and wholly dependent upon God. And without His aid, we are as a salt land, which is destitute of verdure. Salvation is of the Lord. Vain is all trust which builds not on Him.

The priceless blessings of pardon and Divine Grace—how can we procure them apart from God in Christ Jesus? How can sin be removed, except by the Lord, who passes by iniquity? Who is he that can absolve but He against whom the transgression was committed? The washing from all stain—from where can it come but from those dear hands that were pierced for us? When He shall wash us and our robes in His most precious blood, only then shall we be clean—and then all the glory shall be to Him as the Lamb slain.

Justification and acceptance—are not these of God? What can you and I do to justify ourselves, or to make ourselves acceptable with God? These are the gifts of the Covenant of Grace and only God can give them. But if He gives them not, we can never obtain them. These gifts—it is His royal prerogative to bestow according to the counsel of His own will.

So is it with the life and the power of the Spirit of God, by which we are able to receive and enjoy the blessings of the Covenant. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wishes and the order of His working is with the Lord, alone. The new life whereby we receive the Lord Jesus—how can it come to us but from the living God Himself? Can a dead soul quicken itself? Can a man steeped in sin liberate and purify himself? “Can the

Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” “You must be born again.”

But can a man cause himself to be born again? Is it imaginable that the new birth is caused by the person born? The change worked is mysterious, radical, abiding—who can work it upon himself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. The new life must come from God! “Except a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The new heart and the right spirit—from where do they come? Can the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, beget within itself love of God and desire for fellowship with Him?

They cannot be self-created. They are the work of the same hands which made the heavens and the earth. The love of holiness and the pursuit of it, and perseverance in that pursuit—do these come any way but from Him who has worked all our works in us? Every beginning of good, yes, every desire after it, is worked in us by God, or else it is never in us at all. We are absolutely dependent upon God, not only for all spiritual gifts but for the power to become partakers of them.

And, Brethren, all the Divine Graces that are pleasing to the Lord, do they not come to us from God our Savior? Is there a grain of faith in the world that God did not create? Is there a spark of holy love in any human bosom that God did not kindle? Is there any true hope in any heart which the God of Hope did not implant? Is there anything anywhere that is holy, or lovely, or of good repute, which has not first come from God Himself and so entered into the heart of man? Sinner, you are absolutely dependent upon God for your possession of Divine Grace and the obtaining of salvation.

You lie like the dry bones in the valley, which were very many and very dry. What can you do? By what power can dry bones live? The Lord’s Prophet, as an act of faith in God, bids you live. But God’s Prophet knows that you will not live by your own strength, nor by the power of his persuasion. No, his appeal is to a power beyond himself and you. He cries, “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” He looks to the Holy Spirit to create life in you and apart from that Spirit he has no hope for you.

Putting this case very broadly—and I cannot put it too broadly—I am not afraid of exaggerating, or going too far in it—I know that for the clouds, and the rain, and the harvest, men are absolutely dependent upon the God of Providence. And I know, also, that for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the power which saves souls, we are altogether dependent upon the great God who creates all good things.

Here is the pity of it—against God, upon whom we are so dependent, we have sinned and continue to sin. We are dependent upon Him and yet rebellious against Him. Shall the man who accepts from me his daily bread lift up his heel against me? Shall he who could not live without me, yet live to speak evil of me? Shall he abuse my goodness into a means of doing me damage? That were an atrocious thing, which could only spring from a black, ungrateful heart. Yet every sinner who goes on in sin is acting thus ungratefully.

Existing only by God’s infinite charity, he who continues to do evil is ungrateful in the highest degree to the Lord of Love. This being the case, the dependence of guilty man upon the graciousness of Divine Sovereignty and the sovereignty of Divine Grace is still further enhanced. Because man has broken God’s command and continues to rebel against Him, he lies all the more absolutely at the disposal of a righteous God. The traitor has now no rights. He has forfeited them. He has no claims. He has outlawed himself. O ungodly man, you can make no appeal to God’s justice. For if you do, He must award you eternal destruction.

You cannot claim anything now of Him as due to you, for your only due is to be driven into everlasting punishment. You are condemned before Him in whose hands are the issues of life and death. You are as much in the hand of God as the prisoner condemned to die is in the hand of the royal power—indeed, you are far more absolutely so. If pardoned, it must be by the exercise of the sovereign prerogative which is vested in Jehovah, the Lord of All, who does as seems good in His sight. Provided it can be done justly, sovereignty may step in and rescue the guilty from his doom. But this is a matter which depends upon the will of the Lord alone. If you are executed, the condemnation is so well deserved, that not a word can be said against the severity which shall carry out the sentence.

If God had left this sinful world to perish in its sin, none could have blamed Him. It is but right that those should die who have provoked their God and incurred the penalty which He threatened against sin. If the Lord, in the greatness of His love, chooses to save this man or that, He does no injury to any but magnifies His mercy in those whom He redeems from deserved death. If the Lord enlightens an island and leaves a continent in the dark, who shall accuse Him? If He takes one of a city and two of a family and brings them to Himself, while the rest are suffered to have their own way and willfully continue in rebellion, who shall charge God with partiality, or say unto Him, What are You doing?

He can reply to all who object to His way of mercy, “May I not do as I will with Mine own?” He lays on no man more than is right and what He chooses to forgive of His own bounty cannot be challenged. Whether you like the doctrine or not, it is true that, as sinners, you are absolutely dependent upon the sovereign mercy of God. I wish you could see and feel this great Truth of God. For it would tend to humble you and prepare you to seek His favor. I pray the Holy Spirit to impress it upon everyone here who has not yet come to God in Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first Truth of God.

II. Our second remark is this—MEN MAY BE REDUCED TO DIRE DISTRESS. Men, being dependent upon God, may be reduced to dire distress if they disobey Him and incur His just displeasure.

Kindly follow me in the earlier verses of my text. Here we have great temporal distress—the people had no water! The highest ranks of society were made to feel the terrible pinch. The whole of the city was tormented with thirst and the leading men instituted diligent searches to find water.

They sent to the great reservoirs which Solomon had constructed in his time—the upper and the lower pools. But they found no water. They searched again and again but the waters had utterly failed and they were driven to despair. They covered their heads as men who gave themselves up to die without hope.

Terrible was the drought which Jehovah sent upon His land because of the sin of His people—it was as if the day of Elijah had returned, wherein there was neither dew nor rain for three years and six months.

My dear Hearers, there is a spiritual distress of which this drought is a figure. Behold, as in a parable, the state into which we have seen many brought when God has begun to deal with them—to such there comes drought of life and famine of hope. My Hearer, do you know what is meant by God’s dealing with a man? Do you remember that passage in Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress,” where one pilgrim says to the other, “Let us fall into good discourse. Where shall we begin?” The other answers, “Where God began with us.” Do you know what that means? Has God begun with you? If so, you will follow me with understanding when I say God makes the aroused and convicted man conscious of the greatest conceivable want, even of a drought in his own soul.

These people were conscious that they wanted water. The case was worse than that—they were tormented with thirst. So does God come to men and make them feel that they need the living water of His Divine Grace and He sets them thirsting for it. They did not know their need before but went on merrily enough, content with the pleasures of time and sense. But now, being quickened, they feel an intolerable hunger and thirst after higher and better things. They are tormented by an insatiable desire, which cannot and will not be set aside.

Have we not seen these thirsty ones? Have we not pitied them? Have we not pointed them to the one and only Source of supply? Have we not in secret rejoiced over them as we have foreseen to what their anguish tended?

To proceed a little in detail with the words of my text—when the Lord causes sinners to feel the spiritual drought, pride is humbled. “Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters.” Generally, the nobility concern themselves little enough about water. But in great drought King Ahab and his chancellor, Obadiah, went forth themselves to find water. In this case the nobles sent their servants—no, even their sons and daughters—to discover some source of supply. So God knows how to teach a man so that his lofty thoughts are humbled and his pride is brought down to the dust.

My Lord, you will feel yourself a nobody should the Spirit deal with you in conviction. Not long ago, your excellency looked down from the highest seat in the synagogue, but now you sit down in the dust and count everyone your superior. The philosopher grows into a little child and gladly accepts the cup which at some prior time he sneered at. We heard you singing to your own honor and glory the other day. But now you have no song to sing—you cover your lips and mutter, “Unclean, unclean, unclean!” When the Lord lays His hand on a man, He makes his beauty to consume away like the moth. From head to foot the man is moved—his soul within him melts and all his glory is rolled in the mire. Our noblest thoughts become lowly seekers after the water of life in the day of our distress.

But observe that when humbled and made thirsty, these people went to secondary causes—they came to the pits, or reservoirs. Reservoirs in the East are sometimes great caverns in the natural rock and at other times they are excavated by labor, or built up by skill and then streams are turned into them and they hold a great storage of water. Some of the children of the nobles thought they knew of caverns which others had not seen, hidden cisterns under ground, which had been forgotten. And they went forth to find them. They hurried to the place where they hoped for the priceless water.

But we read not that they cried unto God, or sought mercy of Jehovah, who could right speedily have given them rain. They resorted to the secondary causes—they turned not to the hand which smote them. Thus souls, when they are awakened, go to fifty things before they come to God. It is sad that, in superstition, or in skepticism, they look for living streams. They try reformation of manners—I have nothing to say against it. But apart from God, reformation always ends in disappointment. They seek consolation from an orthodox creed, for which I might have much to say. But if a belief in a creed is trusted in, it is as if a man sought to quench his thirst with a bottle but did not care to see whether it held water or not.

A creed is a pitcher in which the water is held but it is not the water itself. Some try forms and ceremonies in abundance and to these they add self-denials and penances—they suffer anything sooner than come to God for His Divine Grace. Grace is a port to which no man steers until it is seen to be the only one into which he can enter. O my Heart, my Heart, how is it that you can be so loath to go to your Father and your God? O you that are wandering at this time from one creature-trust to another, I pray you cease your roaming and come home to God, who alone can help you.

There is no hope for you but in God and the way to God is by His Son, Christ Jesus. Why do you gad about so much? Straightforward to God is the surest, safest way—why do you not take it? God is our haven and our Heaven—why are we so reluctant to seek Him? O man, why will you turn to saints, to angels, and even to devils, rather than to the Lord your God? But I know you, your heart is set on idolatry and this is the essence of idolatry—that you seek the creature rather than to the Creator.

If you read on, you will find that when they went to these secondary supplies, they were disappointed—“They came to the pits and found no water.” They found mud, black, filthy mud. But no water. Once they saw the sparkling liquid in the cool cave. But it was all spent. When waters were to be found everywhere else, the cisterns were full. But when all else was dry, they were dried also. They stooped down, they searched in the darkness. They tried, at least, to get a cupful of the precious liquid. But it

is written, “They found no water.”

Disappointed, “they returned with their vessels empty.” The women with their water pots upon their heads presented a sad sight as they entered the city gate and one after another all sighed, “Empty! Empty!” They thirsted to drink. But not a drop was found to cool their tongues. It is an awful thing to come home from a sermon with the vessels empty. To rise from the communion table, having found no living water and return with vessels empty. To close the Bible and sigh, “I find no comfort here, I must return with my vessel empty.” When the ordinances and the Word yield us no Divine Grace, things have come to an awful pass with us. Do you know what this disappointment means?

Now, upon this disappointment, there followed great confusion of mind—they became distracted—“they were ashamed and confounded.” On the back of that confusion came despair; “they covered their heads.” The Orientals cover their heads when in the deepest grief, as David did, when he went over the brook Kedron. It means, “I cannot face it. Do not look on me in my sorrow, nor expect me to look on you. I cover my head, for it is all over with me.” Thus have I met with many who, after going to many confidences, have been disappointed in all and seem ready to lie down in despair and put forth no more effort.

They fear that God will never bless them and they will never enter into eternal life. And so they sign their own death warrants. Shall I confess that I have been better pleased to see them in this condition than to hear their jovial songs at other times? It is by the gate of self-despair that men arrive at the Divine hope! I would to God that many a Mr. Vain-Confidence sitting here might be struck down to the ground and be compelled to end his proud boastings, by going at once to Jesus only! Oh, that they might come to that holy and safe conclusion, of which I keep on thinking all the while I am preaching to you—the Scriptural and logical conclusion mentioned in my text—“Therefore we will wait upon You.”

At last, when these people came to despair, it is very remarkable how everything about them seemed to be in unison with their misery. Listen to the third verse—“They covered their heads.” Did you hear the last words of the fourth verse? They were the very same—“They covered their heads.” Surely the second is the echo of the first. It is even so—earth has sympathy with man. Nature without reflects our inward feelings. When God makes us happy we, “go forth with joy and are led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands.”

But when we are in despair, then all nature echoes our misery. “The ground is dismayed,” so it runs in the Hebrew. The very earth is frightened for want of rain and opens its mouth, gasping for fear. “The ground is dismayed, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.” Have you ever been in such a state of mind that you knew your need of the water of life but were not able to find it anywhere? If so, you have been unutterably miserable, and all creation has put on mourning to keep you company. Earth is responsive to man, whom the Creator made to be her lord. Nature rings her marriage peal to sound forth man’s happiness, or tolls her knells to mourn the funerals of his joys.

If you have drawn down the blinds of your heart and your soul sits in the dark, then the heavens are darkened, too. Or if not, the very brightness of nature seems another form of blackness to you—and her joys mock your griefs and cast salt into your wounds. When men are cast down and their face is covered, then nature covers her face, too, and all the universe is sad. Alas, for the day when the hand of the Lord is sore on the soul! Then our moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

III. I have brought you so far in the argument. Now I must rush on to the conclusion. Man is a very dependent creature. He may be reduced to dire distress. And thirdly, MAN’S ONLY SURE RESORT IS HIS GOD. “God is a refuge for us.”

If I address myself to any here who are in such trouble as I have described, let me press upon them this thought—the only place of refuge for you is in God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. Hasten to Him! Lay hold upon His strength! Hide under the wings of His care! For, first, there is no help anywhere else. Read verse 22—“Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?” He says not “the gods of the Gentiles”—those who were “gods” in better days are seen to be, in truth, nothing but vanities in the time of need.

To make rain is a Divine prerogative. Therefore the priests of the idols pretend to it for their false deities. The Rain-maker is found in every idolatrous country, but I think scarcely anybody believes in him, now. What antics and tricks the Rain-makers go through to produce rain but it does not come, neither can their gods create a cloud! And where can any of you go to get Divine Grace if you refuse to look to God alone? There is a Rainmaker over there at the Ritualistic Church, who can produce a shower on the child’s heart, by which it becomes “a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.”

But I trust you are not so foolish as to believe in him. And therefore you will not make a fruitless journey towards priest-craft. Where will you go? Come not to any of us poor gospelers, for in us you will find nothing—we are only fingers to point you to the Lord Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells. The long-descended priest of the Church of Rome, who can, for a shilling, grant you absolution—will you look to him? No, you have still some wit remaining and feel that to be absolved of man will not ease your conscience. Priests of Baal are of small account when a total drought and a terrible dearth are in the land.

In the days of Elijah they cried aloud and cut themselves with knives and said, “O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!” But only the God that answered by fire could answer by water. And Baal could do neither the one nor the other. Therefore we will leave Baal alone and all the prophets of the grove, with their candles and their crucifixes and their incense and their robes. I know where you are likely to go and that is to your own frames and feelings, to your own resolves and doings. Alas for your folly!

Oh, yes, you want to get peace, and so you take the pledge, and you vow that you will become a decent, sober body and all that. What are these confidences but vanities of the heathen? The very best of duties that you and I can perform, if we put our trust in them, are only false confidences, refuges of lies and they can yield us no help.

No, look—according to the text there is no help for us even in the usual means of Divine Grace if we forget the Lord. Read that second question— “Can the heavens give showers?” Showers come from the heavens but the heavens cannot yield showers apart from God. The eastern sky, without rain, is blue, bright, beautiful. But after months of pitiless drought, when no tear of pity has stood in the eye of the heavens, the blue color becomes the ensign of melancholy. And if this continues month after month it becomes the color of despair.

Until the Lord opens the windows of Heaven to pour out the blessing, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars can help the need of man. If God does not help you, O tried and anxious Soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they are ordained of Heaven. And preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of Divine Grace. Job truly says, “If God will not withdraw His anger, the proud helpers do stoop under Him.” If God Himself save you not, O Man, all that can be done by men or angels throughout the ages can never help you one single jot. You are lost, lost, lost, if a stronger arm than man’s is not stretched out to help you!

But with God is all power. There is the mercy—“Are not You He, O Lord our God? For You have made all these things.” See in how short a time He covers the heavens with clouds and pours forth an abundance of rain till He makes the wilderness a pool and the dry land springs of water. He can. He can! He can reach the extremity of human weakness and woe. What can He NOT do? Nothing is too hard for the Lord. And you, poor Sinner, dried up like the sand of the desert—God can, within an hour, yes—in a moment, make your heart to be flooded with His Grace.

He is the Creator, making all things out of nothing. And He can create in you at once the tender heart, the loving spirit, the believing mind, the sanctified nature. Though you have no Divine Grace this morning, no, not a drop of it—He can open streams in the desert. You can not find within yourself, wherever you look, any trace of love, or holy feelings or anything that is good. Yet He can give you all, can give you all for nothing, can give it to you now! If you believe that He can and will trust Him, as He displays His love in the Lord Jesus, He will save you.

He can give you the power to believe it and lead you now to cast yourself on Him. He can, but it hangs upon His will. Does He not say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? A God without a will is no God at all. And if He has no will in the matter of salvation, then is He dethroned from His choicest empire and man is set up above the God of Divine Grace Himself. This cannot be.  
Well, then, what follows from this? If God has all this power, our wisdom is to wait upon Him, since He alone can help. We draw this inference—“Therefore we will wait upon You.” O my beloved Hearer, if you have never been converted, I pray the Holy Spirit to bring you to decision, that you may at once seek the Lord. O tried and anxious soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they are ordained of Heaven. And preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of Divine Grace. Every road is closed but the way of Sovereign Grace.

You have no merit, you have no strength. You never can have any merit, you never can have any strength of your own. God must save you, or you are lost to all eternity. But He can save you to glorify His own Grace and make His own mercy to be known and to reveal His great power in turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He can save you. Submit yourself to Him, then, and come to Him and say, with the “therefore” of my text, “Therefore we will wait upon You.”

Do I hear somebody say, “How I would like to pray”? Yes, that is the way to come to God. Come to Him by prayer in the name of Jesus. Do you want a prayer? This chapter is full of petitions and there is one which I would point out to you. Here is a short one for you (verse 7), “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do You it.” “Do You it.” “Lord, I cannot create Grace in my own heart, any more than I can make rain to fall from the sky. But do You it.” “Lord, I cannot come to You, come You to me; do You it.” Is not that a wonderful prayer? There is more in it than you think—the more you consider it, the bigger you will see it to be. Three monosyllables—“Do you it!”

And then observe the argument—four words all of one syllable, “for Your name’s sake.” Not for my sake but for Christ’s sake, who is the manifestation of Your name. For Your own glory’s sake, for Your glory is Your name. Lord, make men see what a sinner You can save by saving me! Lord, glorify Your mercy by forgiving me. For oh, if You will save such a poor, unworthy wretch as I am, even Heaven itself will ring with Your praises. And even in Hell they will say, “See what God can do! He saved one who was ripe for the eternal fire and He has placed the rebel among His children.” “Do You it for Your name’s sake.” Heartily do I commend this prayer to every soul here that is seeking the Lord. May the Spirit write it on your hearts! I cannot give you a better. “Do You it for Your name’s sake.”

Well then, next, if you are really going to wait upon the Lord, you must do it through a Mediator. These guilty people of Jerusalem had Jeremiah to pray for them. Jeremiah, with the weeping eye fitly typifies a greater than Jeremiah. Remember the Man of Sorrows, the Acquaintance of Grief? Jeremiah’s Master must be your Intercessor. Beg Him to be your Mediator. You cannot go in unto an absolute God. You need a Mediator. A Mediator is provided—He has presented an acceptable sacrifice—He will plead the causes of your soul. Trust in His blood instead of your tears. Let His death wash your life. Leave your case in the great Mediator’s hands. For if you believe in Him, He will undertake for you. And He never fails. He will go into the Court of King’s Bench for you and be your Advocate and

win your suit. Come, trust yourself with Jesus. For He will save.

Let me advise you to make a full confession of sin. Read verse 20 “We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness: for we have sinned against You.” Make a clean breast of it, admit the past, lay bare the present. Think not to cloak sin. To conceal sin is to ruin yourself. To confess it is to find mercy. Place yourself among the guilty, for there mercy can fitly reach you. When you have done this, cast yourself down before your God, saying, “Therefore I will wait upon You.” Come through Christ, believing in the power of His precious blood and you may draw near to God. Though you are loaded with enough sins to sink a world of sinners down to Hell, yet if you will believe in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus and cast yourself down at His feet and lie there, He will never say “Depart.”

Jesus has said, “He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you perish, it is because you do not come. Not because you come and He rejects you. O dear Souls, I do not know some of you, others I do know. But whether known to me or not, I look at you now with loving eyes and say, Come to my Lord. Does your heart say, “I will arise and go unto my Father”? Then am I glad. You have tried the citizens of this country and they have sent you into the fields to feed swine. And husks are all that you have to feed upon. You have spent your money and wasted your substance in riotous living. You can find no pleasure now—go where you may.

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! Quit the vanities and seek the verities. Turn unto your God. Turn instantly! Hark back! Hark back! You have gone too far already in the evil way. A precipice is before you! One more step, yes, one more step and you are over and your eternal ruin is complete. Hark back as quickly as you can to the great God from whom you have departed! Come now, even now, for He invites you—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

While he speaks in this manner, I hope you will answer to the call and bow at His feet at once. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” May the Holy Spirit lay hold on you, that you may lay hold on Jesus! God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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PRAYING AND PLEADING  
NO. 1661

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

**“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are  
called by Your name. Do not leave us!”  
Jeremiah 14:7, 8, 9.**

THIS passionate appeal for mercy was forced from the people by extreme misery. There was a famine in the land until men fell in the streets of the city exhausted with hunger. Drought had long prevailed and lack of water was terribly felt. Meanwhile, invasion kept them in perpetual fear, so that the Prophet lamented, “If I go forth into the field, then, behold, the slain with the sword! And if I enter into the city, then, behold, them that are sick with famine!” Such judgment had God inflicted on a guilty nation for her sin. No springs were bubbling up from the earth and no rain dropped down from Heaven. This dire privation had produced universal distress. “Judah mourns, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.”

As the calamity, like a river of lava, burned its dreadful way, an eyewitness, in his heart’s anguish, describes a few common scenes which forcefully tell the tale of utter desolation. Princes and peasants are seized with the same consternation—the Prophet paints them both with their heads covered in token of a common grief. Here in the city the children are coming back from the place of pools and fountains with empty pitchers, for they find not a drop of water in the pits. Out yonder in the fields the ground is chapped and cleft by the scorching sun in the absence of dew or rain. The plow is of no use in that parched soil! Farmers are sitting down ashamed, confounded, utterly dejected—it is vain for them to lift the hand of labor.

Down in the valleys the dumb cattle express their feeling with throes of anguish—the hind calves and forsakes her young. And up on the mountain heights the wild asses prove their share in the universal distress. Those creatures which are most apt to scent water from afar and to hasten to it to drink, are unable to discover a cooling brook, though they snuff up the wind like dragons. What a dreadful thing for a country to be placed, as it were, at the oven’s mouth and to become so completely burned up that even the wild beasts can discover no pasture and their eyes fail because there is no grass! Nothing could help the people. Grim death stared them in the face. None of their idol gods could cause rain and, without it, they must all perish.  
Under such circumstances prayer to God was the last and only resource. Driven to their wits’ end, they now began to be wise. The Prophet has expressed in admirable words the penitent confessions and the earnest supplications of those who were ready to perish. Our text is a most appropriate model of humble petitioning. I can easily imagine that all the Jews of the land were willing enough to adopt this form of prayer at such an extremity and to follow it with a fervent, “Amen.” But, alas for them, the feet which had loved to wander were not willing to return! And the hearts which had cast off their allegiance to the Lord were not reconciled to His Law of righteousness. The Lord felt compelled to say of them, “I will destroy My people, since they return not from their ways.”

Theirs was prayer in terror, not prayer in penitence! How many there are who pray, similar to this, in times of dire distress! When the plague was raging, the cross was marked on many a door which otherwise had never known that token! When the cholera rages they go to Church. When poverty invades their homes and they are sorely pinched, they cry, “Lord, have mercy upon us.” When they are brought to death’s door, they entreat, “Send for some minister to come and pray at our side.” What a wretched business is this, that we should only be disposed to think of God when we are in our utmost need! Dare we treat the Lord as if He were only to be called upon in our emergencies? How can we expect that God will accept prayers that are only forced out of us by selfish fears?

It is not uncharitable to suspect that too often such prayers are either hypocritical or superstitious—and far different from the contrite cries which are music in the ears of the Most High. What a mercy it is that God hears real prayer, even if it is presented to Him only because we are in distress! “Call upon Me,” says the Lord, “in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” When the prodigal went home to his father, his father did not say, “You have only come home because you have a hungry belly. You seek a meal among my hired servants because you could not fill yourself with the husks with which the swine are fed.” No, not so. Every word was welcome, every look was love.

He “gives liberally, and upbraids not.” He does not fling into the teeth of a sincere penitent any reproach concerning the past. There is no scowl on the heavenly Father’s face; no scolding words are uttered by His lips. No, but He opens wide His arms of love and clasps His lost one to His heart! The Lord of Mercy bids the poor and needy come to Him and welcome, though he may have been a rake and a profligate. What a dreadful state, then, must those men be in to whose prayers the God of all Grace has resolved to shut His ears! Thank God, my dear Hearers, that you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with Him. How terrible is the case of any who have passed the frontier of hope!

The case described in this chapter did not admit of pity or pardon. No chastisement could condone crimes which had been so repeated and gloried in. The Lord Himself bade Jeremiah not to pray for these people! If you read the sequel, you will find that God declared that though Moses and Samuel stood before Him—though the mightiest of intercessors and the best and most honored of saints were to join in supplication—yet He would not hear them, for His mind was made up to ease Him of His adversaries! Their hour of doom was come! The scaffold was ready; the executioner was at hand. Take heed, you that trifle with mercy, lest God should put away the silver scepter and draw the sword out of its sheath!

Take heed, you that scorn the Mercy Seat, lest it turn into a burning throne of wrath and you “perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little.” That is not the condition of things with us at this time, blessed be His name, and so I may invite you to notice the text as a model prayer—an excellent example to God’s own people who are in a wandering state. And afterwards I shall use it as an instructive example for sinners, conscious of their sin, who would gladly come to God and find mercy.

I. First, then, I speak to the Church of God at large, wherever it has backslidden, and to each Believer in particular WHO MAY HAVE DEPARTED FROM THE LIVING GOD IN ANY MEASURE OR DEGREE. Would you take with you words and turn unto the Lord? You cannot have better words than those now before you! I will read them again. “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name. Do not leave us!”

Begin by pleading guilty! It is hard to bring men to this, yet there is no forgiveness apart from it. “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You.” The sin-stricken soul has no defense, nor even an excuse, to offer on its own behalf. The penitent cries—Guilty! Yes, guilty, for there is no denying it. Our iniquities testify against us. If there were no witnesses of our sin, our sins, themselves, bear witness against us! Oh that every child of God felt this if he has in the least gone aside from the paths of holiness!

It is not only that you see us, O our God, or that our brother Christians may have seen our faults, or even that some scoffers in the world have spied them out and may be all too ready to bear witness against us—but our sins, themselves, have gone before us to the Judgment Seat and testify against us! When the facts are in clear evidence, what plea can we plead? No witnesses can more effectually secure condemnation! Look at the lives of many professors. Yes, let us look at our own lives. Is there not enough of fault, enough of folly, enough of failure for our own lives, themselves, without any accusation from others to witness against us? If I had to stand before God tonight to plead upon the matter of my own righteousness, I could do nothing but lie in the dust and hide my face for very shame! And it must be, more or less, the same with every Believer who knows his own heart and life—and sees it in the light of God’s Countenance.

There is no denying the charge—we are prone to wander! Therefore, O my Brothers and Sisters, come with me—take the sinner’s place! Be abashed as an erring child and come before the great Father and say, “Our iniquities testify against us.” While there is no denying it, let us admit that there is no excusing it, “for our backslidings are many.” If we could have excused ourselves for our first faults by offering a degree of extenuation for the fickleness of our youth, yet what are we to say of the transgressions of our riper years? If you, my Brethren, could say, “Lord, when we began to be Believers we were ignorant and feeble and were readily carried away by temptation,” you cannot make that apology now, when years have given you stability; experience has brought you knowledge and the favor and protection of God have ripened your character, or should have done so. “Our backslidings are many.”

I feel as if I could not preach about this, for it touches my heart and makes me feel ready to weep! Much rather would I like everyone to say to himself, “What have I done? What have I left undone? How far have I declined from the ways of the Lord?” Turn over the records of your life, Brother and Sister Christian! What have you done for Christ? What have you done for the Truth of God, for the souls of men, for the spread of your Redeemer’s Kingdom? Alas, may you not have lived as even to have disparaged the Truth and done injury to the cause which is so dear to you? “Our backslidings are many.” We cannot count them! Their number is as great as their guilt!

It is well for us to feel that extenuation and apology and excuse are out of the question. There is no use in our making any pretense to selfjustification. We are compelled to plead GUILTY! Guilty with gross aggravations! Guilty again and again “Our backslidings are many.” Guilty, though we were under bonds to have lived in a very different fashion. Yes, and not only is it past denying and past excusing, but also it is past computing! We cannot measure how great have been our transgressions, as that next sentence may well imply—“We have sinned against You.” It looks, at first sight, as if that were the smaller sentence of the three. But let me read it again and throw the emphasis where it ought to be—and then you will see that it is the heaviest clause in the indictment.

“We have sinned against You.” That is where David always lays the emphasis upon when he makes his confession— “Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.” This is the prodigal’s confession—“Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, to have sinned against our Father and His infinite love; against our Savior and His precious blood; against the Holy Spirit and all His gentle striving and His sweet comforting and blessed teachings—this is to have sinned with a vengeance! What shall we say of ourselves? Do not such sins strike us dumb? Sins against the Law and against the Gospel! Sins against the Light of God and sins against knowledge! Sins in our holy things; sins on our knees; sins in our hearts— sins—where are they not? Sins as high as the clouds, broad as the earth, immense as the sea! Who shall fathom the great ocean of our iniquity? It is wise for us, therefore, to stand at the bar of God and humbly confess that, “Our iniquities testify against us. Our backslidings are many, for we have sinned against You.”

Next to this plea of guilty, we find that the culprits do most vehemently appeal to God for mercy. Please observe carefully how they order their cause before Him and with what arguments, as Job has it, they fill their mouths. No reasons whatever could they fetch from themselves. They dare not plead before God that if He will have mercy upon them they will do better, for their many backslidings render such a promise hopeless. Brothers and Sisters, are you not sick of promising that you will, from this time forward, amend your lives? I hardly think that we are convinced of our sinfulness if we flatter ourselves that we shall do better in the future! Can you again trust that broken bone which has let you fall so many times? Can you again trust that tongue of yours when already you have been unable to rule it? Can you trust that flaming member which has been ready to set on fire the course of nature? What? Trust your heart again? Go, confide in the wind or the treacherous sea, but trust not your treacherous resolutions!

“If I could only have my life over again,” says one, “I should do better.” My Brother, I should not like to have my life over again for fear I should do worse! And worse I would do unless I had more Grace. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it never does to say to God, “Lord, forgive the backslidings of the past, for I shall do better, by-and-by.” Suppose you do? There is no merit in that! But it is a wild supposition, for you will do nothing of the kind. “Yes, but,” you say, “I am now more resolved than I was. I am older and wiser, now, and I feel quite safe because may resolution is so strong.” This is fine talk for one who is no better than a reed shaken by the wind! How preposterous is such boasting! Your strong resolution? How strong is the wax before the fire? How strong is the twig in the midst of the flame?

Your resolution, however, seems to yourself to be firm as adamant! Alas, it is only seeming! Peter’s resolution was strong when he said, “Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.” Yet the look and laugh of a silly maid at the palace door opened his mouth with floods of blasphemy—that mouth which Peter thought would overflow with brave confessions of his Master! We know not what spirit we are of. We are worse than we think we are. When young folks tell me how terribly wicked they are and, therefore, they are afraid that they cannot be saved, I sometimes reply, “Yes, but you are much worse than you think you are.” They look so astonished, for they hoped to be comforted, and ho, they are plunged into a deeper ditch!

Probably they cry out that they feel themselves to be more weak and foolish than any other people alive. I tell them that most likely they are near the truth, but that they are much worse than they fancy they are, for, in fact, they are utterly undone and there is no good thing in them! They look bewildered and then I tell them that the Lord Jesus came to save the weak and worthless—and that He looks after the lost and ruined ones. We lay the axe to the tree of self that men may fly to the Tree of Life! There must be no reliance upon arguments based upon our own excellence—we must beg for Grace and plead for mercy—for upon no other terms but those of Grace can the Lord meet with us! Child of God, it is well for you, in prayer before the Lord, to get rid of every sort of excuse, apology, or palliation. Let your self-impeachment stand in the forefront of your petition—“O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake; for our backslidings are many. We have sinned against You.”

But still there is a plea, for they make a plea out of God’s name. From the badness of the rebellious subjects to the goodness of the righteous Sovereign is a rapid but reasonable transition. A weighty motive is suggested that may dispose God to be merciful—and that motive is drawn exclusively from Himself—“Though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake.” Oh the majesty of the name of the Lord! The fame thereof is wonderful throughout all generations. You have a name, O God, for pardoning iniquity. So David said, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” Come, then, desponding Brothers and Sisters! Here is a prayer which will avail for us when the night is darkest and not a star is to be seen—“Do it for Your name’s sake”—because it will glorify Your name to save us! Because there is something about Your name which encourages our soul to hope. “Do it for Your name’s sake.”

The distracted nation is drawn into closer fellowship as the story of the past suggests a plea for her present distress. Nor is this all—the Covenant of Grace promises a glorious future and this promise is pleaded as the Lord is called, “the Hope of Israel.” It is well to draw upon the bank of hope as well as upon the bank of experience. When your cup is full of sorrow and your face is covered with shame—and not a ray of light falls on your dreary path—remember that there is a history full of Grace behind us and a prophecy full of Glory before us! And it is all wrapped up in the name of Him who is the Hope of every contrite heart. But take good heed that your hope is not a vague hope. See to it that you believe firmly in God and that you lay hold upon an actual promise of His Word or some statute of His Kingdom—for then you may hope to your heart’s content! Though you cannot see the way of deliverance, you can feel that the Lord holds you by the hand.

Now plead with Him, “Lord, You are my only hope. You know that I have no hope anywhere else. I am clean driven to despair except You look upon me in Your Grace.” This is good pleading. Everyone has a hope somewhere. To the miserable there remains no other medicine. Deprived of this, the sufferer would grow desperate and his melancholy would drive him to the verge of madness! But there is a hope of some kind in every man’s bosom. Now, if you can truly say, “One thing I know, my hope is alone in You, my God,” you may plead that. You may argue thus— “Lord, save me for Your name’s sake, that I may never be ashamed of my hope. You have never left a poor soul to use You as its anchor and then to find that anchor drag and leave the vessel to drift upon a lee-shore. Be true, then, to this, Your name, and rescue me and blot out my transgressions, seeing I put my trust in You.” Beloved, a hope so grounded shall never fail you!

The Church of God pleads the name of God under another title, “The Savior in time of trouble.” God has saved His people. In the roll of fame His name is written as a great Deliverer. The annals of Israel were full of anniversaries. By feasts and fasts they were taught to remember dire emergencies and delightful escapes. The mighty deeds of the Lord of which their fathers had told them are celebrated in Psalms and songs— and their charm is this—His mercy endures forever! Here, again, is a lesson in the art of prayer. He has been a Savior, therefore plead with Him, “Lord, I have no right to salvation, but, still, You are a Savior. You have been accustomed to save Your people in time of trouble—save me! Fulfill Your gracious office. Lord, save, or I perish! It will glorify You to save me. Why is Your name thus revealed but to guarantee the Grace that is wrapped up in it? Savior is an empty name if You do not save.” Is not this fine pleading? O Laodicea, you that are neither cold nor hot, do you mourn your lukewarmness? Then awake to some such a plea as this—“O Hope of Israel, O Savior in time of trouble, for Your name’s sake deal graciously with me.”

Then, next, she does not mention the name, but it is implied in the words. She says, “Why should You be as a stranger in the land?”—one who is merely traveling through the country and takes little interest in its trouble because he is not a citizen—one who merely puts up for a night in an inn and, therefore, does not enter into the cares and trials of the family. She does as good as call Him, Master, Lord of the house, and His ownership is pleaded in the suit. Jesus, You are Head of the family? You are the Lord, the Husband. Will You act as if You were a mere lodger or a stranger? Tell Him that your house is His—that the Church is His—that He is the Head of it and plead with Him that He will not lay aside His position or neglect that condescending responsibility which He voluntarily took upon Himself when He became the Head of His Church and undertook, on her behalf, to be her Redeemer! Plead with Him, then, for His name’s sake, and you will win a gracious reply!

Then the argument ventures a little farther and the plea is this, “You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name.” God’s Presence with His Church and His connection with it becomes a plea. Have I not thus pleaded, sometimes, for this Church when I have thought over its sins and its wanderings? I have said—“And yet, Lord, You are in the midst of us. We have Your Presence at Your Table and in the Prayer Meeting. You are with this people right blessedly and we are called by Your name. And if You shall leave us, the ungodly world will say, ‘In that edifice was once assembled a Church of God, but it has become deserted! There, in former times, a Gospel ministry flourished, but it has failed.’ If ever it should be so said, Your name will be dishonored.”

See how Israel pleads in the text— “Why should You be as a man astonished?” That is, like a man confounded who does not know what to do—who is distracted and amazed! She says, “Lord, if You do not help us now, the men of the world will say, ‘Their God could not help them. They were brought into such a condition, at last, that their faith was of no use to them and their God could not deliver them.’ Why should You be as a mighty man that cannot save? A champion defeated in all his efforts? No, but You have given us a banner, a sacred standard that must not suffer defeat—let it be displayed because of the Truth of God and give us victory.”

Some of you who are trying to serve God have floated into shallow waters, lately, and you are in great trouble. Now, if you can somehow implicate God in what you are doing, you will greatly strengthen your cause. Are you His servant, acting in His name and entangled with difficulties that arise out of conscientiously following His command and trusting in His promise? Then you may say to Him, “Lord, what will the Egyptians say? What will the Philistines say? Will they not say that at last it is proved that faith is a delusion, that the promise is a snare and that there is either no God, or else that He is a God who cannot aid, or will not hear prayer and help His servants?”

I delight to get upon this track. It refreshes me to feel that I have no help but in God, but that His promise binds Him to help me! When I am quite out of my own depth, I feel that I must swim, for if the Lord’s power does not buoy me up, I shall sink to destruction. How can He suffer one to be destroyed whose trust is in Him? If this faith is a lie, it will be exposed by my failure. And if this God is not the living God and He does not hear prayer, the adversaries of the Lord will laugh. Ah, then you may plead with Him, “Do it for Your name’s sake.” Though our iniquities have been many—though we have not served You as we ought to do—though we have backslidden often, yet, Lord, do not punish Yourself on account of us! Do not put Your name to dishonor because of our folly! Do not put Your Gospel to the rout because we are so unbelieving! But, for Your own honor’s sake, interpose and deliver Your servants in this, their time of need!

II. Having thus tried to put before you, though very feebly, the good ground on which your feet may stand while you are wrestling with God, I need, for a very few minutes, to speak with THOSE POOR TROUBLED HEARTS THAT DO NOT YET KNOW THE LORD or fear that they do not. To my text, as a whole, they have no title. But from the matter of it we may draw some valuable suggestions for their use. Are there not among us many, who though strangers to the fellowship of the saints, are distressed in soul and desirous to find peace with God? Are there not many who would gladly obtain salvation from the God of Grace? You say, “I need peace.” Then, I pray you, take heed that you do not put up with a false peace, or calm your conscience with anything less than true reconciliation with God! It is better to be always restless than to find rest in a delusion.

Begin and continue in the way of the Truth of God, for this will endure to the end, while all that is false will burst like a bubble. Begin first by confessing your guilt. Come, my dear Hearer, there can be no benefit in trying to conceal anything—therefore acknowledge your transgression. God can see it all, but there will be great benefit in your seeing it and confessing it before Him. Do not try to patch up a righteousness of your own! Jesus Christ is never sweet to any but to sinners. You have to prove that you are a sinner, not a saint—for Jesus gave Himself for our sins—not for our merits. Remember, when Christ comes to fill us, the first thing we need to know is our own emptiness. Do not, therefore, go upon the tack of trying to make any kind of defense! Acknowledge your sins and say, “My iniquities testify against me.”

Some of you could not make out a plea of righteousness if you were to try—your life-long actions would confuse you if you attempted it. When people come in here who have never heard the Gospel, they are often brought speedily to receive Christ because when God blesses the Word to such, it is not difficult to convince them of sin. They are so plainly guilty that they do not dream of disguising it. They never attempt to mend their old clothes, for they are too far gone and only fit for the dunghill! They would only make greater tears by patching up such old and rotten materials.

Come, oh you poor ragged sinners, in all your torn garments; in all your loathsomeness and sin—and say, each one—“Lord, I acknowledge that my transgressions testify against me! It is not the first time that I have been anxious, or the first time that I have promised better things, but I have been a deceiver until now. My backslidings are many. I am an old sinner and a hardened sinner. I have sinned against convictions, sinned against a tender conscience, sinned against the restraints of Your Spirit. If I did seem to leave my evil ways, the dog has returned to its vomit and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

Ah, my Hearer, you are a bad fellow, and I want you to admit that you are! I want you to stand in the dock like a felon and plead, “Guilty!” And be sure you do not add, “Only there are extenuating circumstances.” There are no such circumstances in your case! You are thoroughly unworthy and deserve to be sent to Hell! If you had died in your sins 20 years ago and had been condemned without mercy, your wickedness would have abundantly vindicated the sentence of the Judge! Do you kick against that? I hope not—it will be your wisdom to admit your terrible desert of punishment. I beseech you, put your confession into words and state, truthfully, what you have done! The sense of your wickedness will grow more keen when you recall your follies.

Remember, too, the forms in which you have sinned against God. You have violated the Laws which regulate your life. You have set at nothing those counsels which make for your physical health and your moral welfare. It is bad enough to have sinned against a mother’s tears and a father’s prayers. It is bad enough to have sinned against your own body and to have disregarded your wife and your children. That is sad enough and horrible enough. Many have gone deep enough in that direction to crimson their cheeks with shame! But you have despised the God that made you! You have dishonored your Creator. You have lived to gratify your own lusts! You have delighted in defying His Laws. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib.” And, alas, dumb driven cattle have been more dutiful than you!

The Lord raised you up from fever. He sheltered you in storms. He rescued you from shipwreck. He has delivered you many times from going down into the Pit by sudden death, yet you have been unmindful of Him and unthankful to Him! You have doted on the idols that provoked Him. Feel this! Admit this! Mourn this! Come before the Lord in penitent contrition! But make sure you are sincere. Think not that the language of a litany will avail you if you falsely say, “Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners,” when you are not miserable and do not believe that you are sinners at all! Rather may God the Holy Spirit work such deep conviction in your spirit that the language of my text may seem too feeble for you—may you be compelled to cry out”—O God, no speech can tell the depth of my guilt! Forgive me, for Your mercy’s sake.”

Shall I leave you there sitting down in abject despair? Doubtless in such depths we learn that salvation is of the Lord. Be sure of this—no excuse can exonerate you! Apologies drawn from your constitution or your circumstances will only aggravate your crimes. Your only ground for hope must be based on His Grace. Call, now, upon His name! “For Your name’s sake.” You big sinners say, “Lord, if you will save me, it will be a great instance of Your power.” “Well,” said one the other day, “it is of no use your trying to convert me. If I ever shall be converted, it will need God Himself to do it, for I am such a tough fellow.” Yes, yes, and the Lord delights to let men see what He can do! He proves that He is Omnipotent in the moral world as well as in the physical world—and as able to subdue free will as to stay the raging of the wild winds that sweep the sea! He is Lord and besides Him there is none else! When He speaks, His Word can turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove!

Oh, plead with Him to glorify His power! Say, “Lord, it will show Your power if You will save one like me! If You will cast a legion of devils out of me, I shall be a standing wonder wherever I go! To men and angels I shall be a convincing proof of the regenerating power of the Almighty—therefore save me for Your name’s sake.” If the Lord were to forgive a dozen ordinary sinners, it would not so much display His mercy among men as in saving one unusually vile transgressor. Plead this! There may be somebody listening to this discourse whom this word exactly suits. I feel as if the Holy Spirit were prompting me to utter these words for your use— “Lord, all the sin in the world seems to have run into me as into a common cesspool! But, O Lord, if You can cleanse my heart, it will be a wonder of mercy, indeed, and Your name shall be glorified! I am the man who ought to be damned above all men! I deserve to be the center of the target at which all Your arrows ought to be leveled! But oh, if You will forgive me, it will make all Hell quiver with astonishment! That God should save such an one as I will make Heaven ring with joy that such an one should be delivered from going down into the Pit because God has found a Ransom.”

Here you may remember that all God’s name is comprehended in Jesus Christ. This master key unlocks every door! If you will cry, “Lord, save me for Jesus’ sake, that men may see what Jesus can do by the cleansing power of His blood, by the strength of His hands and by the love of His heart,” you will have pleaded the name of the Lord. This argument has matchless force! The dying thief—look what glory He has brought to Christ all through the centuries! The Apostle Paul—changed, renewed— what honor he has brought to Christ ever since he was saved! Be this, then, your prayer, “O Lord, honor Yourself, honor Your Son, honor Your Spirit by saving me. Bless me for Your name’s sake.” Cannot you join me in this prayer? O Holy Spirit, enlighten men as to their lost condition till they feel that there is no other way of pleading and no other name to plead!

Is it not the desire of the Father that Jesus should see of the travail of His soul in the salvation of the chief of sinners? The Lord give you a grip of that plea! It is sure to prevail. “For Your name’s sake.” You may thus plead the name of the Father, “My Father, glorify Your fatherly heart by welcoming Your prodigal child with a kiss of reconciliation and saying, ‘Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.’” You may next use it with the Holy Spirit and say—“O Divine Spirit, glorify Your power over human hearts by cleansing and regenerating even me, that men may see Your new creation and wonder at it as You do work it in me.”

A great point is to be able to lay hold upon a promise, a promise in the Book. I remember, when seeking the Lord, the sweetness of that saying to my heart—“Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I found liberty when I could plead that! I said, “Lord, as far as I know what it means, I do call upon Your name. I have no other name to call upon and You have said that whoever calls upon Your name shall be saved. Now, for Your Word’s sake, do not draw back! I know You cannot lie. Fulfill Your promise even to me.”

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot say to a man, when we have made him a promise, “I promised to do this for you, but you are such a bad fellow.” That would be no excuse for our breaking our promise. You must honor your promise even if you feel ashamed of the person to whom it was made. The Lord in mercy, having made a promise, never quotes our character as a reason why He should break it! He knew all about you when He made the promise and so He is not surprised. He knows more about you, now, than you know about yourself! He knows that you are a thousand times worse than you think you are! He has a much deeper sense of your guilt than you have! Still, for all that, He is ready to pardon! Plead His promise with Him and He will stand to His Word!

Do any of you doubt the possibility of your obtaining mercy of the Lord because of the depths of your iniquity, or the ruinous consequences it has already worked? Believe me, you are victims of a delusion of Satan! The Lord God is merciful and gracious and passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. There are some parts of the book of Jeremiah that I should not like to read to you. I can hardly think that they were meant to be read in public—they are intended, rather, for our private meditations. There is, however, one picture of infamy which I will merely hint at, though it has often excited my profound astonishment. It runs something like this, “They say if a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and is another man’s and plays the harlot, shall he take her to himself again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? Yet return unto Me, says the Lord.”

Do you see the drift of this striking illustration? Here is a woman, kindly treated in every way, who willfully leaves her husband. She has not been led astray by a profligate, but she has wantonly left her husband of her own wicked self. She has defiled her name and her honor—and to crown her infamy, she has even left her paramour and has gone on the streets and become utterly vile! Shall her first husband take her back, again, after her multiplied and manifest impurities? Would it not pollute the land? Everybody will say, “Why, this is an offense against morality! She has dishonored herself! She has dishonored her husband! She has dishonored her country! “Yet,” says God, “return unto Me.” Is not this beyond the manner of man? So does the mercy of the Lord transcend even the statutes of the Law which He gave to Israel!

You will see the force of this more clearly if you compare the third chapter of Jeremiah with the 24th chapter of Deuteronomy. The parable is startling! God is represented as dealing with an idolatrous nation as it would be an abomination before His own eyes for any man to deal with an unchaste wife. Such delight has Jehovah in mercy that He dispenses it at the risk of public disgrace! He knew that the self-righteous would find fault and that even elder brothers would be angry, but He dared all that! Therefore let there be no objection on your part! “Yet return again unto Me, says the Lord.” If there is any disgrace, it must rest on His name whose holiness cannot be sullied!

The elders in our Savior’s day who sat in Moses’ seat thought it an open scandal that He received publicans and harlots. I am not surprised that when He welcomed such fallen ones, they were glad to come—but I am astonished beyond measure at those of you who put aside the only Gospel that can do you good! Why argue against your own interests instead of accepting the Lord’s open invitation? Every evangelist who preaches pardon and peace by the blood of the Lamb braves the ethics of the age—the new teaching is that people must reap the consequences of their actions—there is no hope of ever undoing anything that a man does and, therefore, there can be no Gospel to the guilty.

Yes, I know that this is what the reign of Law seems to demand! But, for all that, the Lord would sooner that men should accuse Him of weakening the principles of morality than refuse a poor sinner who comes to Him for mercy in Christ Jesus! I know that if we receive certain persons into the Church, the mere moralists cry out, “How can they associate with such people?” Yet, come along, come along, you chief of sinners! The vilest are welcome to Christ! You that are worse than the worst—you who have leaped over the hedge and have got upon the wild commons of outrageous sin—you may come to Jesus!

Do you sing—  
*“Depths of mercy, can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me”?*

It is reserved for you! You are the person for whom it is reserved! This deep consciousness of sin; this guilt of yours which you feel and admit points you out as the one to whom I am to say, “Return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon you! He will blot out your transgressions! He will change your nature! He will turn you from a sinner to a saint and glorify His name in you! God grant that you may each and all prove the exceeding riches of His Grace, for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

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INTERCESSION AND SUPPLICATION  
NO. 2745

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1901.

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

**“Are You not He, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait for You” Jeremiah 14:22.**

THIS is an instance of amazing yet holy boldness. The Prophet had received from the Lord the explicit command, “Pray not for this people: for their good,” and yet, after reasoning with God, his heart grew so warm with sacred fervor and his spirit became fired with such a passionate zeal that he could not help pleading for the sinful nation! He poured out his soul in the vehement prayer and said to the Lord, “We will wait upon You.” This was, perhaps, disobedience in the outward form, but it was not disobedience as to the inner spirit of the Prophet, for the Lord counts not as disobedience the earnest pleading and yearning of the heart of His people. This is a marvelous instance of how, under the most discouraging circumstances—when there appears no prospect whatever of success—men who are moved of God to pray for their fellows, will cling to His garments and still intercede on behalf of those who are altogether unworthy of their supplications.

One of the reasons why Jeremiah resolved that he would still wait upon God was because the case was such an urgent one. The land was chapped through the long drought. The poor beasts were dying of thirst. Men and women were pale and pinched with hunger and there was no one who could deliver them out of their distress. The heavens could not pour down rain of themselves and the gods of the heathen could not render any help, so Jeremiah says, “Therefore we will wait upon You. It is our only hope and though it seems to be a forlorn one, yet, since it is the only one we have, we will cling to it with desperate resolve.”

There are two things which appear to me to be strikingly illustrated by our text and its connection. The first is the beauty of an intercessor—and I want you to so admire it as to imitate the intercession. And the second is the necessity which drives men to God—and I want you to feel the necessity which drives you to wait upon the Lord. May God the Holy Spirit make you feel it!

I. First, I want you to see the beauty of a true intercessor and to endeavor, by the power of God’s Spirit, to IMITATE THE INTERCESSION.  
Jeremiah interceded for the people, but we have not to seek far before we discover the reason why he did it. God, in Infinite Mercy, gave the weeping Prophet to his sinful people in order that they might not be left as sheep without a shepherd and be quite given over to utter destruction. And wherever you meet with a man who intercedes with God for his fellow men and makes this the main business of his life, you see in him one of the most precious gifts of God’s Grace to the age in which he lives. It is God that writes intercession upon men’s hearts. All true prayer comes from Him, but especially that least selfish and most Christ-like form of prayer called intercession—when the suppliant forgets all about himself and his own needs—and all his pleading, his tears and his arguments are on behalf of others. I repeat that such men are a most precious gift from Heaven and I feel certain that before the Reformation, there must have been hundreds of godly men and women who were, day and night, interceding with the Lord and giving Him no rest until He answered their supplications—and Luther and the rest of the Reformers were sent by God in answer to the many prayers which history has never recorded, but which are written in the Lord’s Book of Remembrance.  
And when Wesley and Whitefield, in more modern times, stirred the smoldering embers of religion in this land, it was because godly people, perhaps poor obscure men and women in their cottages, reading the Scriptures, saw the sad state of irreligion and indifference into which the nation had fallen—and groaned over it and spread the case before God. I know not how to estimate the worth of even one man who has power with God in prayer! When John Knox went upstairs to plead for Scotland, it was the greatest event in Scottish history. All things are possible with the man who, like Elijah upon Carmel, casts himself down upon the earth and puts his face between his knees, and cries unto Him that hears prayer, till the heavens, which were like brass, suddenly drop with plenteous showers of rain! There is no power like that of intercession! The secret springs that move the puppets of earth—for kings and princes are often little more than that—are the prayers of God’s believing people. The hidden wheels that start the whole machinery and that keep it in motion, are the prayers of God’s people. Oh, if the Lord makes you an intercessor, my dear Brother or Sister, even if you cannot speak with men for God, if you know how to speak with God for men, you occupy a position that is second to none. God help you to fill it well!  
True intercessors, then, are special gifts from God and when He raises up men or women for this high service, you will find that such persons plead with mighty arguments. You must have noticed, as we read the chapter, [Exposition at the end of the sermon was always before the sermon.] that Jeremiah knew well what he was praying about. He had, in his mind’s eye, all those nobles of the land who were reduced to such poverty that they sent their children out to hunt for water. His prophetical eye could even see the hinds in the field leaving their fawns to die because there was no grass for them to eat, and no water for them to drink. Jeremiah had upon his heart all the agony of the nation and he prayed as if his were the thirst, and as if he were perishing of hunger! He took the burden of the guilty people upon himself and became their mouthpiece to God, although they did not thank him for pleading for them, but smote him, and despitefully used him. Yet he took all their griefs into his own sympathetic heart and he pleaded mightily with God while he had all that great burden resting upon his spirit.  
I want you to notice how he pleads. First, he pleads God’s name. “Lord,” he says, “these people are called Jehovah’s people and though they deserve nothing but condemnation at Your hands, yet, if You do not bless them, the heathen will say, ‘Jehovah forsakes His people! This is what comes of being the chosen nation—and so Your great name will be dishonored in the earth.’” And then Jeremiah uses a very strong expression—for using which, I understand, a minister has recently been called to account and I do not wonder at that, for, if it had not been Inspired, it would have been too strong an utterance from the mouth of any man— “Do not disgrace the Throne of Your Glory.” That Throne of God’s Glory was the Mercy Seat—and if it could be carried away to Babylon, the heathen would rejoice, and the daughters of the uncircumcised would triumph! And thus the Throne of God’s Glory would be disgraced. Jeremiah rightly felt that this was a strong argument, so he urged it in pleading with the Lord, “Do not let Your Glory be tarnished, do interpose to prevent such a calamity.”  
As the strongest argument of all, he pleads the Covenant—and that is always a masterly argument with the Lord. Turn to the 21st verse. “Remember, do no break Your Covenant with us.” God had entered into a Covenant with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob, and with David—and though the sin of the people might well be conceived to have made the Covenant null and void, and though they certainly did not deserve that He should keep His Covenant with them, yet Jeremiah felt emboldened to say, “Do not Break Your Covenant with us.” Depend upon it, God is never a Covenant-breaking God—and no plea has greater weight with Him than “the Covenant, the Covenant.” O Brothers and Sisters, if God has made us intercessors, let us come with holy boldness to the Throne of Grace and let us plead for our nation, and for our age, and for our kinsfolk, that God would bless them! And let this be our chief argument—for the honor of Your holy name, for the glory of Your Throne and for the sake of the Covenant which You have made with our great Surety, forsake not those whom You have chosen, however undeserving they have proved to be!  
Notice next that when a man has his heart set upon this blessed work of intercession, it makes him quick to seize every advantage that he can when he is pleading with God. Jeremiah argued thus with God, “Lord, You said to me, ‘Pray not for this people for their good,’ but it is the false prophets who have deceived them, so, O Lord, pity the poor people. They are misled. The priests have led them astray. They are poor silly sheep that have followed the shepherds that deceived them. Therefore, O Lord, have pity on them and spare them.”  
I like that sacred ingenuity on the part of Jeremiah, leading him to catch at such a plea as that and to urge it before God. That is something like Abraham did when he, too, had a desperate case in hand—the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is only these great intercessors who can take up such cases as these. There he stands to plead for Sodom and Gomorrah! Mark the holy boldness which he uses before God. “Lord,” he said, “perhaps there are 50 righteous within the city. Perhaps there are 45 righteous there. Perhaps there are 40 righteous there,” and so on, till he said, “Perhaps there are 10 righteous there—will you also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” That was fine pleading and God yielded to it, for He would have spared the city for the sake of 10 righteous people if they could have been found. And if you know how to plead with God, you will rake up everything which may, in any degree, count on the behalf of the people, even as your Master did, for, when He could say nothing else in favor of His murderers, he said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Even their ignorance He turned into some kind of plea, and in His wondrous mercy used it in praying to His Father. May we all learn how to plead for sinners like that!  
True intercessors resemble Jeremiah in another respect—they will not be turned aside from their pleading. If they meet with rebuffs and no answer seems to come to their supplications, they plead on! It is a wondrous sight, to see a mother—a true, tender, gracious mother—pleading with God for her son. She began pleading for him while yet he lay in the cradle, or before that. She cried to God for him when he was learning to walk with tottering footsteps. She followed him with her prayers through the devious ways of his boyhood and youth—and also when he went away from home and left her to sorrow over him. Parental restraint was gone, even maternal love was rejected as he roamed over a great part of the world. He has grown into a bronzed man, now—his face is tanned with the scorching sun of the equator and he has come home—but his mother’s prayers have followed or accompanied him wherever he has gone!  
She has persevered in pleading with God for him. True, he has been a Sabbath-breaker, and a swearer, and the very sound of his voice has terrified the dear old soul when she has heard him say hard things against the God of Israel. But you should hear her pray when she is alone! She cannot say, “Lord, save my son, for there is in him some good thing towards You.” But she cries, “O You that are mighty to save, I cannot let You go until You save my poor sinful boy! Have You not said, ‘Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me’? Lord, I am in sore trouble about my son! I beseech You to have pity upon him and save him. Did you not listen to the Syrophenician woman when she prayed for her child? Oh, hear me as I pray for mine!”  
Ah, I cannot put it as pathetically as she does, for there is a wondrous sacred ingenuity in the true mother’s heart that makes her plead with peculiar power for her child even when he has grown to manhood. I hope you know what I mean because this is what you have done. When, under great discouragements, seeing those who are the subjects of your supplication going from bad to worse—when you see them get hardened and apparently incorrigible, and invulnerable—when even the arrows of the Word of God do not seem to touch them or pierce them—still persevere in prayer! And I will say what some may think a very strong thing—even if you should have reason to fear that they have committed the sin which is unto death—you remember how John puts it, “I do not say that he shall pray for it.” But he does not say that you are not to do so—therefore take advantage of the negative and pray on! Yes, even until their souls have passed beyond the reach of change—into the unseen world—pursue them with your persistent intercession! And it may be that you shall yet have your heart’s desire concerning them, notwithstanding the fact that, as yet, everything seems to tend in the contrary direction.  
Now, dear Friends, let me say that if any of us shall ever learn how to offer such prayer as this—if we shall ever be able to intercede with God in this manner—we shall become imitators of our blessed Lord Jesus, Himself, for He was, on earth, preeminently the Intercessor. If you could have seen Him coming forth in the morning to preach the Gospel and to heal the sick, you might have noticed how His garments were covered with the dew which had fallen upon Him as He had knelt all night in prayer to God. He could often truly say, “My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night,” for He had spent the whole night upon the lone mountainside agonizing for the souls of those He loved. That sorrowful lament of His—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not”—was only a flash of the fire that always burnt within His heart.  
The tears that fell from our Savior’s eyes as He wept over Jerusalem, dropped from a cloud that always rested on His soul which was always filled with a deep sympathetic compassion even for those who had despised and rejected Him. And now, today, my Brothers and Sisters, though He has put off the seamless garment that He wore on earth and has put on His royal, priestly vesture white as snow, He still wears the golden belt that John saw in the Revelation. The eyes of faith may see Him up there with no care upon His brow, no spittle upon His cheeks, no scourges for His back, but standing amidst the harps of angels and the songs of seraphs, before His Father’s Throne as our great Intercessor still, for He always lives to make intercession for us, so that— *“For all that come to God by Him”—*  
there may be eternal and certain salvation! Oh, if we could only hear Him pray! Of course, there cannot be tears and cries such as became Gethsemane and its humiliation, but there is as much earnestness in Your cry, O blessed Lover of sinners, in the midst of Your Glory as there was in the depths of Your shame!  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, learn from your Lord and Savior how to be mighty in intercession! I give you this blessed work to do, all of you who truly know and love Him. As I have said before, you may not all be able to speak to men for God, but you can all speak with God

for men. This morning [Sermon #1471, Volume 25—CONCEALING THE WORDS OF GOD— read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] I told you

how to use one hand for battle by not concealing the words of the Holy One—now here is the way to use the other hand for battle by drawing near to God in powerful, prevalent intercession! With these two hands uplifted, this Church, like Joshua, shall utterly destroy Amalek, and the sun and moon shall stand still while it is being done! And so long as Moses prays, and Aaron and Hur hold up his hands, the victory must surely come!

II. Now I want your very earnest attention to the second and, perhaps, the more important portion of my discourse, in which I am going to urge you to FEEL THE NECESSITY WHICH DRIVES YOU TO GOD.

Tried Believer, here is a lesson for you. Have you come to a very difficult place? Are you in very sore trouble—such trouble as you never knew before? Then wait upon the Lord and if at first He does not answer you and it seems as if the very gates of Heaven are shut against you, still continue to wait upon the Lord. Where else can you go if you turn away from Him? You are shut up to this one course, so do not seek any other way out of your difficulty. Take that blasphemous letter of Sennacherib and spread it before the Lord, as Hezekiah did. Take that bitter grief and tell it all in His ears. To whom or where should you go if you should turn from Him? Therefore cling to Him and though He slays you, still trust in Him, for you have nobody else to whom you can trust!

But I want, mainly, to speak to the sinner. Perhaps I am addressing some who, by the Holy Spirit’s teaching, have become aware of their danger and who, therefore, are longing to find eternal salvation, but they are afraid they never shall be able to do so. My dear Friend, go and wait upon God and ask Him to save you. Present your case before Him, now, and plead with Him to have mercy upon you—and then show that your supplication is genuine by accepting the salvation which He sets before you in Christ Jesus for all who believe in His name.

In order to urge you to wait upon God, I would just say these few things. First, you will perish unless God hears you. You say that you have prayed to the Lord for a month and yet you have received no answer. Well, even though that is the case, forsake not the posts of His doors, for there is no other door at which you can knock with any hope of success! Perhaps you say, “I have tried to believe in Jesus, but I cannot.” I will not correct your mistake this time, but I will say this—remember that if you do not believe in Jesus Christ, there is no one else in whom you can believe in order to be saved, “for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” It is Christ or nothing! It is faith in Christ or eternal destruction! It is laying hold upon Jesus Christ or else banishment forever from the Presence of Jehovah’s Glory. You are brought to this pass, that God must save you, or you are damned forever! God Himself must save you, or you are a lost man! You are shut up to that alternative, so, being shut up to it, say to the Lord, with all your heart, “Therefore will I wait upon You.”

Now, think, what else can you do? If you want to be saved, what can you rely upon but the Grace of God in Jesus Christ? Your past life avails not. Would you dare to lean upon that broken reed? If you are selfrighteous and reckon yourself to be among the best of mankind, or think that you have done no great wrong, well, then, I do not know that I have any Gospel to preach to you, for our Lord Jesus Himself said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” But if the Lord has been dealing with you by His Holy Spirit and convincing you of your real condition in His sight, I know that you can perceive such flaws in your past life—such black sins—so many of them—such departures of heart from God—that you dare no more trust your soul’s salvation upon your past action than you would trust yourself over the mouth of a pit swinging by a spider’s web! You know better than to do such a thing as that— your past life is so deeply stained with sin that you know you must be washed from it in the precious blood of Jesus, or, otherwise, you must certainly perish!

No, your past life cannot avail for your salvation. And suppose it is suggested that you should trust your future resolves—will they save you? If you make a good resolution, tonight, as strong as you can possibly make it—will that give you a good ground of hope? No, my dear Friends, you know it will not, for you have made very strong resolutions before and they have all been in vain. You have bound the Samson within you with new ropes and I know not what besides, but he has gone outside and shaken himself, and burst your bonds, and once again you have seen that the strong man has not been overcome. I would give nothing at all for the resolutions that you make in your own strength—they do but increase your sins because they are simply further specimens of your presumptuous self-confidence! But, my dear Friend, you know better, do you not, than to trust to your own resolutions? You really wish to be saved and you know in your heart that it would only be a mockery if you were to rely upon your own principles, resolutions and things of that sort. Why, in yourself, you are as weak as water! Have you not proved, by painful experiments again and again, that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing? Come, then—escape from that refuge of lies and go to Jesus—wait upon God because you cannot go anywhere else for salvation!

There is no salvation to be obtained from priests, or forms and ceremonies. There is a gentleman over there who beckons you to come to him. I know him well—Mr. Priest-Craft is his name. He says that he has power to ease men of their burdens, that by some charmed incantation he can give them absolution. “Hi! Presto!” He mutters his formula and away goes the sin—and the sinner is as white as snow! Oh, yes! I know all about his tricks. I have seen quacks in the street selling their medicine to fools and so, doubtless, there are fools that rely upon the word of quacks in churches, cathedrals, and the like! But “none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Of all the monstrous lies which show the impossibility of human civilization giving common sense, not to say religion, to men, one of the grossest is this lie of pretended priestly power! I charge you, go not to that man! He will take your money, but he will leave you worse off than you were before.

There is forgiveness—there is mercy—to be obtained from God through Jesus Christ. But He has not given to any man the power to forgive sins. He says to me, and to all His servants, that we may proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who repent, and we do so, and God will prove that the proclamation is true. But, if sinners look to us, or to priests, or to any mortal men to find forgiveness in them, they will look in vain! Turn not there, I implore you! Take your eyes off the priests of Rome and the priests of Baal! Look to Christ alone, and say, “I will wait upon God. I can do no other if I would find salvation.” Do as the poor monk did who, after living a life of asceticism, at last came to die. In his cell he had found a copy of the Scriptures, which he had read to such good purpose that, when the so-called “sacraments” were brought to him, he waved them aside and was heard to say, “Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!”— “Your wounds, Jesus! Your wounds, Jesus!” Ah, that is the remedy for human sin and there is no other! “Therefore we will wait upon You, O Lord! If there were some other fountain of Grace, we might, perhaps, leave You to go and seek it, but we know that there is none. These priests are of no use to us. We have been to those broken cisterns and found no Water of Life there. Therefore we will come to You, by Your Grace.” O come, Brothers and Sisters, and wait thus upon the Lord!

All of you must know that there is no salvation anywhere but in Christ Jesus, but, suppose any of you were to say, “Yes, I know that. Neither will I seek salvation anywhere else, but I will brave the matter out. I will never yield to God! I will take my chances.” Ah, but can you do as you say? And if you could, what would be the good of it? There will come a time when that strong frame of yours will be as weak as a rush, and then you will talk very differently. I, too, have known what physical vigor and strength mean, but it is not many weeks ago that I knew what it was to be more trembling than an infant! I seemed to feel as if life were not worth the having, so great was my pain of body and heaviness of heart. And such times may come to you big burly men—and you strong-minded women may feel the same—and then you will begin to tremble. As great Caesar, when the fit was on him, whined like a sick child—so many of your braggadocios are the very men who tremble most when they come to die!

Ah, and when God, the Judge of All, lays hold of you in the world to come, though your bones were iron and your sinews brass, you will tremble in every joint! Belshazzar only saw the “fingers of a man’s hand” that wrote upon the wall of his palace, in letters of fire, “You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting” and, though he knew not the meaning of the mystic characters, “the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.” There he sat, a shivering coward—but what will he do who sees God’s hand, by-and-by, not writing on the wall, but lifted up to deal a blow that shall break Him in pieces, as the potter’s vessels are broken with a rod of iron?

“Now consider this, you that forget God,” He says, “lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Those are not my words. I dare not say such terrible things on my own account! They are the warning words of the God of Love! And if Infinite Love speaks like that, you ought to give heed to what is said! There is a weight of emphasis about this message that my voice cannot convey. Let me utter it again, with sorrowful and heartfelt earnestness, imploring you never to run the risk of knowing what these dreadful words means. “Consider this, you that forget God”— not merely you that blaspheme, but you that forget Him and do not think of Him—“Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” God grant that you may not try to fight it out with Him, for you cannot do so, it is impossible!—

*“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there.”*

“But,” someone says, “I do not believe in any future state.” Well, Friend, suppose it should happen to be as you wish—have you any advantage over me even then? Suppose, that, after all, there should be no future state? I am as well off as you are. If there should be no Hell and no Heaven, I am as well off as you are. But if there is a future state. If there is a Hell and there is a Heaven, where will you be then? Remember that to disbelieve is not the same thing as to disprove—and I, for one, feel certain that as surely as you live, there is a future state and there is a God who will judge you! And your unbelief cannot postpone the dread assize.

The ostrich hides his head in the sand—I know the simile is trite, but I can think of no better one just now—and when he sees not the hunter, he persuades himself that he has escaped from danger. But do you imagine that because you refuse to believe the Scriptures, that they will be altered to please you? That can never be! But if you will not believe, I suppose you must go on sinning until you find out the Truth of God and have to cry, in the agony of despair, “Now it is too late!”

The Lord grant that it may not be so. But, because it is true, therefore wait upon God, now, for there is no hope anywhere else.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 14.**

In some respects, Jeremiah is one of the greatest of the ancient Prophets, for he had a most sorrowful task to perform. He had not to deliver a message full of Evangelical comfort, like that of Isaiah, nor had he gorgeous visions of coming kingdoms, as Ezekiel had. He was the Cassandra of his age. Jeremiah spoke the Truths of God, yet few believed him. His life was spent in sighing over a wicked people who rejected and despised him. He bore a heavy burden upon his heart and tears continually wet his cheeks, so that he was rightly called “the weeping Prophet.” This chapter gives us an illustration of the style in which he used to pray.

Verse 1. The Word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts. There had been no rain, so the crops had failed and there was a famine in the land. Jeremiah describes that famine in striking poetic imagery.

2-6. Judah mourns and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is parched, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yes, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass. The distress in the land was so great that the city gates where, in more prosperous times, business transactions took place, and meetings of the people were held, were deserted. There was nothing that could be done while the nation was in such sorrow—and a great cry of agony went up from the capital of the country—“The cry of Jerusalem is gone up.” The highest in the land sent their children to hunt even for a little water to drink. They went to the cisterns where some water might have been expected to remain, but they found none—“they returned with their vessels empty; they were as ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.” The covering of the head was the sign of sorrow. You remember how, in the day of his distress, “David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered.” “And all the people that were with him covered, every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” The ground had been reduced, by the drought, to such a state of hardness that it was useless to plow it, for there was no hope of any harvest coming. Even the wild creatures of the field shared the general suffering. The hind, which is reckoned by the Orientals to be the fondest of its young, forsook its fawn and left it to perish because there was no food. And the wild asses, which are able to endure thirst better than other creatures can and are always quick to perceive water if there is any to be found, tried in vain to scent it anywhere. “They snuffed up the wind like dragons”—like cobras, or serpents, or jackals, as the word may be variously rendered—but they snuffed in vain and their eyes became like coals in their head. They “did fail, because there was no grass.” What then? Why, the Prophet turns to prayer as the only means of obtaining relief!

7. O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do it for Your name’s sake. “You cannot do it because of any merit of ours.”  
7-9. For our backslidings are many; we have sinned against You. O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should You be as a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should You be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You O LORD, are in the midst of us and we are called by Your name; leave us not. Can you not almost hear the good man praying? Notice how he begs the Lord not to be to the land like a mere stranger who passes through it and cares nothing far it. “Why should You be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?” Then he pleads with the Lord, “Why should You be as a strong man, but stunned?”—for that is the meaning of the expression he uses— “Be not You as a mighty man astounded or stunned, who cannot save us; let it not be thought or said that we have come to such a pass that even You cannot help us.” This was grand pleading on the Prophet’s part, and he followed it up by mentioning the close connection that existed between Israel and God. Yet You, O Jehovah, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name.” And then he pleaded, “leave us not.” It was a grand prayer, yet, at first, this was the only answer that Jeremiah received to it.

10, 11. Thus says the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD does not accept them; He will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. “You may pray, if you like, for a plague to come upon them as a chastisement for their sins, but do not pray for any blessing for them.”

12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation I will not accept them: but it will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. After being long provoked, God at last determines that He will punish the rebellious nation and He seems, as it were, to put Jeremiah aside. “Now the day of My vengeance has come, and I will show no more mercy to them.” Now note what Jeremiah does even after the Lord has said to him, “Pray not for this people for their good.”

13. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword, neither shall you have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. He says, “Lord, have pity on the people, for they are misled by their prophets! Perhaps if these false prophets had not thus deceived them and puffed them up, they would not have been so hardened in their sin.” He tried to make some excuse for them, but the Lord would not yield to his pleading.

14, 15. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nothing, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in My name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land. By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. God says, “Yes, I will deal with the false prophets. It is true that they have misled the people and I will punish them for their deception, but I will not excuse the people even on that ground.”

16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them. That seems to be a hard answer to Jeremiah’s pleading—what is the Prophet to do now? God gives him another message to deliver to the people—

17, 18. Therefore you shall say this word unto them; Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. If I go forth into the field, then behold! the slain with the sword! And if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! Yes, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. So God told Jeremiah that he might go and tell the people that he would weep continually for them. The faithful and sympathetic Prophet was to be allowed constantly to shed tears on their behalf and to feel great distress of soul because he saw signs everywhere of the heavy hand of God resting upon the guilty people. If they went outside the city, the Chaldeans slew them with the sword. And if they stayed inside, they perished by famine! Or those that died not were carried away captive into a land that they knew not. What is Jeremiah to do in such a case as this? He is told that he must not pray for the people, and God seems determined to smite them. What can love do when even the gates of prayer are ordered to be closed? Notice how, after he is told that he must not pray, he edges his way up towards the Throne of Grace and, at last, he does what he is told not to do. He begins thus—

19. Have You utterly rejected Judah? Has Your soul loathed Zion? Why have You smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! That is not exactly praying, but it is very like it. Jeremiah is asking the Lord whether He can really have cast off His people.

20. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against You. He has now advanced a step farther, to the confession of sin. If that is not really prayer, it always goes with it. It is the background of prayer, so we shall soon have some other touches in the picture.

21. Do not abhor us for Your name’s sake, do not disgrace the Throne of Your Glory: remember, break not Your Covenant with us. Now he is actually getting to praying. He cannot help himself. He is told that he must not pray, but he feels that he must—he loves the people so much that he must plead for them.

22. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain! Or can the heavens give showers? Are You not He, O LORD our God? Therefore we will wait for You: for You have made all these things. O splendid perseverance of importunity—strong resolve of a forbidden intercession! “You, O Lord our God, tell us not to pray, but we cannot restrain our supplication—‘Therefore we will wait for You.’” God help us all to wait for Him! We are not so discouraged from praying as he was who spoke these words, so there is still more reason why we should say to the Lord, “Therefore we will wait for You.”

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THE NORTHERN IRON AND THE STEEL  
NO. 993

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

**“Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?” Jeremiah 15:12.**

THE Prophet Jeremiah was, as we saw upon a former occasion, a man of exquisitely sensitive character. Not a Prophet of iron, like Elijah, but nearer akin to Him who was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He lived in times which were peculiarly trying to him, and in addition was called to exercise an office which involved him in perpetual sorrow. He loved the people among whom he dwelt, yet he was commissioned by God to pronounce judgments upon them. This in itself was a hard task to such a nature as his. As a loving father, fearful of Eli’s doom uses the rod upon his child, but feels each stroke in his own heart far more acutely than the child does upon his back, so every threat which the Prophet uttered lashed his own soul and cost his heart the direst pains.

He went, however, to his work with unstaggering firmness—hopeful, perhaps, that when his countrymen heard the Divine threat, they would repent of their sins, seek mercy, and find it. Surely if anything can add weight to the prophecy of the judgments of God it is the trembling love, the anxious fear with which such a messenger as Jeremiah would deliver his warning. The deep sorrow of him who warned them ought to have driven the sinful nation to a speedy repentance. But instead they rejected his warnings, they despised his person, and defied his God.

As they thus heaped wrath upon themselves, they also increased his sorrow. He was a delicate, sensitive plant and felt an inward shudder as he marked the tempest gathering overhead. Though a most loyal servant of his God, he was sometimes very trembling, and though he never ventured, like Jonah, to flee unto Tarshish, yet he cried in the bitterness of his soul, “O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men. That I might leave my people, and go from them!”

The Jews treated him so harshly and unjustly that he feared they would break his heart. They smote him as with an iron rod, and he felt like one crushed beneath their unkindness. To silence his fear the Lord assures him that He will renew his strength. “Behold,” says He, “I have made you this day a defensed city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against you. But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.”

Thus the Lord promised to His servant the Divine support which his trials demanded. He never did and never will place a man in a trying position and then leave him to perish. David dealt thus treacherously with Uriah, but the Lord acts not thus with His servants. If the rebellious seed of Israel were iron, the Lord declared that His Prophet should be hardened by sustaining Grace into northern iron and steel. If they beat upon him like hammers on an anvil, he should be made of such strong, enduring texture that he should be able to resist all their blows.

Iron in the olden times among the Israelites was very coarsely manufactured, but the best was the iron from the north. So bad was their iron generally, that an admixture of brass, which among us would be thought rather to deteriorate the hardness, was regarded as an improvement. So the Lord puts it, “Shall iron—the common iron—break the most firm and best prepared iron?” It cannot do so—and if the people acted like iron against Jeremiah, God would make his spirit indomitably firm that they should no more be able to put him down than common iron could break the northern iron and the steel.

That being the literal meaning, we shall draw from our text a general principle. It is a proverbial expression, no doubt, and applicable to many other matters besides that of the Prophet and the Jews. It is clearly meant to show that in order to achieve a purpose, there must be a sufficient force. The weaker cannot overcome the stronger. In a general clash the firmest will win. There must be sufficient firmness in the instrument or the work cannot be done. You cannot cut granite with a penknife, nor drill a hole in a rock with an auger of silk. Some forces are inadequate for the accomplishment of certain purposes. If you would break the best iron, you will be foiled if you strike it with a metal less hard.

I. We shall first of all apply this proverb to the PEOPLE OF GOD INDIVIDUALLY. Shall any power be able to destroy the saints? We are sent into the world, if we are Believers in Christ, like sheep in the midst of wolves—defenseless and in danger of being devoured—yet no power on earth can destroy the chosen disciples of Christ. Weak as they are, they will tread down the strength of their foes. There are more sheep in the world now than wolves. There are parts of the world where wolves once roamed in troops where not a wolf can now be found.

Yet tens of thousands of sheep feed on the hillside—one would not be very bold to say that the day will come when the wolf will only be known as an extinct animal, while as long as the world lasts the sheep will continue to multiply. In the long run, the sheep has gained the victory over the wolf. And it is so with Christ’s people. They appear to be weak, but there is a force about them which cannot be put down—they will overcome the ungodly yet—for the day will come when the mighty Truth of God shall prevail. God hasten that blessed and long-expected day!

Till then, when persecuted we are not forsaken. When cast down we are not destroyed. Many Christians are placed in positions where they are subject to very great temptations and persecutions. They are mocked, laughed at, ridiculed, called evil names. Persecuted One, will you deny the faith? Are you going to put aside your colors and relinquish the Cross of Christ? If so, I can only tell you, you are not made of the same stuff as the true disciples of Jesus Christ. For when the Grace of God is in them, if the world is iron, they are northern iron and steel. They can bear all the blows which the world may possibly choose to lay upon them, and as the anvil breaks the hammers in the long run, so will they, by their patient endurance for Christ’s sake, break the force of all persecution and triumph over it.

Do I speak to a young Christian who has come up to London and finds himself placed where he is continually ridiculed? Will you shrink in the day of trial? Do you mean to play the coward? Shall the iron break the northern iron and the steel? Let it not be so! Be strong. Be you like men. And in the energy of the Holy Spirit, endure as seeing Him that is invisible. There is no need that we should fear, for amid all dangers the love of God shall live within us as a fire unquenchable. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Besides persecution, we are called frequently to serve the Lord under great difficulties. There are supreme difficulties connected with the evangelization of this city. To stand here and preach to such a congregation as this—so large and so eager for the Word—is a pleasure. But every sphere of labor is not equally cheering. Some of you who go to the lodging houses to speak, or who visit the alleys, or stand up in the low neighborhoods to preach the Word of Life, I know full well find it anything but child’s play to serve your Lord under such conditions.

Yours is rough hedging and ditching work—with very little in it of rosewater and gentility—and very much of annoyance and disappointment. What, then, is your resolution? I trust it is this—that as much strength is needed, you will wait more than ever upon the Strong One till the needed power is given you. I trust you are not of that craven spirit which shrinks at difficulty or toil. Will you give way before the labors demanded of you? Do the redeemed of the Lord consent to give London up to Satan’s rule?

Do they say in despair that its dark parts cannot be enlightened? Will the Church of God despair of any race or country? Will it say—“There is no converting the Romanist. There is no convincing the literate and crafty Brahmin?” Is the iron to break the northern iron and the steel? Will we not rather take a firmer grip upon Omnipotence and draw down almighty help by the blessed vehemence of prayer? What are we doing? What ails us that we are so soon dispirited? Is the Lord’s arm waxed short? The Apostles never thought of defeat—they believed that the Gospel could break everything in pieces that stood in its way—and they went without hesitation to the work which the Lord sent them to do.

It was theirs to dare and die—questions and foreboding were not theirs. Into the bloody jaws of death those champions of Christendom rode on with dauntless courage and won the victory! And are we to give way under difficulties? Are we to be as reeds shaken of the wind? You, Sunday school Teacher, are you going to give up your class because the boys are unruly? You in the Ragged-school, are you thinking of closing the doors, because as yet the children have not come in great numbers, or because the young Arabs are as wild as unbroken colts?

You, who stood in the corner of the street the other night to preach— did you determine never to stand up and preach again because of the rough reception you received? O Man, be of different metal from this! If God has called you to do anything, do it even if you die in doing it. To a man for whom Jesus died, no work should seem hard, no sacrifice grievous. All things are possible to those who burn with the love of God. There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore it with.

Look at the Mont Cenis Tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks. With a sharp tool, edged with diamonds, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says—“Is your work hard? Set a harder resolution against it, for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something still harder.” May the Spirit of God work in you invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance! Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel.

Under persecutions and difficulties, let God’s people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it—for according to our faith so shall it be unto us. One of the greatest trials to which the people of God are subject, in trying to serve their Master, is failure. The seven lean kine, as they eat up the seven fat kine, sorely try the Believer’s faith. Alas, our disappointments seldom come alone, but like Job’s messengers follow close upon each other’s heels. When a man succeeds, he continues to succeed, as a rule. He derives encouragement from what God has already done by him, and goes from strength to strength.

Probably, however, there is more Grace exhibited by the Christian, who, without present success, realizes the things not seen as yet and continues, still, to work on. To labor is not easy, but to labor and to wait is harder by far. It is a grand thing to continue patiently in doing well, confident that in the end the reward is sure. He is a man, indeed, who under long-continued disappointment will not—

*“Bate a jot  
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer*

*Right onward.”*  
Such a man “plucks success even from the spear-proof crest of rugged danger.” The well-annealed steel within him before long breaks in shivers the common iron which strikes him so severely. To him, to overcome by Grace is glory, indeed.

Some of the greatest works that were ever performed by Christian people were not immediate in their results. The farmer has waited long for the precious fruits of the earth. The question has been asked, again and again, “Watchman, what of the night?” Some, no doubt, have had to labor all their lives and have bequeathed to their heirs the promise whose fulfillment they had not personally seen. They laid the underground courses of the temple and others entered into their labors.

You know the story of the removal of old St. Paul’s by Sir Christopher Wren. A very massive piece of masonry had to be broken down. And the task, by pick and shovel, would have been a very tedious one, so the great architect prepared a battering-ram for its removal. A large number of workmen were directed to strike with force against the wall with the ram. After several hours of labor, the wall, to all appearances, stood fast and firm. Their many strokes had been apparently lost, but the architect knew that they were gradually communicating motion to the wall, creating an agitation throughout the whole of it, and that by-and-by, when they had continued long enough, the entire mass would come down beneath a single stroke.

The workmen, no doubt, attributed the result to the one crowning concussion, but their master knew that their previous strokes had only culminated in that one tremendous blow and that all the nonresultant work had been necessary to prepare for the stroke which achieved the purpose. O Christians, do not expect always to see the full outgrowth of your labors! Go on, serve your God! Testify of His Truth! Tell of Jesus’ love! Pray for sinners! Live a godly life! Serve God with might and main—and if no harvest springs up to your joyous sickle—others shall follow you and reap what you have sown! And since God will be glorified, it shall be enough for you!

Let no amount of failure daunt you. Be uneasy about it, but do not be discouraged. Let not even this iron break the resolution of your soul. Let your determination to honor Jesus be as the northern iron and the steel. I might thus enlarge but I have so many other things to speak of that I shall pass on. The essence of what I want to say is this—if any dear Brother here, as a Christian, is put to very severe trials, he may depend upon it there is nothing that happens to him but what is common to men. And that there is Grace enough to be had to enable him to bear up under all. There is no need for any one soldier of God to turn his back in the day of battle.

It is not right that any one of us should consider himself doomed to be defeated. The Holy Spirit gives power to the weak and lifts the common warriors into the ranks of the mightiest. Fullness of Grace is provided for us in Christ Jesus, and if we draw from it by faith we shall not need to fail. Let us not be slow to arm ourselves with the Divine might! Let us ask the Captain of our salvation to make us as tough in the day of battle as the northern iron was beneath the blow of the common iron—that having done and suffered all, we may still stand—and none may be able to rob us of our crown.

II. But we shall now make a second use of this same proverb. It is applicable to the cause of God in the world—to THE CHURCH. I shall speak but little upon this, for time would fail me. What power, however like to iron, shall suffice to break the kingdom of Jesus, which is comparable to steel? We every now and then hear the babyish talk of persons who say that the Gospel will die out in England—that Romanism will return in all its darkness—Gospel Light will be extinguished, and the candle which Latimer helped to light will be blown out. Atrocious nonsense, if not partial blasphemy!

If this thing were of men it would come to nothing. But if it is of God, who shall overthrow it? It has sometimes happened that fear has been the father of the thing it feared—let it not be so in this case. Let us not court defeat by anticipating it. As surely as the Lord lives, the end of the Roman Catholic Anti-Christ will come, and the long-expected angel shall cry with a loud voice, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” “Rejoice over her, you Heaven, and you holy Apostles and Prophets. For God has avenged you on her” (Rev. 18:2, 20).

Other desponding prophets foretell that infidelity will so spread through all the Churches and the fabric of society, that at last we shall see this country without a Gospel ministry, and perhaps, through the spread of revolutionary principles, bereft of all respect for law and order. We are to go down by way of Paris to the foulness of Sodom, and from there to pandemonium. Brethren, let those who will believe these evil tidings, I am not greatly moved by this noise. There are eternal principles and immutable decrees which uphold my joyful hopes!

Consider, for a moment, what is involved in these gloomy forebodings. Then the gates of Hell are to prevail against the Church, are they? Then Christ is to be defeated by Anti-Christ, is He? Then the pleasure of the Lord is not to prosper in His hand? Who said that? Who, but a lying spirit that would lay low the faith and confidence of the people of God? It is no more possible for the Truth of God and the Church of God to be defeated, than for God Himself to be overcome in conflict.

Lo, Jehovah girds His Church like a buckler on His arm—this is His battle-ax. This His weapon of war. And if you can wrench from His hand the weapons of His choice, then you may lift up the shout of triumph over the Eternal Himself. But it never can be, for who shall stand against the Lord and prosper? My Brethren, we may well fear the crafty machinations of the Church of Rome, for all the subtlety of the old serpent is within her. But with the wisdom of God to meet it, there can be no alarm. He takes the wise in their own craftiness—there is no device nor counsel against the Lord.

We may well be dismayed at the insidious attacks of skepticism. But while there remains a Holy Spirit to create and sustain faith in the world, we need not fear that the faithful will utterly cease out of the land. There are thousands still reserved whose knees have never bowed to Baal. Infidelity and Socinianism have ready tongues, but every tongue that rises against the Church, in Judgment she will condemn. The forges of Hell are busy in fashioning new weapons with which to assail us, but the Lord will break their bows and cut their spears in sunder.

They may and will defeat the dogmas of superstition, but the Truths of Revelation and the people who believe them they can never overthrow. The iron will never break the northern iron and the steel. The Church can bear the blows of Ritualism and Infidelity, and survive them all—and be the better for them, too. See what the cause of Christ is. It is Truth—there is victory! Who knows not that the Truth must prevail? There is in the Church of God, moreover, Life, and life is a thing you cannot overcome. A dead thing may be cut in pieces, and thrown to the winds of Heaven. But the Life in Christ’s Church is that which has defied and overcome Satan a thousand times already.

In the Dark Ages the enemy thought he had destroyed the Church, but Life came into the monk in his cell, and Luther shook the world. The Church in England fell into a deadly slumber in the days of Whitfield and Wesley. But she was not dead, and therefore a time of awakening came. The flame burned low but the heavenly fire still lingered among the ashes, and only needed the Holy Spirit to blow upon it and cause a hallowed conflagration! Six young men in Oxford were found guilty of meeting to pray— their offense was contagious—and soon there sprang up hundreds glorying in the same blessed crime!

Earnest servants of the living God were forthcoming and no man knew from where they came. Like the buds and blossoms which come forth at the bidding of spring, a people made willing in the day of God’s power came forward at once. Seeing that there is Life in the Church of God, you can never calculate what will happen within its bounds to-morrow, for Life is an unaccountable thing, and scorns the laws which bind the formal and inanimate. The statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral stand fixed on their pedestals, and the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey never raise a riot. But who can tell what the living may next conceive or attempt?

Men have said—“We will put down the troublesome religion of these gospelers. Build prisons enough, forge chains enough, make racks enough, concoct tortures infernal enough, slay enough victims and stamp out the plague.” But their designs have never been accomplished. They hatched the cockatrice’s egg, but that which came of it died. They burnt the Gospel out in Spain, did they not? And in the Low Countries they erased the memory of it. How is it now? Has not Spain achieved her liberty at a blow? Is not also Belgium free to the preacher of the word? Not even Italy or Rome itself is safe against the obnoxious heretic.

Everywhere, by God’s Grace, the Gospel penetrates! Even the earth helps the woman, and swallows up the flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth to drown the Man Child—political rulers restrain the violence of those who otherwise would slay the saints in one general massacre. It shall be so, right on through all the ages till Christ comes—the iron shall not break the northern iron and the steel. Glory be to God, we have confidence in this, and in the name of God we set up our banner. This, too, is a pleasing theme. But we must leave it and pass on to another.

III. We may apply the principle to a very different matter, indeed—THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS EFFORTS WHICH MEN MAKE FOR THEIR OWN SALVATION. We may remind them that the iron will never break the northern iron and the steel. The bonds of guilt are not to be snapped by a mere human power. Here is a man with the fetters of his transgressions about him, but “he will get them off,” he says—prayer shall be his file! Tears shall be the acid to dissolve the metal, and his own resolutions shall, like a hammer, dash the links in fragments!

But it cannot be—the iron shall never break this northern iron and the steel. Habits of sin yield not to the rasping of the unregenerate resolves. You are condemned, and only Christ, the Son of God, can set you free from the fetters which hold you in the condemned cell! All your efforts, apart from Jesus, are utterly useless. He must bring liberty—you cannot emancipate yourselves. You say that you will break off the chains of evil habits. There are some you can break off, but can you alter your nature?

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” That were an easy task compared with a man renewing his own heart. The imaginations of the thoughts of your heart are evil, only evil, and that continually. Do what you will, they will remain so. The dead cannot give themselves life—it needs superior power to hew off the fetters which hold you prisoner in the sepulcher of your natural death. Your iron can never break the northern iron and the steel which bind you to the slavery of

Hell.

Do you think to force your way to Heaven by ceremony? Do you imagine that Baptism can wash away your sins, that confirmation can convey to you Grace, that outward ceremonies of man’s devising, or of God’s instituting can deliver you from wrath? Believe no such thing! There is no potency in all these to deliver you from the bonds which hold you. The iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel. Come, Sinner, with your fetters, and lay here at the foot of the Cross where Christ can break the iron at once. Come, bring yourself, chained as you are, to Him! Or if you cannot stir an inch, cry out to Him!

Ask Him to deliver you! He can do it. Trust in Him, for trust in His precious blood and reliance upon His perfect Sacrifice will make you a free man in a moment, never to be a bond slave again. But, oh, let not your puny strength be wasted on so futile an effort as that which aims at selfsalvation! How shall weakness achieve the labor of Omnipotence, or death accomplish the sublime miracle of the Immortal? Remember the work of salvation—think how great it is—how worthy of a God.

And then cease utterly from all self-reliance, for it is madness and blasphemy! Where were the need of the Holy Spirit if you could regenerate yourself? Where would there be room for a display of the power of Sovereign Grace, if man’s will and effort could accomplish all? But I leave that topic, also, and pass on to another consideration.

IV. This same text is applicable to the case of any persons who are making SELF-RELIANT EFFORTS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. How painfully are we made to feel, my Brethren, after every series of our special services at this Tabernacle, that we of ourselves can do nothing! How are we driven to the conclusion that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone!

Man’s heart is very hard. It is like the northern iron and the steel. Our preaching—we try to make it forcible, but how powerless is it of itself! The preacher seeks goodly words and illustrations. He brings forth the Law of God, he gives forth threats in God’s name. He reasons concerning judgment to come, and flinches not from declaring the eternal punishment of sin. He preaches the love of God, and the infinite mercy of Christ Jesus, and he blends all this with an affection which longs for conversion.

He prays for God’s blessing—but in many many hearts there is no change—the northern iron and the steel remain unmovable. We call spirits from the vast deep of their lost estate, but they come not at our bidding. We plead with sinners to be reconciled to God, and we beseech them as though God Himself besought them by us! But they remain unreconciled. They are even the more obdurate in iniquity. The cries and tears of a Whitfield would not avail. Though all the Apostles reasoned with them they would turn to them a deaf ear.

The best adapted means cannot break the northern iron and the steel. With some of you an instrumentality has been used which ought to have been more prolific in results. A mother’s tears, to your knowledge, have been shed for you. How affectionately has she spoken to you of the Savior whom she loves—but powerful as your mother’s pleadings are on any other point, you reject them in the matter of your soul. How would it make yon gray-headed man, your father, rejoice if he might see you saved! In other matters this also would have weight with you, but it has none in this.

You have had the Gospel, too, some of you, put to you very, very tenderly by those whom you love best, but you are still unsaved. There could be no better means than human love sanctified and strengthened by indwelling Grace. It has been strong as iron, and would have broken any ordinary heart, but it has not crushed yours, for it is hard as the northern iron and the steel. Yes, and you have been sick. You have been stretched upon the bed with fever, within a hair’s breadth of Hell. Or you have been at sea, and escaped as with the skin of your teeth from shipwreck.

But even the judgments of God have not aroused you. The iron has not broken the northern iron and the steel. This month, to some of you, there have been addresses delivered pointedly, plaintively—which should have moved a rock. I have been present at some of the meetings, when I have heard certain of our Brethren speak in a way that made me inwardly say, “Surely these careless ones will yield to that!” There has been much sighing and crying for your souls. And you have been spoken to personally, many of you. A kind hand has been put upon your wrist, and with tearful eye, Brother and Sister have looked into your face, and told you of your danger and of your remedy.

Oh if this does not save you, what will? “What shall I do unto you?” “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” What other instrumentality can be employed? The iron will not break the northern iron and the steel. Children of God, you are driven to this—that here is a case in which you are powerless. You might as well reverse the wind, or move a star, or create a world, as soften these hardened hearts! What are you to do? Certainly you are to continue the effort—nothing must tempt you to relinquish it—or even to relax your zeal. If you cannot break the heart—truly it is no business of yours to do so—commit that work to HIM who is fully equal to the miracle!

Keep to your work, and fear not that the Lord will work with you. God bids you continue prayer, warning instruction, and invitation. If you knew that every soul you preached to or talked with would be lost, it were no less your duty to preach the Gospel. For the duty to tell out the Gospel is not influenced by our success, but is based upon the commission of Christ—“Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” It is not Ezekiel’s duty to make the dry bones live—but whether they live or not it is his duty to prophesy to them.

Noah was none the less a preacher of righteousness because none, save his own family, listened to his appeals and sought shelter with him in the ark. Go on with your work. But let a sense of your personal inability make you fall back upon your God. Let it keep you from one self-reliant prayer or word, much more from one self-confident sermon or address. Every time we try to do good in our own strength, the effort bears the certainty of defeat in its own heart. You shoot pointless darts. You wield a blunted sword when you go to work for God without God.

It is only when we go in God’s power that we can save souls. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.” Lo, spiritual children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of our soul’s womb is His reward. Feel your weakness, my Brethren, and then you shall know your strength! Go to the sinner in God’s strength, and then shall you see the Divine operation. But certainly not till then.

What a blessing it has been to some of us at times to be made to lie very low in the dust and see what unworthy creatures we are! I have often noticed that when God intends to give a great blessing upon my ministry, and to let me know it, He usually makes me feel as if I had rather die than live, because I feel myself so utterly unworthy to preach His Word, and am made to bemoan my wretched unfitness to be used at all by my gracious Master. Let the stone lie in the brook, and let it be rounded, and made smooth by the water—it will do nothing of itself.

But when it has been worn away enough by the brook, and David slings it, and smites the giant’s brow, the stone cannot say, “I slew the giant by my own force.” But all men will give glory to the champion who hurled it at the giant’s forehead. Yes, God will have the Glory, and He will take means to prevent us from usurping it. He will make us feel that the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel, and then He will send us forth to victory. Truly my inmost heart confesses that if one heart has been won for my Lord Jesus by me, I am less than nothing in it, and He is All in All. My soul dares not touch the Glory, but loathes every thought of self-praise. He has done it, and to Him be everlasting songs!

V. But now I must close—time warns me to do so—by remarking that this text has A VERY SOLEMN APPLICATION TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE REBELS AGAINST GOD. Men sometimes think themselves of very great consequence. I spoke with one some years ago who had professed to be a Christian, who addressed me very indignantly after some little argument, and said that before long he intended to produce a pamphlet which would extinguish Christianity.

I remember making the remark that I dared to say that the world would hear as much about it as when a fly fell into a pail of water and was drowned, and not much more. And then he was more indignant still. But I told him I had seen many a moth dash against my gas burner in the evening, but I had never seen the light put out, though I had seen the wretched insect fall with singed wings upon my table, to suffer for its fatal folly. And I feared that such a fate would happen to him.

So rest assured it will be to you, O Blasphemer of God, or Hater of His Christ! Fight against God, would you? Measure your Adversary, I charge you! The wax is about to wrestle with the flame—the twig is about to contend with the fire. It is too unequal a warfare. If you are wise, you will select another adversary, and not attempt to go to war with the Omnipotent King with such a puny force as yours. “Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?” You may be like iron—go and break the potsherds of the earth. They are fair game for you. But do not contend against the northern iron and the steel, for these will break you.

You will not be able to deprive Christ of a single atom of His glory. You may blaspheme, but even that shall, somehow or other by a holy alchemy, be turned to His Glory. You cannot thwart His Decrees. The great wheels of His Providence grind on, and woe to him who throws himself in their track—they will surely grind him to powder. The huge Matterhorn lifts its colossal head above the clouds. Who will speak against it? It bows not its giant form. And no matter what of snow and sleet may dash against its ramparts, there it stands, still the same—emblem herein of the great Throne of the Eternal, firm and immutable—though all the universe storm at its foot.

To resist God is to strike with naked feet against a goad. “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” You will hurt yourself. You cannot injure Him, nor change His purposes by so much as the turning of a hair. God will have His way—none shall resist His will. Everlasting and eternal are His decrees. And fast and fixed they ever must remain, though all earth and Hell should unite in one great conspiracy. He thrusts a bit into the tempest’s mouth and rides upon the wings of the wind! Confusion there is none to Him. Adversaries, what are they? They are utterly consumed as the stubble.

Take heed that God come not out against you, you who are rebels. For if He once puts on the war harness and fights against you, woe unto you! Have you not heard? Has no one told you of the arrows of His quiver? They are sharp, heart-piercing, infallible. Sickness can shake you till every nerve shall become a road for pain to carry on its dreadful traffic. Poverty can come upon you, and want, like an armed man. Death shall strike down all your lovers, and your acquaintances shall sink into the abyss. Let God but come forth in judgment against a man, or a people, and what can He not do?

Look at the nation across the Channel, and see how God has dealt with it. Turn to any other nation against whom His fiat has gone forth, and read the story of its overthrow. What can emperors do, and their imperial guards, and their novel instruments of war, and their death-dealing machines that were to mow down thousands in an hour? He that sits in the heavens does laugh! The Lord does have them in derision. He has broken the bow and cut the spear in sunder. He has burned the chariot in the fire.

Contend no more against the Almighty—put back your sword into the scabbard and submit yourself to the inevitable—for remember, before long, O Rebel against God, He will deal with you in another fashion than He does now. Let that breath which is in your nostrils go forth from you, and where are you, then? I will quote one passage of Scripture and leave it to your thoughts. “Beware, you that forget God”—that is the very mildest form of rebellion—“Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

O may you never know what that means! Cast down your weapons! Come now and ask for reconciliation. The Ambassador of Peace invites you. I point you no longer to His burning Throne, but to yonder Cross. See there God in human flesh—bleeding, suffering, dying. Those wounds are fountains of mercy. Look to them, and you shall live! Wrath is appeased by the death of Jesus. Fury is no more in Jehovah! Trust in Jesus, the

Crucified, and your transgression shall be forgiven you. That precious blood shall make reconciliation—there shall be peace between you and God.

But O resist no longer, for the iron cannot break the northern iron and the steel. The Lord bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 40: 9-31.

LETTER: CLAPHAM, JUNE 5. *TO MY FRIENDS EVERYWHER*E, I HAVE now endured ten silent Sundays, and as I know that many of you are anxious to have accurate information as to my state of health, and as I have now something cheerful to communicate, I feel bound to add the present note to this week’s sermon. The pain of my disease, which has been intense, has now ceased for a week or more. I have had a succession of good nights in which sweet sleep has so refreshed me that I felt, each morning, to be far in advance of the previous day. I am now very weak—weak as a little child—but by the same mercy which allayed the pain, strength will be restored, and I shall have the pleasure of being again at my delightful labor.

Please pray for me that I may be speedily and lastingly restored to health, if it is the Lord’s will. Ask also that the furnace heat which I have suffered may produce its full effect upon me in my own soul and in my ministry. My heart’s inmost desire, as the Lord knows, is the salvation of sinners and the building up of His people in their most holy faith to the glory of the Lord Jesus—therefore it has been very grievous to me to have been debarred my pulpit and shut out from other means of usefulness.

Nevertheless, no work has flagged at the Tabernacle because of my illness—pecuniary help has been furnished just when it was needed—and spiritual help has been given by the Lord of Hosts. We desire to accomplish more and to receive more blessing when our health is restored to us. Surely the Master has some great design to be answered by laying His servant aside—we trust it will prove to be so. Let our prayers be more fervent, our zeal more ardent and our labors for the spread of the Truth more abundant, and “God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

I have one great favor to ask of all readers of the sermons, and that is that they will try to spread them abroad, and increase the number of regular subscribers. What has been good to you will be good for others if the Lord blesses it. If you cannot preach yourself, you can distribute the word spoken by others. I hope to be able to occupy the pulpit again by June 25, if the Lord wills—but all things are uncertain to us, especially when one is slowly recovering from severe affliction. Yours to serve till death,

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1079 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE SECRET FOOD AND THE PUBLIC NAME  
NO. 1079

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

**“Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”  
Jeremiah 15:16.**

JEREMIAH had been greatly persecuted for his faithfulness in delivering the Word of God. He tells us the reason for his continuance in a work which brought him so sorrowful a reward. He makes us understand that he had been faithful in delivering God’s Word because that Word had been overpoweringly precious to his own soul. He could not do otherwise than speak the Truth of God, because that Truth had been his own daily food. He had met with nothing but ill-treatment from those whom he addressed. They had vilified him in every way—he had been put into the most noisome dungeon. He had been denied even bread and water—everything short of actually putting him to death had been inflicted upon him by his ungrateful countrymen.

But still he went on prophesying. He could not be silent. Though his prophesying brought him nothing but tears, yet he continued still to prophesy, for God’s Word came with such sweetness to his own soul and filled his heart with such ravishing joy and delight that he could not do otherwise than go and tell his fellow men what had been so delightful to himself. I believe this to be the secret of every living ministry. The ministry that is fed upon flattery and flatters those who flatter it is a poor feeble counterfeit and God will never bless it. But the ministry which under great difficulties and fierce opposition is still sustained because the preacher cannot help continuing in it is that which God will bless.

It was good advice of a venerable Divine to a young man who aspired to be a preacher, when he said to him, “Don’t become a minister if you can help it.” The man who could very easily be a tradesman or a merchant had better not be a minister! A preacher of the Gospel should always be a volunteer and yet he should always be a pressed man who serves his King because he is constrained to do so by God Himself. Only he is fit to preach who cannot avoid preaching—who feels that woe is upon him unless he preaches the Gospel—and that the very stones would cry out against him if he should hold his peace.

I have said that Jeremiah lets us into a secret. His outer life, consisting in his perpetual faithful ministry, was to be accounted for by his inward love of the Word which he preached. Depend upon it, this secret reveals all true spiritual life. If ever you see anyone who walks in holiness, stands fast in temptation and is upheld under affliction, you may rest assured there is a something about him that is not perceived by every eye—there is a secret which the world knows not of—a hidden fountain which sustains the stream of his life. There is an invisible spring of vitality which keeps him vigorous even in the midst of surrounding death. Bunyan’s metaphor was that he saw a fire which was burning under singular circumstances, for one stood before it who continually threw water upon it to quench it, and though he did so, yet the fire was not put out.

Christian could not understand the marvel till the Interpreter took him behind the wall and there he saw one that cast oil upon the fire as perseveringly as the enemy cast the water, so that the fire, being secretly nourished, could not be extinguished. Every Christian’s life is of that sort— there is abundance to destroy it, but, if it is sustained, there is a secret something which keeps that soul alive unto God and persevering to the end. We shall, then, tonight speak about the secret life of the Believer and afterwards upon his public life. His secret life is described in this way: “Your Words were found, and I did eat them; and Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” That was for himself alone. In the next sentence you have his public life, his manifestation before men—“For I am called by Your name O Jehovah, God of Hosts.”

I. Now observe that in the description of Jeremiah’s SECRET LIFE which consists of his inward reception of the Word of God, (which description will answer for ourselves), we have three points—the finding of God’s Word, the eating of it and the rejoicing in it with all his heart. First, you have the finding of it—“Your Words were found.” Now we have not to find God’s Word as Jeremiah had, by waiting until the Spirit of God reveals fresh Truths of God, for the Spirit of God now reveals no fresh Truth to us. He takes of the things of Christ—the things which are revealed in the Scriptures—and opens them and applies them to us.

We are not to expect any addition to the sacred canon—the Book is finished and there shall be nothing added to it. We have not to find God’s Word, therefore, in that respect. If any man comes to me and says, “I have God’s Word for you”—if he speaks not according to this Book, you may know at once that he is a liar and that his utterance is a vain imagination. Yes, though he should come with pretended miracles and should boast proudly of his visions, yet is he to be rejected, for Holy Scripture is the mind of God and novelties are the fancies of men. And, therefore, when we use the term “finding” God’s Word, we must use it rightly and our meaning will be mainly contained in the following senses—First, we read the Word. Here it is—God’s Word is all here and, if we would find it, we must read it earnestly.

Let me commend to you the frequent reading of the Word of God. Young people would do well to form the habit of reading a chapter every day, not as a form, but with a sincere desire to understand what they read. If they continue to do so till life’s latest hour they will not regret it. The lack of habitual reading of Holy Scripture by professedly Christian people is very much to be regretted. If you trust yourself to read the Word only when it is convenient for you, it will very often happen that day after day will pass without a passage of Scripture having been read at all. But if you make it a point that such a time shall be set apart for the reading of a chapter and keep to it, it will be well for you.

Of course the habit of setting apart any time is not binding. None of us may say to his Brother, “You ought at such an hour to read the Scriptures,” for we are not under legal bondage, neither are we to judge our Brethren. But, though not binding, I believe it to be very profitable and as proper a thing as appointing regular times for meals. As the habit of having a time for prayer is good, so also is the habit of reading the Scriptures. Yet it is a mischievous practice to read a great deal of the Bible without time for thought—it flatters our conceit without benefiting our understanding.

The practice of always reading the Bible in scraps is also to be deprecated. I recommend the student of Scripture to read through a whole book carefully. As with a poem, we could not get the spirit and sense of the poet by reading a stanza here and there, so you cannot effect to discover the drift of Bible teaching by taking a verse or two here and there. The Bible is divided into many books and I would recommend you all to read through a book, carefully and prayerfully, and get the general run and catch the drift of the Author and so endeavor to perceive the mind of God.

But at the same time, remember that like every other valuable book, the Bible needs diligent and prayerful reading. Surface-skimming is of little use. Some go through the Bible just as a traveler may be whirled through a country in a railway carriage—he will know very little, indeed, about that country though he may traverse it from end to end. He only sees a little of it out of the window and the conclusions he may come to will be very poor ones and utterly unreliable. And to go whirling through a chapter of Scripture, as it were, at railway speed, is of little or no service to the mind. I recollect an Arminian Brother telling me once that he had read the Scriptures through a score or more times and could never find the doctrine of Election in them.

He added he was sure he would have done so if it had been there, for he read them on his knees. I said to him, “I think you read them in a very uncomfortable posture and if you had read them in your easy chair you would have been more likely to understand them.” Pray, by all means, and the more the better, but it is a piece of superstition to think there is anything in the posture in which a man puts himself in reading—and as to reading through the Bible 20 times without having found anything about the doctrine of Election, I said, “the wonder is that you found anything at all! You must have galloped through them at such a rate that you were not likely to have any intelligible idea of what the meaning of the Scriptures was at all.”

If but once in that man’s life he had taken the Scriptures and really desired to know their meaning and had weighed them deliberately and studied them verse by verse and word by word, I think he would have been far more likely to find what was the true meaning of the words which the Holy Spirit has used. But, to come back to our subject—we need more Bible reading. I shall not, tonight, speak of those who waste their time in reading works of fiction though there are innumerable hordes of timedestroying volumes that come pouring forth from the press. I fear that even our religious literature, the best of it, has in some measure kept men from the Word of God itself. I should like to see all the good books themselves burnt, as well as the bad books of Ephesus, if they keep men from reading Holy Scripture for themselves!

Here is the well of purest Gospel undefiled—it springs up in this precious volume with freshness and sweetness unequalled. We who write upon it hand out that same sweet water to you in our own cups and goblets, but to some extent all our vessels are defiled! There is, in the purest intellect, some measure of error and the living water which we hand out to the people must in some measure participate in our imperfection. Do not be content to drink from our small pots and our chalices, but come and put your lips right down to where the living water, with all the selfsufficient fullness of the deeps eternal, comes welling up from the very heart of God!

This is the way to find the Word—to read it for yourselves, to read it from the Bible. If you can read it from the original books so much the better, but if you cannot, be thankful that you have so good a translation as that which is to be found in every Englishman’s house. Be sure you read it until you can say, “Your Words were found.” But we have not found God’s Word when we have read it unless we add to it an understanding of the Word. The mere Words of Scripture are no better than any other words, only so far as they contain a holier and nobler sense. It is man’s superstition to think a text is any more because it is in the Bible than anywhere else—I mean the words of the text—the mere sound. Yet I have known a great many who, when they have just repeated a text of Scripture or read a text of Scripture, think that something good is done.

Why, dear Friend, you need to get the meaning—the inner sense. Nuts must be cracked, so must Scripture—you must get out the meaning, or you have got nothing! Marrow bones, who can feed on them? Split them, take out the marrow and then you have luscious food! Merely verbal utterances, even though they are the utterance of the Holy Spirit, cannot feed the soul. It is the inward meaning, the Truth that is revealed, which we should labor after. To often they stick in the letter and advance not to the soul of Divine Truth. Pray, dear Friends, as you read the Scriptures, that God may illuminate you. Ask that you may not read in the dark as many do, who therefore stumble at the Words in disobedience. The best interpreter of a book is generally the man who wrote it. The Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures. Go to Him to get their meaning and you will not be misled. Oh, when shall the time come when every Christian shall say, “By the Grace of God I read the Scripture and I am enabled by the Holy Spirit to mark it, to learn it, and to understand it. I earnestly labor to know what God means by what He has said, as far as the human intellect can understand His meaning”?

To find God’s Word, however, means more than this. I think it means sometimes the discovery of select and appropriate words to suit our case. “Your Words were found.” You know when you have lost your key and your cupboard or your drawer cannot be opened? What do you do? You send for a locksmith, and he comes in with a whole bunch of keys. First he tries one—that does not fit. Then he tries another—that will not do. And the good man perseveres, perhaps with 20 keys—it may be with fifty. At last he gets the proper key which springs the lock and he opens your treasure for you.

Now Scripture to us is much of the same nature. We have many promises in the time of trouble and it is a great blessing to find the promise that suits our case. We turn them all over and say, “Well, that is a precious promise, but then I am not exactly in that condition. That is a choice Word, but then I do not think I can lay claim to it. And then again, this third passage is very cheering but it is evidently not spoken to a person in my position.” At last you find one, and you say, “Ah, this is the Word spoken to a person of my character—in my condition of soul. My God, now apply this to my heart with power and make this Truth be to my soul comforting and cheering. Your Words are found. I have found the Divine utterance which emphatically pertains to me.”

And truly, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we desire to find a Word of God that would suit us we need never be long in searching if we seek sacred direction. We have come to a point, perhaps, in life, where two roads meet and neither of them seems to diverge from the straight path. And yet we feel solemnly that in a moment we may change the whole current of our life from peace to sorrow by making a mistake. Kneel down at the cross roads and cry, “Lord lead me,” and then go to the Book and ask that the proper guidance for this condition may be indicated by the written Word and you shall often find a text leap out of Scripture to you, seizing your soul with loving violence and drawing you into the appointed path!

I do not mean by this the idle and wicked practice of opening upon texts as a sort of lottery, but a far higher and more spiritual matter by far. The Holy Spirit still remains for us and is the Urim and Thummim of the Christian Church, even as Providence is the pillar of cloud and fire. “‘Your Words were found’—I went to You and to Your Book for them that I might be guided and comforted by them. And I was guided to, and guided by the appropriate text for the occasion.” At the same time, in opposition, or apposition to this remark, let me say it looks to me as if Jeremiah made no selection at all in another sense—“Your Words were found.” They were Your words, all of them, and I did eat them. No matter what the Words were—were they bitter Words? I did eat them—they were my medicine.

Were they sweet Words? I did eat them—they were my consolation. Were they Words of instruction? I did eat them—they were my daily bread. I did not find fault with doctrinal Truth for I found it among Your Words. On the other hand, were they Words of precept? I did not say, “I do not need to be legal. I hate the very word, ‘duty.’” No, but when I found Your Words, if they were precept Words I did eat them. There were some of Your Words that, in the face of them, threatened me. They rebuked me, they humbled me, they spoiled my beauty—they laid me in the dust—but these very words I loved, because “I felt that faithful were the wounds of a friend.” I laid bare my breast to these lances. I asked the Good Physician to use these sharp texts upon me.  
Now this ought to be our constant spirit—searching for the text appropriate to the occasion and yet willing that any Scripture and every Scripture should have its due effect upon our souls. Beware of picking and choosing in God’s Word! It is a very dangerous symptom when there is any portion of Scripture that we are afraid to read. If there is one single chapter in the Book that I do not like, it must be because I feel it accuses and condemns me. My duty ought to be to face that chapter at once and answer its accusation and endeavor, as far as possible, to purify myself by God’s help from that which the passage of Scripture condemns. Brethren, read that passage most which stings you most!

When I go to visit the aged or the sick, I generally know whereabouts the Bible will be marked with dog’s ears, and thumbed and rubbed. Of course one of the favorites is the chapter, “Let not your heart be troubled,” and another—the 8th of Romans—“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” And then, again, they are sure to read again and again the precious Book of Psalms. We are sure to find that the Saints have been there. And I cannot blame them. I think so many of the ripest saints would not have fallen into the habit if it had been a wrong one, but, at the same time, I pray you all to not be afraid to read, or hesitate to read, or be slow to read portions which are not comfortable— passages which are full of rebuke.

We all need rebuke and need it continually, and as soon as we find the Word of God, whether we like it or not for the time, it is ours to receive it and feed upon it by God’s gracious help. “Your Words were found,” that is, I felt I had got a hold of them. I knew I had got them. I had discovered them—they were Your Words to my inmost soul. Do you know there is a habit springing up in these times, when a passage of Scripture is quoted, to put the name of the author at the bottom, as, for instance, Isaiah, Paul, Christ? Now I think the habit is a very absurd one, for the moment you read a verse of Scripture you do not need to know who wrote it—you feel quite sure it is a Scriptural text.

When a man quotes a text of Scripture and puts the name of Christ at the bottom, you feel it to be a superfluity. You know Christ’s words—there is a particular ring about them—there is a something golden in them that cannot be imitated by the utterances of other men. So it is with the whole of the Word of God—we perceive by instinct that the Words are the Lord’s own. Perhaps we could not tell others why we know, but there is a peculiar majesty, a remarkable fullness, a singular potency, a Divine sweetness in any Word of God which is not discoverable, nor anything like it, in the word of man except that word of man is itself drawn directly from the Word of God.

Now we hear of some who try to take away from us God’s Word. “This book is not Inspired,” they say, “And that particular book is not authentic—this chapter—there is a dispute about it.” And, as for the whole of it, the gentry of these days tell us that there may be a sort of Inspiration in it, and so on. Well Sirs, the Bible shall be to you what you like. You shall treat it as you please and you shall look upon it as a mere commonplace book if you will. But know this, that to us it is God’s Inspired teaching, Infallible and infinitely pure! We accept it as the very Word of the living God, every jot and tittle, not so much because there are external evidences which go to show its authenticity—a great many of us do not know anything about those evidences and probably never shall—but because we discern an inward evidence in the Words themselves.

They have come to us with a power that no other words ever had in them and we cannot be argued out of our conviction of their superlative excellence and Divine authority! We have found the Words of our heavenly Father—we know we have, for children know their own Father’s voice. When we speak God’s Truth, we speak what we know, what we have tasted and handled and tested and proved! Dear Brothers and Sisters, I have been rather lengthy upon this first and most important matter of finding God’s Word, and I will tell you why. I have dwelt thus fully upon it because it is just this which is the secret of the thorough Christian life in all its departments. Jeremiah would not have been so bold a preacher if he had not thus found God’s Word. If you hold God’s Word with a loose hand; if you are an inattentive reader; if you are a superficial Believer; if you have loose views about the authority of Divine Revelation, you will be lax in everything else—you will be loose in your obedience to the precept, in your love to the doctrine—and in your hope in the promises.

It stands to reason if the Word of God is not God’s Word to you, it will not comfort you to the same extent as it did Jeremiah and neither will you obey it with the same reverence or teach it with like perseverance. If you do not attach reverence and Divinity and Inspiration to the Word of God it will not yield to you the force and power which it ought to yield and your whole life will suffer. Thus much upon the finding of God’s Word.

A second view of the inner life must now be considered. “Your Word was found, and I did eat it.” The surest way to preserve the Truth of God is to put it into the casket of the soul—to enclose it in one’s inner man. “I did eat it.” By that term is signified, first, the prizing of God’s Word. When Jeremiah received a sentence which he knew came from God’s mouth he prized it—he loved it so that he ate it. He could not lay it aside. He did not merely think of it—he loved it so that he put it into his very self! Oh, when we get God’s Truth, do not let us love it so little as to shelve it by saying, “I accept it formally as belonging to the Articles of the Church of which I am a member.” No! Let us prize it so that we may say, “I must carry it about me, no, better than that, I must carry it in me—it is meat and drink to me.” “I did eat it.”

The term, eating, implies, moreover, that he derived nourishment from it. The food we eat, if it is fit for eating, nourishes and supports us. So when a man reads God’s Word as he ought to do, he feeds upon it and finds in it a something that makes him a better man, a stronger man, more bold in holy service and more patient in submission to God’s will. It is delightful to sit down and suck the soul out of a text, to take it and feel that not the letter, only, but the inner vitals of the text are our own and are to be received into the very nature of our spirit to become assimilated with it.

Many foolish persons, when they come to the Lord’s Table, imagine that in eating the bread and drinking the wine there is some eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Christ in a corporeal manner. But those who understand the mysteries know that eating the flesh of Christ signifies considering, meditating and feeding upon the Truth of God that Christ was Incarnate, was of our nature and is still partaker of the nature of man. The Humanity of Christ becomes food for our souls and that is the meaning of eating His flesh! So, when we drink the wine, the Atonement, the sufferings of Christ are thought upon, weighed and considered—and these become food for our faith, our gratitude, our love, our confidence and holiness.

So, too, with every Truth of God—we are to feed upon it. We are not merely to accept the statement as being true, but we are to get out of it that abolishment for our inner man which God intended it should render. “Your Word was found, and I did eat it.” It is a very different thing from saying, “Your Word was found, and I did admire it,” or, “Your Word was found, and I did criticize it,” or, “Your Word was found, and I did divide it and make a sermon of it.” That is a minister’s temptation. But, “Your Word was found, and I did eat it.” I said to my soul, “Here is something to make you better, to make you more Christ-like, something to help you in your struggle against sin.” Brothers and Sisters, let us use the Word for that purpose! By the help of God’s blessed Spirit let us eat it as our everyday food, the bread and the salt, the wine and the water of our life.

But the figure of eating means more. It sets forth an intimate union. That which a man eats gets intertwined with his own self, his own personality. The body is built up from the elements which are received in the form of food. So the man, the real man—the soul—is made up of the Truth which he lives upon. Some feed on error and their whole manhood, their hope, their confidence—everything is built up of error and their religion is deceitful throughout. But he that feeds upon God’s Word gets God’s Word to be a part of himself and his faith and hope are all based upon the Truth of God. I sometimes hear of a person giving up a certain doctrine. Well, I am certain if a man gives up any doctrine of God’s Word he never knew it, for he who knows God’s Truth knows that it has a clinging power and will not be separated from us!

The diligent Believer, when he knows the Word, learns it so well that he assimilates it into his own being. Let me illustrate this by a fact which is notable, in a lower sense, in certain natural persuasions. When Galileo was convinced that the world moved, they put him in prison for it. In his weakness he recanted and said he believed it stood still and that the sun moved. But the moment he got away from his persecutors he stamped his foot and said, “But it does move.” And so he who knows the Truth of God as it is in Jesus has even a higher persuasion than that which ruled Galileo. He cannot belie the Truth—he has got it so into himself that he cannot give it up.

Sirs, if you can run from Christ you have not yet become His disciple. If you can leave Him, you never knew Him. If you can deny the Truth of God and utterly give it up, you have never known it savingly. But he that can say, “Your Word was found, and I did eat it,” may confront the foe and when his enemy cries, “Give it up!” his reply will be, “How can I give it up? I have eaten it.” You remember the faithful servant who was sent by his master with a very valuable diamond, and who, when he was attacked on the road swallowed the diamond? Well, but even then it might have been taken from him had the robbers killed him. But if the diamond had been of such a nature that the man, in eating it, could dissolve it and assimilate it into himself, all the thieves that ever attacked him could not take away from him that which he had eaten.

And so, when a soul feeds upon the precious Truth of God, all the devils in Hell multiplied 50,000 times could not take the Truth away from him! It is most important for this very reason that we should get such a grip of the Truth of God that it should be, as it were, burnt into our souls—interwoven into the warp and woof of our very being to run like a silver thread right through our entire existence—so that you would tear that existence to pieces and destroy it before you could destroy the Truth that is inwrought in it. “Your Word was found, and I did eat it.” See here, then, my Beloved, the secret power that will support a Christian’s life—the eating of God’s Word—the getting it thoroughly into one’s soul. This is it which will make you speak and act as a Christian.

There is a great deal of error in many Christians and a great deal of sin. And many try to correct the error and remove the sin, and they do well. But have you never heard a doctor say, when a person has been covered with some eruption, “I shall not deal with these eruptions at all. I shall apply no ointment. They are caused by the poorness of the patient’s blood. I shall recommend to him a generous diet. I shall give him a strengthening medicine which will invigorate the system and these blotches will disappear as a natural consequence”? Depend upon it, very many of the faults which are to be condemned in Christians are the result of their not leaning upon God’s Word—their not knowing the whole of it—especially the strong meaty parts of it as they ought to. And if they did come to find God’s Word and to eat it, their spiritual constitution would be stronger and then they would throw off many of the ailments that are now such an injury to them—and they would become healthy, vigorous, mighty in the service of God.

Notice, now, the third glimpse into the inner life. “Your Word was found, and I did eat it, and it was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Nothing makes a man so happy as the Word of God. Nothing makes him so full of delight and gives his soul such peace as feeding upon the Word of God. “The joy and rejoicing of my heart.” I preached the Gospel on a certain occasion in a certain place of worship and I preached the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints and it was not believed in by the minister. However, many of his people who heard the doctrine, and never would have believed it if I had mentioned the words, “Final Perseverance,” drank it in and it made them so very happy that the minister declared I had done a world of mischief by it, for he believed the good souls would never give up the doctrine!

Truly, when God’s Word comes with the power that makes you joy and rejoice in it, your inward delight becomes to your heart a main reason for holding it tenaciously! I would cheerfully give up many doctrines if I believed that they were only party watchwords and were merely employed for the maintenance of a sect—but those Doctrines of Grace, those precious Doctrines of Grace—against which so many contend, I could not renounce or hate a jot of them because they are the joy and rejoicing of my heart!

When one is full of health and vigor and has everything going well, you might, perhaps, live on the elementary Truths of Christianity very comfortably. But in times of stern pressure of spirit when the soul is much cast down, you need the marrow and the fatness! In times of inward conflict, salvation must be all of Grace from first to last. Then it must not be according to the will of the flesh, but according to the will of God! Then you need an “Everlasting Covenant ordered in all things and sure.” Then, “the sure mercies of David are precious” and then it is that you come to understand how those glorious Truths of God which have been called Calvinistic, but which are really the Truth of God’s own Word, are so much prized by old and advanced Believers.

Aged and tried saints, having had their senses exercised to discern good and evil, have also come to a period of life in which they need consolation—to a time in which deep experience calls for solid sustenance—and therefore they fall back on the eternal verities and rejoice in them. Beloved, may you know every Truth of God’s Word by rejoicing in it! May you know its power to console you and uplift you in the time of distress, for, when you know the joy that flows from the Truth of God into the regenerate heart, you will say—

*“Should all the forms which men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I’ll call then vanities and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*

These three things are the secret of a strong spiritual life—to find, to eat, and to rejoice, in God’s Word.

II. Now, very briefly, we shall describe THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS OUTWARD LIFE, as he is mentioned here—“I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.” Now I think these words may be used in three ways. First, the condition of Jeremiah was one which he had attained by his conduct. He was so continually preaching about Jehovah, so constantly insisting upon Jehovah’s will and going upon Jehovah’s errands, that they came to call him, “Jehovah’s Man,” and he was known by Jehovah’s name.

Now the man who loves God’s Word and feeds on it, and rejoices in it, will so act that he will come to be called a Christian. He will not only be so, but he will be called so. Men will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. If they do not give him the name in the sense of honoring him, they will give it him as a nickname, but they will be sure to call him, in their hearts, at least, by such a title. An esteemed city missionary who for years frequented public houses to preach the Gospel there, was known as, “The Man with the Book,” because he always carried his Bible with him. Oh, I wish many of us were known as, “The Man with the Book.” Among the heathen it has frequently happened that earnest missionaries have been known as, “Jesus Christ’s Men,” or the heathen have said, “Here comes God’s Man.”

We don’t expect them to give us that title by word of mouth, but I could earnestly pray that every one of us may have it in some shape or other. You know generally the world will pick out some religious leader and then they will abuse those who listen to him by calling them by his name. They need not blush at that, since it is often only the world’s way of owning that they are Christians—their acknowledging that they are the followers of that which is right and true. Years ago, when a man spoke of the things of God with great emotion so that he quaked with holy trembling, they called him a “Quaker.” It was but acknowledging that a power was influencing the man which the world did not understand.

And when other persons were methodical and precise in their lives, they called them “Methodists”—persons who lived by method and rule. They needed not to be ashamed of that and they were not. It was only another way of the world’s pointing them out and saying, “These are God’s people.” They thought it a sneer and meant it for a sneer, but it was an honor! To be called, “Jehovah’s Man,” was an honor to Jeremiah. And to be called by any of these nicknames which signify that we belong to God is an honor to aspire after and not to be regretted. May we all win some opprobrious name and wear it as our title of holy chivalry!

But this is a name, in the second place, which is involved in the profession of every Christian. “I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of Hosts.” Of course you are so called, if your profession is true! You were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and you then and there accepted that name. You are a Believer in Christ and therefore you are rightly called a Christian—you cannot escape from it. By being a believer in Christ’s name, you have Christ’s name named upon you.

Oh, Friend, consider what your obligations are! There was a soldier in the Macedonian army who was named Alexander—a coward. And he was called before the king, and asked, “What is your name?” He said, “Alexander.” “Then,” said the king, “You must give up your name, or you must cease to be a coward.” So we call before us those who are Christians and we say, “What is your name? You are named with the name of Christ, therefore you must give up being covetous. You must give up being badtempered, worldly, slothful, lustful—or else you must give up Christ’s name—for we cannot have Christ’s name dishonored any more than Alexander would have his name dishonored.” You were spitting fire just now against that person who had irritated you. Suppose I had stepped in at that moment, and said, “You are called by the name of Christ!” What a color would have risen in your face!

Perhaps today you were talking idle stuff with vain persons and supposing someone whom you honored and loved had laid his hand on you and whispered, “What? You, a Christian, and talk like that?” How would you have felt? Oh, that we remembered always that we are Christians and therefore must always act up to the name that is named upon us! God grant you, Friends, that in the power of the eating of God’s Word you may be constrained to always act as becomes those upon whom the name of Christ is named!

Once more—this word may be used in the sense which arises out of the Gospel itself. “I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts: I belong to You. When they gather up the nations and they say, ‘This man belongs to Babylon, and that man to Assyria, and that man to Egypt,’ I belong to You and am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.” What a comfort this is—we who believe in Christ belong to God! We are His portion and He will never lose us. “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord, “when I make up My jewels.” We see the broad arrow put here and there upon royal property— upon government property—let us remember that we have the broad arrow of the King of Kings set upon us as Believers in Christ!

The Lord will take care of us because His name is named upon us and we belong to Him. “You are not your own: you are bought with a price.” “All things are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” You are poor but you are Christ’s. Does not that mitigate your poverty? You are sick but you are God’s. Does not that comfort you? The poor lamb lies in the cold field but if it belongs to a good shepherd, it shall not die. The sheep is sick, or it has wandered, but, if it belongs to an Omnipotent Shepherd, it shall be healed and it shall be brought back! The name of Christ being named upon us is the guarantee of our present comfort and of our future security.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I come back to the point I began with—find God’s Word, eat God’s Word, rejoice in God’s Word, and then go and live as those who are alive from the dead, who wear not the name of the first Adam, but the name of the second Adam—who are not known any longer as the servants of sin, but known as the servants—the sons—of God, forever and ever! God bless you and if you have not believed, may you be led to trust in Jesus crucified this very night that you may be called by His name. We pray it for His name’s sake. Amen.

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HIDDEN MANNA  
NO. 980

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Your Words were found, and I did eat them. And Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”  
Jeremiah 15:16.**

JEREMIAH was a man of exceedingly sensitive temperament. The very reverse of Elijah. Yet he was sent of God to execute a duty which apparently required a person of great sternness and slender sensibility. It was his unhappy duty to denounce the judgments of God upon a people whom he dearly loved, but whom it was impossible to save. For even his deep anguish of heart and melting pathos were powerless with them, and rather excited their ridicule than their attention. Either they did not believe that he was sent of God at all, or else they neither cared for Jehovah nor for His Prophet.

Naturally mild and retiring, his strong sense of allegiance to God and love to Israel made him bear a fearless testimony for the Truth of God. But the reproaches, insults, and threats which were heaped upon him sorely wounded his soul. And even deeper was his anguish because he well knew that his rejected warnings were terribly true. He carried before his mind’s eye at all times the picture of Jerusalem captured by her foes, and her wretched sons and daughters given up to the sword. There is no line in the whole of his prophecy more characteristic of him than that exclamation, “O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.”

He was eminently the man that had seen affliction, and yet in the midst of a wilderness of woe he discovered fountains of joy. Like that Blessed One, who was “the Man of Sorrows,” and the acquaintance of grief, he sometimes rejoiced in spirit and blessed the name of the Lord. It will be both interesting and profitable to note the root of the joy which grew up in Jeremiah’s heart like a lone palm tree in the desert. Here was its substance. It was an intense delight to him to have been chosen to the Prophetic office. And when the Words of God came to him, he fed upon them as dainty food. They were often very bitter in themselves, for they mainly consisted of denunciations, yet being God’s Words, such was the Prophet’s love to his God that he ate every syllable, bitter or not.

This also was evermore a consolation to him—that he was known by the people to be a Prophet of Jehovah. This distinction, whatever persecution it brought upon him, was his joy. “I am called by Your name.” God’s Word received, God’s name named upon him, and God’s work entrusted to him—these were stars which cheered the midnight of his grief. However hard his lot might be—and none seem to have fallen upon worse times— there were secret sweetnesses of which none could deprive him. When he was “filled with bitterness, and drunken with wormwood,” he still drank

of that ever-flowing river, the streams which make glad the city of our God.

The basis of faith’s joy lies deeper than the floods of affliction. No torrents of misery can remove the firm foundations of our peace. May our hearts be so molded by Divine Grace that the words of the weeping Prophet in this verse may be proper language for us to use. Especially do I speak to those who during the last few weeks have found a Savior. My prayer and cry to God for you, beloved Friends, is that you may say sincerely, “Your Words were found, and I did eat them. And Your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.”

I. In considering these words, we shall begin by dwelling upon A MEMORABLE DISCOVERY—“Your Words were found.” As Jeremiah meant them, they signified this—that certain messages came to him most clearly from God, and he recognized them as such. He ascertained how far the thoughts which passed through his mind were originated by the Spirit of God, and how far they were merely his own imaginings. He separated between the precious and the vile, and when he had found, discovered, and discerned God’s Word, then it was that he fed upon it. But the words, as we may use them, may signify something more.

Beloved, it is a great thing to find God’s Word, and discern it for ourselves. Many have heard it for years and yet have never found it. I may say of them as of the heathen gods, “Eyes have they, but they see not: ears have they, but they hear not.” Content with the outward letter of the Scriptures, the inner meaning is hid from their eyes. O that they had known the life-giving Truth! O that they had found the “treasure hid in the field!” The Word of God to them might as well be the word of King James the First, whose name dishonors our authorized version, for they have never felt that its Truths proceed immediately from the throne of God, and bear the authority of the King of kings.

Therefore they have never felt the weight of authority with which its Authorship impresses Holy Writ. What is meant by finding God’s Words? The expression suggests the mode. A thing found has usually been sought for. Happy is that man who reads the Scriptures and hears the Word— searching all the while for the hidden spiritual sense—which is, indeed, the Voice of God. The letter of the Truth contains a kernel, which is the inner life of it. Like some tropical fruits which are very large, but in which the actual life-germ is a comparatively small thing—so within the Sacred Volume are many words and books—but the living secret may be summed up in a few syllables.

The mystery which was hid from ages is a secret something which flesh and blood cannot reveal unto us. “Do you understand what you read?” is a vital and heart-searching question, meaning more than appears on the surface. The chosen of God dig into the mines of Revelation believing that, “Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it.” Therefore they give their hearts to meditation and cry mightily unto God to reveal Himself unto them.

Such seekers winnow sermons as the farmer winnows his corn. They care little for the chaff of fair speeches. They desire only the fine wheat of the Lord’s own Truth. Solomon tells us the method of finding true wisdom in that cheering word at the commencement of the second chapter of the Proverbs, “My son, if you will incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures. Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

Though occasionally the Lord, in His infinite Sovereignty, has been pleased to reveal His salvation to those who sought it not, according to His own Word, “I am found of them that sought Me not,” yet there is no promise to this effect. The promise is to those who seek. To find God’s Words means that we have been made to understand them. A man may be well versed in Scripture, both in the English and in the original tongues. He may be accustomed to read the best of commentaries, and be acquainted with Eastern manners, and yet he may be quite ignorant as to the Word of God.

For the understanding of this Book, as to its depth of meaning, does not lie within the range of natural learning and human research—reason, alone, is blinded by the excess of light, and wanders in darkness at noon day. For “the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Before my conversion I was accustomed to read the Scriptures, to admire their grandeur, to feel the charm of their history, and wonder at the majesty of their language. But I altogether missed the Lord’s intent in them. But when the Spirit came with His Divine life, and quickened all the pages to my newly-enlightened soul, the inner meaning shone forth with quickening Glory! The Bible is to many carnal minds almost as dull a book for reading as an untranslated Latin work would be to an ignorant plowman. They are unable to get at the internal sense, which is to the words as juice to the grape, or the kernel to the nut. It is a tantalizing riddle till you get the key.

But the clue once found, the volume of our Father’s Grace absorbs our attention, delights our intellect, and enriches our heart. To find the Word of God means not only to understand it, but to appropriate it as belonging to yourself. To read a will is not an interesting occupation—repetitions, legal phrases, tautologies multiplied to utter weariness. But if there is a legacy left to you in that will, no writing will be more fascinating! You will trip lightly over the lawyer’s fences and five-barred gates, and rejoice as one that finds spoil when you reach those clauses which leave certain “messages, tenements, and property” to yourself and heirs. In such a case every repetition becomes musical, and technical phrases sound harmoniously!

After this manner we learn to enjoy the Word of God by discovering that we have a part and lot in it. When we perceive that the Lord is calling us and blessing us, then have we found His Word. When the Divine promise assures us, personally, that our sin is forgiven, that our spirit is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that Heaven is for us, that we are accepted in the Beloved—then the Word of God is found, indeed! I will ask each hearer here whether in this respect he has found God’s Word. Have you an ear to hear Gospel Truth as the voice of the Infinite God addressed to

your own soul?

The Dutch farmers at the Cape, at no very distant period, considered the Hottentots around them to be little better than beasts—quite incapable of anything beyond mere eating, drinking, stealing, and lying. After our missionaries had labored among the natives for a time, one of the Hottentots was found reading the Bible by the roadside. The Dutchman enquired of him, “What book are you reading?” “The Bible.” “The Bible? Why that Book was never intended for you!” “Indeed it was,” said the black man, “for I see my name here.” “Your name? Where?” cried the farmer. “Show it to me!” “There,” said the Hottentot, putting his finger on the word, “sinners.” “That’s my name. I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save me.”

It were well, indeed, if men would but read the Bible, saying, “In this volume the great God condescends to speak to me, and bids me come and reason with Him that my scarlet sins may become white. In here He appeals to my weakness that He may remove it, to my willfulness that He may subdue it, to my distance from Him that He may bring me near!” Happy is that man who hears or reads the Word of God for himself, feeling evermore a living power witnessing within his soul, and operating mightily upon him. Unapplied Truth is useless. Inappropriate Truth may condemn but cannot save.

The Word of God to an unregenerate heart is like a trumpet at the ear of a corpse—the sound is lost. Beloved, I pray that you may discern the Truth, and then may grasp it as your own. May your interest and title to the promises be clearly made out so that not presumptuously, but with the full approbation of your conscience you may know yourself to be Beloved of the Lord. “Your Word was found.” Yes, indeed, it has been found by many of us, and a blessed find it was! Remember, my Brethren, the time when you first found God’s Word?

Recall the period of your conversion? Let the remembrance kindle in you anew the flame of gratitude. Magnify the Divine Grace which revealed the heavenly Word to you. What a removal of darkness and bursting in of Glory you then felt! It was a discovery far more memorable than the finding of a new continent by Columbus, or the discovery of gold mines in the southern continent—you found eternal life in God’s Word! May you, who have never found the life-giving Word, be led to desire it. We pray for you, that the Lord may open your eyes to see wondrous things in His Law.

II. Secondly, our text testifies to AN EAGER RECEPTION. “Your Words were found, and I did eat them.” It is not, “I did hear them,” for that he might have done, and yet have perished. Herod heard John gladly, and yet became his murderer. He does not say, “I did learn them by heart”— hundreds have committed chapters to memory, and were rather wearied than benefited. The Scribes fought over the jots and titles of the Law, but were blind leaders of the blind nevertheless.

It is not “Your Words were found, and I did repeat them,” for that he might have done as a parrot repeats language it is taught. Nor is it even, “Your Words were found, and I remembered them.” For though its an excellent thing to store Truth in the memory, yet the blessed effect of the Divine Words comes, rather, to those who ponder them in their hearts. “Your Words were found, and I did eat them.” What is meant by eating God’s Words? The phrase signifies more than any other word could express. It implies an eager study—“I did eat them”—I could not have too much of them, could not enter too thoroughly into their consideration.

He who loves the Savior desires to grow in knowledge of Him. He cannot read or hear too much or too often concerning his great Redeemer. He turns to the Holy Pages with new delight. He seeks the blessing of the man who meditates in God’s Law, both day and night. It is pleasing to notice the sharp, spiritual appetite of a new convert. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He will hear a sermon without fatigue, though he may have to stand in an uncomfortable position. And when one discourse is over, he is ready for another.

O that we all had our first appetites back again! Some Professors grow very squeamish and proudly delicate. They cannot feed on heavenly Truth, because, indeed, they see defects in the style of the preacher, or in the manner of the service. Some of you need a dose of bitters to keep you from quarrelling with your food. When the Word was found by my soul I did not stand to remark upon an inelegant expression or a misplaced word, but I seized at once the marrow of the Truth, and left the bones to the dogs. I drank in the expressed juice of the sacred clusters, and left the husks to the swine. I was greedy for the Truth of God. My soul hungered even to ravenousness to be fed upon the bread of Heaven.

The expression also implies cheerful reception. “I did eat them.” I was so in love with Your Word that I not merely held it, rejoiced in it, and embraced it—but I received it into my inner man. I was not in a frame of mind to judge God’s Word, but I accepted all without demur. I did not venture to sit in judgment upon my Judge, and become the reviser of the unerring God. Whatever I found to be in His Word I received with intense joy. The stamp of Divine authority upon any teaching is enough for the Believer.

Proud self-will demands to have doctrines proved by reasoning—but faith lets the declaration of Jehovah stand in the place of argument. Others may cry, “Let us spin our creed out of our own heart like the spiders. Let us find in the easing of the great the grounds of our beliefs. Or let us remain in a state of suspense, to be molded by fresh discoveries.” But we are committed to Revelation, our minds are made up. We confess that we have eaten God’s Word and intend still to feed upon it—upon the whole of it, and upon nothing else. Open your mouths, you wild asses of the wilderness, and snuff up wind. Our food is more substantial, and we will not leave it to wander with you.

The expression signifies also an intense belief. “Your Words were found, and I did eat them.” He did not say, “Perhaps it is true, and if it is so it is of no great consequence.” No, he made practical use of it at once. He set about testing the power of the Word to nourish his soul. He brought it into the most intimate contact with his being, and allowed it to operate upon his vital parts. We have heard that God’s Word is life. Be it ours to possess that life abundantly! The Truth makes men strong, free, pure, Godlike. Let us then eat it, that it may purify, strengthen, liberate and elevate us.

Whatever God’s Word, by His Spirit can do for man, it should be our desire to experience for ourselves. Blessed is that man who is so humbled as to become like a little child in the submission of his mind, his judgment, and all his faculties to the operation of the Word of Divine Truth. He has eaten it, and shall live by it. But food eaten does not long continue as it was. The juices of the body operate upon it, and the substance is dissolved and absorbed so that it becomes a part of the man’s body.

So when we find God’s Truth we delight to meditate, contemplate, and consider. We let it dwell in our hearts richly till at last its sustaining, upbuilding, nourishing influence is felt and we grow. It is not a hasty swallowing of the Word which is blessed to us, but a deliberate eating of it. Our inward life acts upon the Truth, and the Truth acts upon our life. We become one with the Truth, and the Truth one with us. I would to God we were all more given to feeding and lying down in the green pastures of God’s Word. The sheep fattens as it chews the cud at peace, and so do we. Establishment in the Gospel is the result of meditation, and nothing is more desirable at this present crisis than that all Believers should more constantly study and weigh the Word of God.

Neglect in this matter has weakened, is weakening, and will weaken the Church. We want, at this time, not just persons who have been aroused by solemn exhortation and led to give their hearts to Christ under the influence of deep emotion, but Christians well-instructed in the things which are verily believed among us, rooted and grounded in Gospel doctrines. Many professing Christians think very lightly of Scriptural knowledge, and especially of an experimental acquaintance with Divine Truth. Few nowadays have studied the doctrines of Grace so as to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

Too often converts are made by excitement, and, as a consequence, when the excitement is gone, they grow cold. Some of them go back to the world and prove that they were never taught of God. Others linger on in a half-starved condition, because soul-sustaining Truth is hidden from them. The man who knows the Truth of God, and feels that the Truth has made him free is the man who will continue a free man at all hazards. There are enemies of the faith about nowadays—error is put in very tempting forms. Those who try to subvert the Gospel are exceedingly skillful and know how to make every falsehood fascinating.

These will rend and devour—but who will be their victims? Not the instructed saints! Not those who can say, “Your Words were found, and I did eat them,” but the mixed multitude in nominal union with the Church, who scarcely know what they believe—or knowing it merely in the letter— have no inward vital acquaintance of it. We read in the Word of God of certain deceivers who would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, from which we gather that the elect cannot be deceived, and that for this reason—that the Truth is not held in the hand of the elect man as a staff which can be wrenched from him, but he has eaten it—it has entered into his vital substance.

You cannot tear away from a man what has become assimilated to himself. You might draw the silken thread out of a piece of tapestry and in so doing injure the material, but you cannot remove the Truth which is interwoven into the fabric of our new-born Nature by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is dyed ingrain with the Truth—he wears no flying nor fading colors. He can as soon cease to be as cease to believe what he has learned by the Spirit’s teaching. In olden times, the fury of persecutors failed to make the servants of Christ deny the faith. The saints were taken to the stake, but the fires which devoured their bodies only burned their testimonies into the hearts of other witnesses. They were faithful even unto death.

This glorious firmness in the faith is greatly needed now to resist the insidiousness of error. Besides, dear Friends, it may in the Providence of God happen that some of you will be taken away from the ministry which now feeds you, and what will you do if the Word of God is not in your inmost souls? I have observed many who did run well when under a Gospel ministry, who, when they have been removed into a barren region, have lagged and loitered in the race. Some, whose principles were never very deep, have given them up when placed in society which despised them. I pray you get such a hold of the Gospel that you need not be dependent upon the preacher or upon earnest companions. Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God!

No Truth will be of any use to you unless it is branded into you! Yes, and made to penetrate the marrow of your being. If you could give up the Truth of God, you have never received it. He only has the Truth of God who so holds it that he could never part with it. A person takes a piece of bread and eats it. He who gave it to him demands it back. If he had put that bread upon a shelf, or laid it in a cupboard, he can hand it down. But if he can reply, “I have eaten it,” there is an end to the request—no human power can reproduce what is already eaten.

“Give up justification by faith and trust in sacraments,” says the Ritualist. “Give up faith and follow reason,” cries the Infidel. We are utterly unable to do either. And why? Because our spiritual Nature has absorbed the Truth into itself, and none can separate it from us, or us from it. To live upon the Truth is the sure method to prevent apostasy. “Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart is established with Grace. Not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied in them.” May you all be rooted and built up in Christ Jesus, and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving.

Besides, good Friend, you cannot be very useful to others if you are an unintelligent Christian. To do much good, we must have Truth ready at hand, and be apt to teach. I desire that you may grow up, you who are new-born into the Christian family, to become fathers and mothers in Israel. But this cannot be unless you, as new-born babes, desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, that you may really grow.

O for a race of Bible-reading Christians! We have long had a society for selling the Bible, but who shall found a society for getting the Bible read? A young man who never had read his Bible was tempted to do so—and led to conversion by the gift of a bookmarker, presented to him by a relative. The gift was made upon the condition that it should be put into his Bible, but should never stop two days in one place. He meant to shift it, and not to read the Book, but his eyes glanced on a text. After awhile he became interested. By-and-by he became converted, and then the bookmarker

was moved with growing pleasure!

I am afraid that even some Professors cannot say that they shift their bookmark every day. Probably of all the books printed, the most widely circulated, and the least read volume is the Word of God. Books about the Bible are read, I fear, more than the Book itself. Do you believe we should see all these parties and sects if people studiously followed the teaching of Inspiration? The Word is one—from where are these many creeds? We cry, “the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.” But it is not true of half the Protestants.

Some overlay the Bible with the Prayer Book, and kill its living meaning. Others read through the spectacles of a religious leader, and rather follow man’s gloss than God’s text. Few, indeed, come to the pure fountain of Gospel undefiled. A second-hand religion suits most—for it spares them the trouble of thinking—which to many is a labor too severe. To be taught of man is so much easier than to wait upon the Holy Spirit for instruction. Remember, my beloved Children in Christ, the words of David, and make them your own. “I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.”

“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” “Your Testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” “My eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Your Word.” “My soul has kept Your Testimonies. And I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your Precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

III. Thirdly, the text tells us of HAPPY CONSEQUENCES. “Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” He who has spiritually found God’s Word, and consequently feeds upon it, is the happy man. But in order to get joy from God’s Word we must receive it universally. Jeremiah first speaks of God’s “Words.” Then he changes the number and speaks of God’s “Word.” We are not only to receive parts of the Gospel, but the whole of it. Then it will afford us great joy. That man’s heart is right with God who can honestly say that all the Testimonies of God are dear to him.

“But,” says one, “that is impossible—parts of the Bible are full of terrible denunciations! Can they afford us joy?” In this way, Brethren. If God appoints that sin should be punished, we are not to rebel against His righteous ordinance, nor to close our minds to the consideration of Divine Justice. God’s judgments are right, and what is right we must rejoice in. Moreover, by the threats of the Word many are led to forsake their sin, and thus the warning itself is a means of Grace.

To tender-hearted Jeremiah I have no doubt it was a trial to say, “Your city will be destroyed, and your women and your children will be slain.” But when he considered that some might be led to repentance he would, with tearful vehemence, deal out the thunder of the Lord. But, Brethren, God’s Word is not all threat. How much of it consists of exceeding great and precious promises? Grace drops from it like honey from the comb. How would even Jeremiah brush away the falling tear while that face, usually so clouded, would beam as the sun when he spoke of the Messiah? Surely, if there is anything in the whole range of the Truth of God which can make our hearts leap for joy, it is the part of it which touches upon the lovely Person and finished work of our adorable Redeemer, to whom be honor and glory forever!

Receive the whole of God’s Word. Do not cut a single text out of Scripture or desire to pervert its meaning. Hold the Truth in its entirety and harmony, and then as a matter of certainty it will become to you the joy and rejoicing of your spirit. Allow me to interject another thought. No Word of God to Jeremiah would have given him joy if he had not been obedient to it. If he had kept back a part of his Master’s message, it would have been a burden intolerable to his conscience.

What a wound it makes in the heart if we have inwardly to confess, “I have been unfaithful. I have neglected a command of the Host High.” Never, I beseech you, allow any text of Scripture to accuse you of having neglected its teaching or denied its obvious meaning. There are ordinances to which some of you have not submitted yourselves which you know to be the will of Jesus Christ. How can the Scriptures be a joy and rejoicing to you when their pages accuse you of disobedience to your Master’s will? In order to have the full joy of the testimony of God your mind must yield itself to what God reveals as the clay to the potter’s touch— your willing spirit must be prompt to run as with winged feet in the ways of obedience to all that Christ commands.

Then the Word being found, and you having eaten it, it will be to you a song in the house of your pilgrimage. Let me refresh your memories for a moment by reminding you of certain choice Truths in God’s Word which are brimming with comfort. There is the doctrine of election—the Lord has a people whom He has chosen, and whom He loved before the foundations of the world. I will suppose that you have found it out for yourself and have read the riddle. And like the Apostle Paul, can say, “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. And whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified.”

I will suppose that you know yourself to be called, and therefore know yourself to be predestinated. Is not this the joy and rejoicing of your heart? Is it not to you a very Heaven below to believe that before the hills were made God loved you! Before sin was born, or Satan fell, your name was in His Book, and He regarded you with infinite affection? Could any doctrine be a more abundant table, spread for you in the presence of your enemies?

Take the other doctrine, the doctrine of the Immutability of Divine love. Before you knew the secret of it, it was a mere dogma. But now you understand that Jesus never changes and therefore the promises are yes and amen. You will, you must rejoice! Having loved His own, He loved them to the end. Is not this music to your ears? “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” is not this a heavenly assurance? As you sit down and consider for yourself, “God has loved me, for He has given me salvation in Jesus Christ. The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the Covenant of His Grace cannot depart from me!” Will not your cup run over, and your soul dance before the Ark of God?

Of course it will not be so till you have found the Word for yourself, and have eaten it—but then it shall be marrow and fatness to you. Thousands of God’s people live in doubts and fears because they have not eaten

God’s Word as they should. They do not know the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of Peace. How many are in bondage through the fear that after all, though they have been for years Believers, they are not yet saved? Whereas, if they read the Scriptures, and received their meaning they would know that the moment the sinner believes in Christ he is saved! In that very instant he has passed from death into life, and shall never come into condemnation.

If they read the Scriptures would they endure such doubts about being left to perish after having believed? The thing is impossible! Jehovah cannot cast away the people of His choice. No members of Christ’s body shall be suffered to perish, or else the body of Christ would be mangled, and He Himself would be the Head of a dismembered frame. To have a clear understanding of the Gospel. To know the Covenant which, like a mighty rock, underlies all Gospel blessings. To know Christ and our union with Him. To know His righteousness, His perfection and our perfection in Him. To know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—all these things must inevitably make us strong in the joy of the Lord!

Half our doubts and fears would vanish if we had more acquaintance with the Lord’s Statutes. Other knowledge brings sorrow, but this Wisdom is the joy and rejoicing of the heart. Beloved, if there is a quarrel between you and any text of Scripture, end the dispute by giving way at once—for the Word of God is right—and you are wrong. Do not say, “We have always been of one way of thinking, and our parents were so before us.” Have respect unto God, and sit at Jesus’ feet. The Lord’s teaching is in this Book, and may be opened to you by His Spirit. Test everything by the Word. Prove the spirits whether they are of God.

Do not be such fools as to take your religion from fallible men when you may have it from the Infallible God! Some who do so are not fools in other matters, but in this case it may be said of them as it was once said of the people of an Italian city, “They were not fools, but they acted as if they were.” Persons who would not take the opinion of anybody else as to the goodness of a half-crown will leave their religion to be settled by an Act of Parliament, or by convocation, or by conference. What are brains given to us for? Are we forever to be the slaves of majorities and follow a multitude to do evil? God forbid!

Stand upright, O Christian Man, and be a man! God has given you a judgment, and His Spirit waits to enlighten it. Search the Scriptures! See whether the things handed down by tradition came from the devil or from God—for many an ancient maxim may be traced to the infernal pit. To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them. May we have Grace given us like Ezekiel to receive the roll from the Lord’s hand, to eat it, and to find it in our mouth as honey for sweetness.

IV. The fourth point is A DISTINGUISHING TITLE. “I am called by Your name, O Lord God of Hosts.” This may not appear to some of you a very joyful thing—to Jeremiah it was pre-eminently so. In Jeremiah’s day the name of the Lord God of Hosts was despised. The God of Hosts was the subject of derision among the rabble of Jerusalem, and the weeping Prophet of mournful countenance, who spoiled their mirth, came in for his full share of scorn. Now. Jeremiah, instead of feeling it a hard thing to be associated with the Lord in this contempt of the wicked, was glad to be so honored!

The reproaches of them that reviled the Lord fell upon His poor servant, and he was content to have it so. O you who love Jesus Christ, never shun the scandal of His Cross! Count it glory to be despised for His sake. Let fear be far from you. Remember Moses, of whom it is written, “he esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.” It does not say he esteemed Christ to be greater riches—an ordinary Believer would do that. But he reckoned the worst thing connected with Christ to be better than the best thing about the world. The reproachof Christ he esteemed above Pharaoh’s crown!

Disciples of Jesus! Be willing to bear all the contumely the wicked pour upon you for your Lord’s sake, for in so doing they help to make you blessed. Through the mire and through the slough march side by side with the Truth of God, for those who share her pilgrimage shall share her exaltation. Be content to abide with Christ in His humiliation, for only so may you be sure that you shall be with Him in His Glory.

It was a comfort to Jeremiah that he bore the name of the despised God. It made him the object of very much persecution as well as contempt. The king put him in the dungeon. He was made to eat the bread of affliction, and was in tribulations often—but he took it all joyfully for the Lord’s sake. And if to serve Christ today, and bear His name should entail extreme suffering, as in the days of Rome’s tyranny—yet, my Brethren, we ought to be cheerful in the bearing of it—and glad that we are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

Yet I am afraid I am speaking to some who do not count it a fair thing to bear the name of the Most High. I gather this from their conduct. They have a belief in Jesus. They hope they have, but they have never avowed Christ’s name. You have missed, then, that which was a comfort to the Prophet. Why have you missed it? Because you imagined that it would be a source of discomfort to you? Are you wiser than the Prophet? To him it was consolation that he was called by God’s name. Do you think it would be a sorrow to you?

“Oh,” says one, “I could not bear the world’s rebuke.” Can you bear Christ’s rebuke when He will say to those who did not confess Him before men, “I never knew you”? But you say you could not live up to a profession. You are afraid your life might fall short of what it should be—a very salutary fear. But do you hope to improve your life by beginning with disobedience? If I own my Savior’s name, it is Christ’s business to keep me. But if I am so foolish that I think I am safer in the path of disobedience, then I cannot reckon upon Grace to preserve me. The warfare is arduous, but we do enter upon it at our own charges—there is One who has promised to help us.

Well, if you will be cowards, I will part company with you—if you were, every one of you this day, enemies of Christ, or if you were all of you lovers of Christ in secret, and none of you gloried in Him—I, for my part— could not live a moment without being an avowed Christian. I do not say this in egotism, but as fact. My heart might sooner cease to beat than cease to own the Lord. It is a sneaking thing, and utterly degrading that my Lord should die upon the Cross for me to save my soul from Hell—

and I should be ashamed to wear His livery.

Should He honor me by redeeming me with His blood, and I should deny Him the little honor that my poor name could give when it is enrolled with His people? No! Though least of all His followers, put down my name, O recording angel—and there let it stand—and if all men revile and devils rage, so let it be. It shall be my Heaven to suffer Hell for Christ, if such must be. I cannot comprehend how so many Believers remain outside the visible Church of Christ. I would not question the safety of any man who has believed in Jesus, but I do avow that I would not run the risk that non-confessors run.

For what is the Gospel? “He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him should be saved”? How dare you leave out one half of the Gospel command? What was the Gospel which, according to the Evangelist Mark, is to be preached to every creature? It runs thus—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I do not question the safety of the soul that has believed, but I do say again, I would not run the risk of the man who, having believed, refuses to be baptized. It is plainly his Master’s will. I question the genuineness of his faith if he starts back from obedience to the known command of Jesus Christ.

My dear Brother, to confess Christ is so easy a burden—it involves so temporary a loss, and so real a gain—that I would have you say, “I have found God’s Word, and I have eaten it: it is the joy and rejoicing of my soul. And now from this day let others do as they will, but I will serve the Lord. I bow my willing back to His Cross. I will be buried with Him in Baptism unto death. I would die to the world, and rise to newness of life through His Spirit.”

Blessed are they who go to their Lord without the camp, leaving the world’s religion, as well as its sin, in obedience to that sacred call—“Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters.”

The Lord deal graciously with you, Beloved, and lead you in a plain path, because of your enemies, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 15.

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THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN  
NO. 812

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is  
engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and  
upon the horns of your altars.”  
Jeremiah 17:1.**

IN traveling in the East, inscriptions upon the rocks are often met with, which have remained almost as sharp and clear as when they were first cut by the engraver’s tool. Some of these owe their indelible character to the hardness of the rocks upon which they have been engraved. They must have been written, to use the expressive language before us, “with a pen of iron,” and engraved as “with the point of a diamond.” When such writing had been once achieved, those who had achieved their purpose might have said with Pilate, “What I have written I have written,” for there it stood, and there it stands.

The Prophet declares that the sin of Judah was as indelibly cut into their nature as the rock writings in the stone. Their hearts were as hard as rock and sin was inscribed thereon deeply and plainly—as though written with some iron instrument. Their spirits were just as senseless and hardened as stone itself, and their iniquity appeared as if engraved with the point of a diamond. What was said of Judah, may, with equal truthfulness be said of the whole human race. Circumstances here do not alter cases. Put men where you will, whether they belong to Judah or to the uncircumcised nations, as face in water answers to face, so the heart of man to man—each man is like his fellow—the hardness of Judah’s heart is repeated in the stubbornness of barbarian and Roman, Greek and Scythian. It is seen, indeed, in us—to deal with ourselves is our main business this morning.

I. We shall commence by answering the question, WHAT IS SIN? We are always hearing about it. It is constantly dunned into our ears by the preacher. We cannot turn over a page of Holy Writ without meeting with it. What is sin? How few people have obtained a right idea of sin! How much smaller is the number who express the idea clearly! If you ask the Pharisee of old what sin was—“Well,” he would say, “it is eating without washing your hands. It is drinking wine without having first of all strained out the gnats, for those insects are unclean, and if you should swallow any of them they will render you defiled.”

His repentance dealt with his having touched a Gentile, or having come on the wind side of a Publican. Many in these days have the same notion, but with a variation. We have read of a Spanish bandit, who, when he confessed before his father-confessor, complained that one sin hung with peculiar weight upon his soul that was of peculiar atrocity. He had stabbed a man on a Friday, and a few drops of the blood of the wound had fallen on his lips, by which he had broken the precepts of “Holy Church,” in having tasted animal food on a fast day. The murder did not seem to arouse in his conscience any feeling of remorse at all—not one atom—he would have done the same tomorrow. But an accidental violation of the canons of “Mother Church” excited all his fears!

I read only last night in the newspaper an account of a visit paid by a strict high churchman to a little meeting of Plymouth Brethren and I was amused with the guilt that evidently rested on the writer’s conscience in having been found in such an assembly. He tells us, in the first place, that he was not quite well enough to sit out the usual long service in the Church. And in the second place that he had been to a celebration of the “Eucharist” in the morning, and, therefore, he thought that for once he might be pardoned for indulging his curiosity. His mind was, however, evidently burdened with the weight of his heinous sin.

There are men in England to whom it would be one of the highest crimes and misdemeanors to worship God with the most holy of His servants so long as they did not meet within walls which had been superstitiously consecrated. Singular, indeed, are the ideas which many men have of transgression! But such is not God’s view of sin. Half of those things which mere ecclesiastics condemn are not sins at all. To break the commandments of men may be virtuous! To kick against the conventionalities of a man-made Church may be an evidence of enlightenment! To refuse homage to a proud hierarchy may be a bounden duty!

The chains of custom, the fetters of fashion, the manacles of priest craft are to be scorned by all who claim the right of manhood. To break them in sunder is no sin. Sin is a want of conformity to the will of God! Sin is disobedience to God’s command! Sin is a forgetfulness of the obligations of the relation which exist between the creature and the Creator. This is the very essence of sin. Injustice to my fellow creature is truly sin, but its essence lies in the fact that it is sin against God who constituted the relation which I have violated. It is surprising, when we talk with persons who profess that they have forsaken their sins, how very seldom they will give you a distinctly spiritual definition of sin. I believe they understand it in their hearts, but their understandings come short of the desired point.

Ask them the question, “What sin has most troubled you?” Or, “What in your sin most distressed you?” You will be amazed at their replies! Seldom enough will they answer that sin is obnoxious to them because it is an offense against God—rather they will light on some one offense, and indicate that as the weight which lies heaviest. One very sincere young man told me that nothing had previously pricked his conscience until he upset an oil can in the warehouse where he was working, and in foolish fear of his master, denied that he had done so.

He felt that he had told a lie and was so overwhelmed with a sense of his meanness that he felt thoroughly degraded, and was led to search his heart and to make the discovery of the corruption of his nature. It did not appear to have occurred to him up till that moment that he had been living wrongly in living without God, or that he was acting meanly in his ungrateful neglect of his Maker to whom he owed his hearty service. Sin, through all those years, only meant to him mean things towards his fellow mortals! By God’s Grace he now knows how ill it is to rebel against his God.

This last week an esteemed Brother minister was telling me that in speaking to a man who professed to have been converted, he asked him which sin remained as a load upon his mind. “Well,” said the man, “I have to see after cows and I have often beaten the cows very badly.” “What do you do now?” “Oh, I coax them instead of beating them.” Now, I have no doubt that in his peculiar calling, cruelty to animals would be most strikingly laid upon his conscience, but the pastor had to say to him, “Yes, quite so. But the great sin in your fault is that the cows are God’s creatures, and that He is angry if we treat His creatures unmercifully.”

The guilt lies in all our offenses in our disobedience to the good Lord who has a claim to be served by us with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Conscience readily enough tells us we are wrong if we defraud our fellow men, but if we rob God, how feebly does the moral sense upbraid us! If we were ungrateful to our parents or friends we should feel that we had done a grievous wrong—but we confess that we are ungrateful to God—and yet our shame is not so deep as a true sense of wrong would produce. If we were disloyal to our country and rebellious against its laws, we should feel it to be a great crime—but some of us remain in disloyalty to the King of kings, and in disobedience to the best Laws that were ever framed—and yet our spiritual treason does not strike us with horror!

David touched the center of the matter when he said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” Sin is a lack of conformity to the will of God. It is a breach either in imagination, or desire, or word, or action of the Divine Law. It is, to repeat the words I have used before, a forgetfulness of the true relation which exists between a creature and the Creator. It is but right that He who made us should have our service. It is a great and intolerable wrong that, being created by God, we yet refuse to yield to His will. It is right that He who is so good to us should have our love—it is sin that, living upon God’s goodness we do not return to Him our heart’s affection.

It is right that, being sustained by Divine beneficence from day to day we should give to Him constant thankfulness, but, being so sustained, we do not thank Him—herein lies the very soul of sin. Let it be remembered that tens of thousands of persons in this so-called Christian land live in utter neglect of God. If there were no God, it would not in any way affect the lives of most men—they live precisely as if there were none. “God is not in all their thoughts.” They never pause over an action, and ask, “Will God be angry with this?” They are never moved to the performance of virtue by the reflection that God will approve it.

There is no God to them, though the table is loaded with the bounties of His Providence. There is to them no God even though the sick chamber is made to feel the terror of His rod. There is no God to them though they walk in all the fields of Nature and behold evidences of Deity on every side—no God though they might see His finger in every event of their lives. They live like brutes in this respect and alas, many of them die the same—without God, without hope—earth grubbers buried in the earth. Multitudes of men who are occasionally stirred with the thought of God, yet, nevertheless, as often as they can, forget Him. They cannot quite be without reflections upon the existence of the Deity and their own relation to Him, but still it is so unpleasant a thought and so contrary to the general set of their nature that they shake it off as much as possible, and plunge into the frivolities and dissipation’s of pleasure, or into the stormy seas of care and trouble in business—into anything so that they may be able to be clear of the undesirable remembrance of their Maker.

If they hear a peculiarly earnest sermon they resolve to remember their Creator, but then they have resolved before and they find it as easy to forget now as then. Sometimes an arrow from the Eternal One sticks in their loins, and oh, what crafts and arts are practiced to get that arrow out! How they would, if they could, escape from conviction and continue lighthearted and frivolous in forgetfulness of their God, His Law, His justice and the coming Throne before which all the creatures shall be summoned! Yes, and even when men are compelled to think of God, yet, for all that, they go on sinning! They think of Him and yet violate His commands! They acknowledge His Presence and yet do despite to His love.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is a strange thing! It shows what a monster, what a diabolical miracle sin is, that God should be around us all the day long and yet before His very face we should dare to say and think, and do that which is contrary to His will although a word could crush us as the moth is crushed! Although His will could sink us into the profoundest Hell! What words shall denounce the arrogance and impudence of sin? Who shall sufficiently condemn an evil which defies Jehovah to His face and hurls defiance at the thundering God?

This it is which makes sin so much sin—that it is not sin against God’s creatures, an indirect thing—but it is high treason against the Majesty of God Himself. It is a defiance of Him to His face, a stabbing of the Godhead so far as man can do it, to the very heart. This is sin. Now, in the light of this Truth of God, pausing just a minute, let me ask the Believer to humble himself very greatly on account of sin. That I have not loved my God with all my heart. That I have not trusted Him with all my confidence. That I have not given Him the glory due unto His name. That I have not acted as a creature should do, much less as a new creature is bound to do—that, receiving priceless mercies, I have made so small a return—let me confess this in dust and ashes and then bless the name of the Atoner who, by His precious blood, has put even this away so that it shall not be mentioned against us any more forever.

Let me invite the unconverted to reflect upon their state in the light of this Truth. If sin consisted only in dishonesty, in lying, in swearing, in drunkenness—many of you might plead not guilty—and it might go well with you. But if the sin which will bring upon you the punishment of Hell is a neglect of God, a lack of love to Him—then where are you? You who, with the Pharisee, could say, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men,” where are you? Why, this shows you that your heart may be vile and filthy and you, yourself, may be condemned while your outward conduct may be very commendable, and all who know you may be praising you for your consistency!

Let this Truth of God, then, shine right into your souls, and as you see it to be a Truth and see yourself exposed by it, remember*—  
“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins.”*

Fly to it, and make this the unceasing prayer of your heart, “Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Blot it out for Jesus’ sake.”

II. In the second place, the question, HOW IS THE FIXEDNESS OF SIN WHICH IS DECLARED IN THE TEXT PROVEN? The Prophet tells us that man’s sinfulness is as much fixed in him as an inscription carved with an iron pen in granite. How is this fixedness proven? It is proven in two ways in the text, namely, that it is engraved upon the tablets of their heart, and secondly, upon the horns of their altar. It clearly proves how deeply evil is fixed in man, when we reflect that sin is in the very heart of man.

Man loves sin. Sin is not an accident to man—a ditch into which he falls because he cannot help it—but sin is the subject of man’s deliberate preference. Man selects evil and rejects good. If a man, for awhile, falls into a habit and yet that habit yields him no satisfaction, you may very readily break him of it. But when a man finds his habit to be pleasant to his nature and even dear to him, you may rest assured that you are not likely to turn him from it. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots. When a sin becomes intertwisted with the roots of the affections, you cannot uproot it. When the leprosy eats deep into the heart of humanity, who can expel it? It becomes, therefore, a hopeless case so far as human power is concerned. Since sin reigns and rules in man’s affections, it is deeply ingrained, indeed.

My unconverted Hearer, the sin of forgetting God is in your heart, you know it is. You do not like to think of Him. It is not your desire to be obedient to Him. Your pleasure lies in quite another direction. You know very well that when you take up the Bible in the evening and begin to read it, it is a dreadfully dry book. You have no interest in it. And when you go to a place of worship you find no pleasure in it. Your heart does not go after God’s praise—you are like the mouse which crept into the Church and, finding hymn books very dry nibbling, was glad to get away again. The larder suited her better and so it does you.

The music hall, the ballroom, and the theater are more to your taste because there you will not be worried with the things of God. God, holiness, Heaven, Hell, eternity and the Atonement—why these things are old and cheerless sounds to you! You have heard them many, many times but they ring no music into your ears—they rather beat like muffled drums in a funeral march! As soon expect a stream to flow uphill as look for a natural heart seeking after God! If it were right in this place to talk of certain sins, there are many that would blush and hide their face and say, “I pray that I may never fall into them,” and yet they close not their ears when the evil is recited, but listen with evident interest!

When we read police reports and divorce reports, we should be deeply pained and made to shudder, were it not that our evil heart of unbelief is hardened towards evil. Everybody knows that the light literature of the day, which is pretty freely spiced with shameful sin, goes down readily and second and third editions are called for. Your very decent and moral people like a precious mouthful of scandal or uncleanness to give a flavor to their reading. Yes, there is a love of sin in the heart, a love of everything that is contrary to God! And there is a forgetfulness, a distaste, even a hatred to thoughts concerning the great Father of spirits!

Oh, if you loved God you would not live without prayer as some of you do! If you loved God you would not repeat forms of prayer as some of you do! If you loved God you would talk to your Father without your book! My child never reads a book to me when he wants anything, but he comes with his mouth and his heart ready at once, without any teaching from his brother, to ask me for what he needs. If you loved God, you would not live day by day without speaking of Him, without meditating upon His glorious works, and without seeking after fellowship and communion with Him! But, inasmuch as you love Him not Who is so worthy and Who by such gentle ways woos your love, who shall deny that your lack of love to God is deeply engraved in the very center of your heart, and cut into your nature, itself?

The second proof the Prophet gives of the fixedness of human sin is that it was written on the horns of their altars. When people are bad, at their best they must be very bad, and such were the men of Judah. They sinned in their very religion. These people sinned by setting up idols and departing from Jehovah—we sin in quite another way. When you get the unconverted man to be religious—which is a very easy thing—what form does the religion take? Frequently he prefers that which most gratifies his taste, his ears, or his sight. Yes, of course he does not object to a religion which is produced and assisted by painted windows, praising machines, elegant tailoring and fine music!

Men’s carnal appetites are pleased with these things, and it is gratifying to human nature to discover that such things may be called religion. The fact is that there is no more true religion in fine music than in discord, and no more genuine worship in a cathedral than in a hovel. Men might as well look at vestments, and windows, and carvings in the artificers’ shops where they are made—and there would be quite as much devotion as in looking at them in the place where they are fixed! Others think if their ears are pleased with listening to an eloquent discourse they are worshipping God. He who can speak well is, to them, as one who makes a goodly sound on a pleasant instrument. Their religion is to admire elocution, but there is no religion in that! There can be no more Divine Grace in listening to an eloquent minister than in listening to an eloquent parliamentary orator.

If your heart is touched, that is the worship of God! If your heart is drawn to God, that is the service of God—but if it is the mere ringing of the words, and the falling of the periods, and the cadence of the voice that you regard, why, Sirs, you do not worship God, and on the very horns of your altars are your sins! You are bringing a delight of your own sensuous faculties and putting that in the place of true faith and love, and then saying to your soul, “I have pleased God,” whereas you have only pleased yourself. When men become serious in religion, and look somewhat to the inward, they then defile the Lord’s altar by relying upon their own righteousness. Nothing is more pleasing to human nature than the attempt to do something by which it may merit salvation at the hand of God.

God thunders out, “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified,” and in the teeth of that, millions of men say, “We will be justified by the works of the Law”! So, coming to God with the pretense of worshipping Him, they offer Him that which He abhors and give the lie to Him in all His solemn declarations. If God says that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified, and man declares, “But I will be so justified,” he makes God a liar—whether he knows it or not his sin has that within it. Man is much like a silkworm—he is a spinner and weaver by nature. A robe of righteousness is worked out for him but he will not have it—he will spin for himself—and like the silkworm, he spins, and spins, and he only spins himself a shroud. All the righteousness that a sinner can make will only be a shroud in which to wrap up his soul, his destroyed soul—for God will cast him away who relies upon the works of the Law.

In other ways men stain the horns of their altars. Some do it by carelessness. Some of you who come here are filled with vain thoughts. I thank God that I have not to complain of inattentive audiences, but still, how often during prayer your hearts are anywhere but at the Throne of God? And when the sacred song is rising up to the Majesty of Heaven your lips are moving, but your hearts are not praising God! Ah, my Friends, if secret things were testified abroad how many times it would be seen that the horns of your altar have been stained by irreverence and carelessness! Those lips must be depraved, indeed, which even in prayer and praise still continue to sin!

The horns of our altars are defiled by hypocrisy. Into our Churches there will come men who, like Demas and Judas intrude themselves, uncalled, sitting at the Master’s Table. They are baptized into His name and yet for all that are hollow and rotten, deceivers and deceived. You may have seen two fencers practicing their art and noticed how they seem to be seeking each other’s death—how they strike and thrust as though they were earnestly contending for life—but after the show is over they sit down and shake hands and are good friends. Often so it is in your prayers and confessions—you will acknowledge your sins and profess to hate them—and make resolutions against them—but it is all outward showfencing, not real fighting! And when the fencing is over, the soul shakes hands with its old enemy and returns to its former ways of sin.

Oh, this foul hypocrisy is a staining of the horns of the altar with a vengeance! But I shall not detain you longer. The fact is clear that men do this and the inference is also logical that if men love sin in their hearts, and if even in their religion they still perpetrate sin, then it must be deeply engraved in them as with the point of a diamond.

III. Thirdly and briefly, WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS? How did sin get such a firm footing in humanity? How is it that the Evil One has so stormed the city of Mansoul as to entrench himself in the impregnable castle of the heart, and bid the black banner float thereon? The answer is, first, we must never forget the Fall. Certain theologians ignore the Fall— but for all that it remains the saddest and the second greatest event in human history. We are fallen. We are none of us today as God made us. “God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions.”

Our first parent was the perfect man but he polluted the fountain of life, and, “Behold,” as David said, “we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” In sin do our mothers conceive us. The human judgment is out of balance—it uses false weights and false measures. “It puts darkness for light and light for darkness.” The human will is no longer supple, as it should be to the Divine will—our neck is naturally as an iron sinew and will not bow to Jehovah’s golden scepter. Our affections, also, are twisted away from their right bent. Whereas we ought to have been seeking after Jesus and casting out the tendrils of our affections towards Him, we cling to anything but the right and climb upon anything but the true. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.”

Human nature is like a magnificent temple all in ruins. Where there ought to be shouts of sacred joy and rising paeans of incessant praise, you can hear the howling of the dragon and the hooting of the owl. Magnificence is there, but for all that the ruin is complete. This accounts for the depth and fixedness of sin in us—that it is a matter of birth. Original sin, let it be denied and explained away as it may, remains a great Truth of God and there are problems in human history which never can be explained without the belief in it. Indeed, every man is in himself such a problem that if you deny his original depravity you miss the key to his life—but if you believe that doctrine you may then understand what manhood is—and you are on the right track towards getting to find out how manhood can be made better and holier.

In addition, however, to our natural depravity, there comes in, in the second place, our habits of sin. Well may sin be deeply engraved in the man who has for 20, 40, 50, or perhaps 70 years, continued in his iniquity. Put the wool into the scarlet dye, and if it lie there but a week the color will be so ingrained in the fabric that you cannot get it out. But if you keep it there for so many years, how shall you possibly be able to bleach it? Man has continued in sin, therefore the Prophet says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well.”

Use is second nature. Nature originally is bad, but the use comes in as a second mischief and makes us doubly inclinable towards evil. You must remember, in addition to this, that sin is a most clinging and defiling thing. Who does not know that if a man sins once it is much easier to sin that way the next time? No, that he is much more inclinable towards that sin? This is conspicuous in certain sins of the flesh which we all condemn. Let any person once have given way, and it becomes an awful struggle—a struggle in which the major part are defeated altogether when they attempt it—to break loose from their bands of lasciviousness. I mention that one sin because its power to return upon us is so conspicuous, but it is an illustration of the same thing in every other sin.

If you fall into covetousness, you will find it very hard to be generous. And if you continue to be grinding and grasping, generosity will become an impossibility. The muscles of the arm, if you never exert them except in one fashion, will become set so that you cannot move them—like the Indian Fakir who held his arm aloft so long that he could not take it down again. Man, continuing in sin, becomes fixed in its habit. Only the other day we read of a great millionaire in New York who was once weak enough to resolve to give a beggar a penny. He had grown old in covetousness and he stopped himself just as he was about to bestow the gift, saying, “I should like to give you the penny, but you see I should have to lose the interest of it forever, and I could not afford that.”

Habit grows upon a man. Everybody knows that when he has been making money, if he indulges the propensity to acquire, it will become a perfectly tyrannical master ruling his entire being. Therefore the reason why sin being in the nature, and secondly, coming upon us in the use and the habit, and thirdly, being in itself a thing which naturally clings to us and gets a dominance over us, it is written within us as with the point of a diamond. I may add that the Prince of the power of the air, the Evil Spirit, takes care, so far as he can, to add to all this. He chimes in with every suggestion of fallen nature. If we say “One,” he is always ready to say, “Two.” If we want a lie to help us in any of our plans, he will be at our beck and call at once.

He knows when to use the bellows when he sees that the fire is beginning to burn. He will never let the tinder lie idle for lack of sparks, nor the ground lie waste for lack of the seeds of thorns and thistles. He has an aptitude for dealing with human nature for his own purposes, and so is never far away when a sin is to be produced. When we begin to fasten a nail, he is ready to drive it home and clinch it, too, so that the sin of Judah may be written as with an iron pen and engraved as with the point of a diamond.

Up to now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I have had to enlarge upon a very dreary statement. What I have said I feel persuaded is true, but I feel no satisfaction in speaking it. I have declared what I believe to be the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, but it is a burden to have to state these things. Let no man imagine that we are the inventors of these doleful doctrines. If they are not true, they certainly are among the most miserable of human conceptions. But if they are true, it is among the most honest things that man can do to tell people plainly of them, that they may be prepared against them. But we will not so finish—we will advance to a more cheering topic.

IV. Our fourth point will be, WHAT IS THE CURE FOR ALL THIS? Sin thus stamped into us, thus ingrained into our nature—can it ever be removed? It must be, or we cannot enter Heaven, for there shall by no means enter within those pearly gates anything that defiles! None but the perfect can enter into the land of the perfect, where the thrice-holy God is the center of a perfectly holy company!

We must be cleansed and purified, but how can it be done? It can only be done by a supernatural process. You cannot do it yourself. The dead in the grave can sooner raise themselves than you, who are accustomed to do evil, can learn to do good! Even those who are saved by Divine Grace will tell you that they can do nothing without the Spirit of God, much less can you who are dead in sin. If the vessel that is well rigged and manned cannot move upon the waters without the breath of Heaven, much less can the unformed timber which lies in the merchant’s yard make itself into a ship and then cross the seas!

If the living Christian needs Divine assistance, much more do you. You have destroyed yourselves, but your help is not in yourselves. In God your help is to be found. Your only help—to make short matter of it—lies in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became the Son of Man that He might lift the sons of men up from their natural degradation and ruin! How does Jesus Christ, then, take away these deeply-inscribed lines of sin from human nature? I answer, He does it first in this way—if our heart is like granite and sin is written on it, Christ’s ready method is to take that heart away! “A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you.”

Has it ever struck you what a wonderful thing it is for God to promise to give man a new heart? If you get a tree and saw a branch or two off, you may regret that the branches are gone but a new branch may come. And though you may grow a new branch on the tree, you could not obtain a new heart for it. When once the tree gets thoroughly rotten in the center you must give it up as hopeless—you cannot put new sap into it. But here God promises by the hand of His Son that He will give us new hearts— hearts in which there shall be no sin! Hearts which shall have no tendency towards evil, but which shall be pure hearts—hearts in every part renewed and filled with Divine love—perfect and right, and pure and good—a copy of His own heart!

The Lord Jesus Christ has for many now present worked this miracle! He has given them the new heart and though the old heart is still there, contending and fighting, yet the new heart will get the victory. We have now new loves, new hates—the name of God is now the sweetest bell that ever rings! The thought of God’s Law is marrow and fatness to us. A sense of God’s love is like honey dropping from the honeycomb. Now, the thought of Hell, solemn as it is, does not alarm us! The thought of Heaven is bright and lustrous, and cheers us in traversing this wilderness. Now, to muse upon eternity and the fact that we shall see the Lord forever, face to face, is our daily delight! We are not what we ought to be, nor what we want to be, but still our leanings and inclinations are towards better things.

The new heart has its helm turned in an opposite direction from that in which the old heart was steering. We are sailing under a new flag now—we have enlisted under a new Prince and by God’s Grace we shall conquer— and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a part of the Covenant of Grace and a part of His Gospel that Jesus can give to us hearts in which there shall not be this tendency to sin, and so the deepseated sinfulness of our nature shall be overcome.

Next to that, inasmuch as the guiltiness of sin is as permanent as sin itself, Jesus Christ is able to take our guilt away. His dying upon the Cross is the means by which the filthiest sinner out of Hell can be made white as the angels of God, and that, too, in a single instant! You understand the doctrine of the Atonement, but let me sound it in your ears again. Sin is a thing which God must punish—the eternal laws of the universe demand that there shall never be an offense committed against the rules of God which shall escape without a penalty. The penalty of sin is death and God has never seen fit to mitigate this—its justice makes it perpetual.

The Lord has been pleased to open a way of mercy by sending His only begotten Son into this world as our Substitute. He became Man and He suffered for His people what they ought to have suffered. He endured at the hand of God what all the redeemed ought to have endured. Now, God, at this day, never pardons a sin without having first punished it— punished it on Christ for us. God never punishes the man for whom Christ died, but all besides must bear their iniquity. If you believe in Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ died for you and God cannot put two to death for one offense, nor can He ask for payment twice for one debt—you are therefore free. Christ paid the debts of all His people and obtained their full discharge when He rose again from the dead. And now every soul that believes in Him is clear at the bar of Divine Justice, because it is written, “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

See then, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ can take away the deeply-engraved inscription of our sin and can remove the horrible stains of our iniquity—justly remove them through what He has suffered on our behalf! The Holy Spirit also comes in—the new nature being given and sin being forgiven, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us—as a Prince in His palace, as a God in His temple. Oh, wondrous mystery, that God should dwell in a human heart! He who fills Heaven and earth—whom all worlds cannot comprehend! He, before whom angels bow with veiled faces, deigns to make Himself a habitation within the body of the man that trusts in Him! If you are now relying alone on Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit is in you this morning, and, being there, He controls your passions— passions which otherwise would master you.

He rules your will, a stubborn thing, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke! He guides your affections, wandering things, like wild asses of the desert not to be tamed. He sits, this day, within your soul as God’s lieutenant in the kingdom of your humanity—ruling, preventing, directing—and making you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do I hear any say, “Then, I would to God that I may experience the Divine process—the new nature given which is regeneration—the washing away of sin which constitutes pardon and justification, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which insures final perseverance and complete sanctification. Oh, how can I have these precious things”?

You may have them, whoever you may be, by simply believing in Jesus. Does it seem too simple? Try, and you will find it effectual. The most potent remedies for disease are not always the most elaborate—the simplest may often be the most effectual. I tell you, you who gad about after your ceremonies, and repentance, and tears—you will never get in all these that which you can have by simply coming to Jesus and trusting in Him! Now have done with your own doings! Cast yourself on Him who has done everything for you! Spin no more, but take the raiment already woven! Work no more, but take the ransom already paid!

Strive no more in your own energy after the works of the Law, but take the great accomplished work which Jesus Christ has performed! Believe and live! These are the words which God emblazons across the brow of Truth—which I would gladly write across the brow of Heaven itself—which I would gladly have thunder out of every wave, whispered by every gale, and spoken by every breath of air!—BELIEVE AND LIVE!—Trust Christ and live! The remedy will meet the disease—this heavenly chisel will cut out the diamond-worked inscription! This hammer which Christ wields will dash to pieces the granite upon which the pen of iron has written your sin. Trust in the Lord to save you and you shall yet be made as Adam was at the first—in the image of God! And you shall stand before the Eternal Throne, among the white- robed, pure as they! You shall stand among the celestials as heavenly as they, and near to God, even made a partaker of the Divine Nature, “having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake!

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OUR SANCTUARY  
NO. 1786

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake You shall be ashamed, and they that depart**

**from Me shall be written in the earth because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living  
waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed,  
save me, and I shall be saved: for  
You are my praise.”  
Jeremiah 17:12, 13, 14.**

THIS book of Jeremiah is a very thorny one—it might be called, like his smaller work, “The Book of Lamentations.” Our text is as a lily among thorns, as a rose in the wilderness. The solitary place shall be glad for it and the desert shall rejoice. The words sound like sweet music amid the crash of tempest. The bitter tree yields us sweet fruit. The weeping Prophet wipes away our tears. I do not know that the whole of Scripture contains more delightful promises than those which fell from the lips of this son of sorrow who has been to so many a son of consolation! May God grant that this lily, today, may be exceeding lovely in your eyes as you see it in the sunlight of the Holy Spirit.

It seems to me that in this passage the mourning Prophet is sitting alone in communion with his God, speaking out his steadfast faith, and washing the feet of his sorrows in the laver of the promises. The singular change of the pronoun from You to Me shows how near the Lord was to him—so near, indeed, that Jehovah not only speaks by the Prophet, but breaks in with personal language and speaks, Himself! All men who have to deal with great multitudes of people for God must be much alone or they will lose their power. Jeremiah was sick at heart, for he prophesied, but he was not believed. He entreated and persuaded, but his affectionate appeals were rejected. He saw the nation hastening to destruction and he could not avert the doom! All this made him cry out in the anguish of his soul, “I am the man that has seen affliction.”

And, therefore, he could not have lived if he had not found sanctuary in his God. He often stole away into secret places that he might pour out his breaking heart before the Lord and commit himself to the tender care of Him whom he so faithfully served. Let us imitate him and overcome our griefs by secret fellowship with the happy God! The passage before us is a very broken one. Those who are acquainted with the original tongue will tell you that it is difficult to construe it. It is a fragmentary passage and several meanings have been given to it. Do you know the reason of this? Should not a broken heart use broken words? When you have been in great trouble and have drawn near to God, you have often had to pour out your heart in faltering accents. Nor does this destroy your prayer, or even shorten its power.

Our God can put our speech together when we cannot put it together ourselves. A sigh here and a cry there—an utterance of faith at one moment and a groan of sorrow at the next—these make up a singular patchwork to ourselves, perhaps. And even more singular, still, to anyone who should overhear us in our solitary sighs. But such supplications are not at all singular to God! He reads the meaning of His saints and understands the language of their sighs. However, it seems to me that the translators of the Authorized Version have given us the true meaning of the original, as I think they generally do. The men are not yet born who will give us a better rendering either of the Old or the New Testament than is to be found in our old English Bibles—and it is my belief that they will never be born!

These men wrote a marvelously pure English and really translated the Bible into our mother tongue, being helped of God not only to see the meaning, but to write it in words which are understood by the people. Learned men in our day, for the most part, know every tongue except English—and they fall into the error of mistaking long Latinized words for our native language. Give me plain expressive Saxon! You may place every confidence in your grandmother’s Bible—whatever small improvements the translation may require—it is in the main so good that its rivals have had but short lives while it retains all its primitive power!

In this text, no doubt, the Prophet had in his eyes the Temple at Jerusalem. Seated upon the summit of a hill, with deep valleys surrounding it, the Temple stood aloft, above all, a noble structure, seen from afar. To the Jew it was, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” When God dwelt in it, the Temple might be fitly described in the language of Jeremiah as, “A glorious high throne” for God. That glittering Temple of snow-white marble, adorned with abundance of gold, seemed, as it gleamed in the sun, to be the lofty seat of Jehovah, whereon He reigned in the midst of His people. The Temple, I say, may have been in the Prophet’s eyes, but I do not think that it was in the heart of his meaning. The passage which we read just now, in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, shows you that Jeremiah was by no means a devotee for the material Temple, nor did he rest his confidence in its outward ceremonies.

He had reached a more spiritual region. That evangelical spirit which spoke by Isaiah also rested upon Jeremiah. He had come to understand that God is not to be worshipped as if He dwelt in temples made with hands, nor to be served by merely outward rites—but that God is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It seems to me to be clear that the Prophet here speaks of God, Himself, as being to His people the place of their sanctuary and a glorious high throne. With this I shall begin—the true place of our sanctuary. Secondly, I shall have a little to say about the departers from God, the true place of our sanctuary—they are to be ashamed and written in the dust. Then, thirdly, the comers to God as the true sanctuary. How do they come? They come with the language of the 14th verse, “Heal me O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.”

I. First, let us consider THE TRUE PLACE OF OUR SANCTUARY. It is not at Jerusalem, nor at Samaria. It is not at Rome, nor at Canterbury. The place of our sanctuary is not the meeting house wherein we gather. The place of our sanctuary is our God, Himself. “God is our refuge and strength.” “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

He is viewed under the aspect of a sovereign reigning in majesty—“A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary.” Many refuse to worship God as reigning—they have not yet grasped the idea that the Lord is King, so that they cannot understand the song, “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.” For that includes, first, Divine Sovereignty, and some men grow black in the face with rage against that Truth of God—they cannot stand it! Not even over His own mercy will they allow God to exercise any sovereignty—He is to be bound by their rules and compelled to deal the same with all—so they say. But He will not have it so, for this is His Word—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The crown rights of God include this among the rest, that He has the power of life and death—and can punish or pardon according to His royal pleasure. While He will deal justly with all mankind, yet He has a special favor towards His chosen, passing by their iniquity through the Sacrifice of Calvary. He will make His own election and He will distribute His mercy as seems good in His sight. To all who rebel against this sovereignty He gives this answer—“Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own? Are your eyes evil, because I am good?” When any cavil at His acts, His only answer is—“No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?”

Now, this God whose sovereignty is so much disputed is our God—a glorious high throne for absolute dominion and sovereignty is the place of our sanctuary! To Him whose Sovereign Grace is the hope of the undeserving, we fly for succor. Besides sovereignty, of course, His glorious high Throne includes power. A throne without power would be but the pageantry of vanity. There should be power in the King who rules over all— and is there not? Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” God is ruler even at this hour! The floods lift up their voices, yes, the great waves of the raging sea roar in their pride, but, “the Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Hallelujah! Do not imagine that Jehovah has vacated His Throne or left the affairs of His Kingdom to chance, or to the free will of man. Whatever you think you see of chance, has an underlying order about it which shows that God is there! Whatever you see of man’s free agency—and you do see it—yet over it and above it there is the overruling hand of Him that works all things according to the counsel of His will. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain.”

Oh, it is such a blessed thing to me that the place of our sanctuary is the reigning God! As long as He is on the Throne, it must be well with the righteous. “Oh, but,” they say, “evil reigns.” Yes, but God reigns over the evil and through the evil still produces good! Do not imagine that Satan is an independent power, a sort of second Deity, outside of the dominion of the Lord, for even he is subordinated to the eternal purpose. “Alas,” cries Despondency, “sorrow reigns and the effect of the curse!” I know it! But the Redeemer also reigns, lifting up His people from that curse! And the creation itself, which has been made subject to vanity, shall be delivered and rise into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Therefore, rejoice in this, that the Lord reigns as absolute Monarch, full of power to execute His own purposes of infinite love! In all times of disturbance and trouble flee to the Lord of All as to a sanctuary and find your comfort in Him.

Forget not that the Lord reigns in extending glory. The excellence of His dominion surpasses all other, for He is the blessed and only Potentate. Every act of His empire exhibits His glorious Character, His justice, His goodness, His faithfulness, His holiness. Other kings need the tinsel of pomp and the trickery of policy to make them great. But the Lord God is essentially glorious and those who know Him best are most struck with His grandeur. The chronicles of Jehovah’s Kingdom are honorable and glorious. The forces of His Throne are infinite; the purposes of His majesty are holy and His name is to be praised from generation to generation! We shelter beneath no insignificant princedom—a glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary!

The text teaches more than this, however. It says, “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.” It is a very blessed thing to come back to the fact that the Lord has not newly assumed a Throne from which He has newly cast out some former king. No, “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.” As His is the most potent of empires, so is it the most ancient! There was a time before all times when there was no day but the Ancient of Days and then God was supreme, purposing, determining, counseling, arranging all things according to the good pleasure of His will. “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?”

Then there came a day when He had created worlds, I know not how many, but in them all He found no rival. Perhaps all the stars we see are worlds full of inhabitants who worship the infinite Creator—and perhaps all the stars that have ever been seen by the telescope are, to the whole universe of God, as a little dust behind the door might be to a large room! But in all these worlds, from the beginning, the Lord is a glorious high Throne. When He made this world and put man upon it, He did not make it without a plan and a purpose from the beginning. He never lifted His anger upon any work of His hand without first knowing what He was going to do and what would come of it. God is never taken by surprise! He has foreseen all things and worked them into His grand plan.

The arrangements of Providence which seem so complex to us are not complex to Him—they are simple, direct and effective. God is always working for a glorious purpose which shall, one day, make the universe and all eternity to sing with rapturous joy that ever God determined to do what He is now doing. Let us rest in that Truth of God. From the beginning, a glorious high Throne ordained everything, and it arranges all things today—this is the place of the sanctuary of God’s people! Oh, be not cast down and troubled, for the Lord reigns! Beneath His royal pavilion we may rest in peace. There is evil and there is sorrow; there is sin and there is bold rebellion; but infinite goodness is still ruling upon the Throne of Glory! Be not worried as though truth would be defeated by falsehood, and goodness would be exterminated by evil—for the Lord of Holiness wears the crown—and He will break the hosts of wickedness with His scepter, as with a rod of iron.

A glorious high throne, higher than the throne of Satan, higher than the heights of pride, higher than the loftiness of ambition, higher, even, than the Heaven of heavens, is still the Throne of God forever and ever— and this is the refuge of all His saints. The Lord has graciously said of His people, “Although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary.” And He has also said, “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary.”

When the Prophet alludes to the place of our sanctuary, our mind is naturally led to feel that there must be some kind of place where God especially reveals Himself. We all know that He manifests Himself in Heaven and we expect, before long, to be there to swell the number of His courtiers! But He has also revealed Himself on earth and very significant are the places where He has done so. The place where He mainly revealed Himself among men was the Temple, to which I have said Jeremiah somewhat alludes. Now, where was the Temple built? It was built upon that mountain where Abraham took his son, Isaac, to offer him up as a sacrifice. Wonderful scene! There, all in lonely quietude—the servants left at the foot of the hill—the great Patriarch, the father of the faithful, laid the wood upon the altar and unsheathed the knife to slay his only son! There the scene ends and the curtain drops, but what a wonderful picture it was of the greater Father, the everlasting God, who did, in very deed and truth, offer up His Son, the Heir of the promise, that we might live through Him!

A ram caught in the thicket was the substitute for Isaac, but there was no substitute for Jesus, the Son of God! He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! And there, where the most instructive of all types of the heavenly Father’s love was exhibited, there must be the Temple wherein God would converse with men and make a place of sanctuary for men. The Temple, itself, was built upon that site, and there it was that God dwelt visibly between the wings of the cherubim, above the Ark of the Covenant, over that golden lid which was called the Mercy Seat. What was that Ark of the Covenant but a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in a most instructive way? There stood the cherubim above the golden lid of that coffer—and Jesus, also, was “seen of angels.” The cover made the Mercy Seat, or propitiatory, and this the Lord Jesus is to us. He, as the bloodsprinkled Mercy Seat, is the place where God meets with us; hears our prayers and accepts our persons and our praises.

Look within the lid with holy reverence and, first, you see two tables of stone upon which the Law of God was engraved. Did not Jesus say, “I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart”? Looking again, you observe a golden pot filled with manna and you remember Him who is the Bread which came down from Heaven, of which if a man eats, he shall live forever. Nor may we fail to notice a rod, a rod that has budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds—for by it we are reminded that the scepter of rule is with the Lord Jesus Christ—and the government shall be upon His shoulders. This is His living and productive scepter with which He rules the souls of His people. Do you wonder that the Lord, in meeting His people, ordained as the meeting place such an eminent type of His dear Son?

The Ark of the Covenant was made according to the pattern which Moses saw in the holy Mountain and above its Mercy Seat was the place where God dwelt and communed with His people. But the sacrifice of Isaac and the Ark of the Covenant were only types of that greater Sacrifice when He who is the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, went up to the Cross and, on Calvary, “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” It is natural that the Lord should meet with us in Grace in the place where He put His Son to grief. There, where He made His Son an offering for sin, the Lord becomes well-pleased with us. O Friends, the Cross is the place where God has His Throne of salvation, and truly we may say of it—“A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.”

In the great plan of salvation by the sacrifice of the Son of God, God is indeed enthroned! Upon the Cross He is extolled and made very high. Would you see His majesty? Behold it in the Person of the Only-Begotten, full of Grace and truth. Would you see His justice? Read it written in crimson lines upon the dying Person of the Son of God! Would you see His love? Ah, I will not speak of it, but simply say—Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! In giving us His own dear Son, He has glorified His Grace by an unspeakable gift! God is never so revealed in all the works of His hands as in the Cross of Christ. That is a glorious high Throne, indeed! Its moral excellence, its infinite love, its spiritual beauty can never be equaled! Earthly kings and princes often rule by injustice, breaking the laws which they pretend to make—but He, our God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is lifted high—high above all censure as to His justice, His holiness, His Grace, His truth, His love. “A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary.”

Now then, dear Friends, the place where we worship, God is, Himself, revealed in the Person of His dear Son. I pray you, never try to worship anywhere else! Christ is the one Altar, the one Temple, the one Sanctuary. Set not up your high places of will-worship! Erect not images to Baal in the form of self and sin! God in Christ Jesus should absorb all the worship of all the sons of men!

In addition, the Lord God is our refuge, for a sanctuary was a place to which men fled in the hour of peril. Is not Jesus our Refuge from present guilt and from the wrath to come? Does He not deliver us from the guilt of sin? Yes, He is our Refuge from temptation, our Refuge in the hour of trial, our Sanctuary in every season of sorrow, distress and pain! This glorious high Throne affords us an abiding shelter under the assaults of the enemy! I do not think I can preach on such a text—so there—I must just leave it for you to think it over, or, better still, for you to flee to it and, fleeing to it, to abide in it, worshipping in spirit and in truth!

II. Secondly, I am to speak but a few words, but those very solemnly, concerning THOSE WHO DEPART FROM GOD. Alas, that there should be such!—men who leave the river for the desert, the living for the dead! Who are they? The text says, “All that forsake You,” and, “they that depart from Me.” See, then, that this text has a bearing upon us, because these people of whom we are now going to speak were not an ignorant people who did not know God, or how could they be said to forsake Him? They were not like the heathen who have never heard His name. You cannot forsake a person with whom you have no acquaintance!

They were a people who knew a great deal about God, since He had given them His Law and sent His Prophets among them. They were the people of Israel—God had dwelt among them—in open type and visible glory He had been in the midst of their host. They had seen the sacrifice, they had beheld the great wonders which the Lord worked for them in Egypt and at the Red Sea—and yet they forsook Him. Alas, there are among His own professed people a company that forsake Him! They mix, for a time, with the people of God, but they ultimately go out from them because they are not truly of them. In this land we have a people to whom God has been very gracious in sending the Gospel to them, but they are forsaking Christ for Rome—turning aside from faith in the Redeemer’s merit—that they may trust in priestcraft.

It will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, it will not do! But there are many such and many that did run well, for a time. What hindered them that they should not still obey the Truth of God? They went back to the world for gain or for ease—because of poverty, or because of riches, or because of fear of man they turned aside and went away from God. We still sorrowfully know that an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God remains among us. Those who forsake the Lord are not altogether an infidel people, they are not a people who refuse, even, to hear His name. But their hearts are not right with Jehovah, neither are they steadfast in His Covenant. Evidently at one time, these people had something to do with the Lord, but after a while they forsook Him.

What did they do? They no longer sought after the Lord as once they did, but ceased to be fervent in their service. At first they ceased to worship Him, they took no delight in His ways. They tried to be neutral, they were lukewarm, careless, indifferent—they forgot God. After thus declining in zeal and refusing outward worship, they went further, for He says they had departed from Him—they could not endure the Lord and, therefore, went into the far country. They said unto God, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” They went into open sin. They disowned their God and broke His Commandments—some of them even dared to blaspheme Him! The course of sin is downhill. The man who once forgets his God soon forgets himself—and then he throws the reins on the neck of his lusts and goes from sin to sin, forgetting his God more and more.

I may be addressing such this morning. I fear I am. To such I have to tell what will becomes of them one of these days. This will become of you— you “shall be ashamed.” I do not know a more painful feeling to a true man than to be ashamed. When he feels—“I was foolish and wrong,” it makes his cheeks crimson, his heart swells, his eyes overflow. The most hardened of sinners will, one day, be ashamed, saying, “I acted unprofitably to myself.” Such shame will come over you forgetful ones one of these days. You that live without God will, before long, be disgusted with yourselves for it. It may not come upon you till you die, but it is very probable that it will assail you then. When, in your dying hours, what a dreadful thing it will be to be filled with shame at the remembrance of the past, so as to be afraid to meet your God, ashamed to think that you have lived a whole life without caring for Him!

What will it be to wake up in the next world and to see the Glory of God around you—the Glory of the God whom you despised! Oh, the shame that will come over the ungodly in judgment! It is written, “They shall wake up to shame and everlasting contempt.” Every intelligent being that is right towards God will despise the man that forsook God and turned away from Him. “They shall wake up to shame and everlasting contempt.” What a waking! It is as terrible as our Lord’s word, “In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” How fearful to think that the contempt will never end! Everlasting contempt! What a word! I hope you have never acted so as to feel ashamed before your fellow men, for it must be a dreadful thing when such a charge is brought against a man that he has to appear before the judgment seat of his own country and knows that he is guilty. He has only his fellow men to face, but what a hang-dog look he has! He cannot face the jury. He is afraid to cast his eyes upon the judge! He is ashamed to be seen, even, by the meanest wretches in the court!

In the next world there will be none of that hardihood which enables big villains to bronze it out before their neighbors. Conscience will be awakened and, therefore, shame will have all the greater power. Great men and proud men will be small enough, before long—and careless and profane persons will be miserable enough when that Word of God shall be fulfilled—“All that forsake You shall be ashamed.” And then it is added that they, “shall be written in the earth.” That is, if they turn away from God, they may win a name for a while, but it will be merely from the earth and of the earth. They may obtain a fortune and enjoy outward prosperity. They may be like David’s green bay tree that spread itself far and wide— but in the end it will turn out that they were like bullocks fattened for the slaughter, or like the swine that lie down in their sty, too full to move— but all the more sure to be killed!

What an awful thing that a man should have his portion in this life and nothing to come hereafter! O worldlings, you have your riches in this poor country which is soon to be burned with fire! Your pleasures and treasures will melt in the fervent heat of the last days! Your life’s pursuits are a short business, ending in eternal misery! They that have forsaken God will have their little day, but the more they prosper and the richer they become, and the more famous they grow, so much the worse for them—for the higher they mount the more desperate shall be their fall! We read that they, “shall be written in the earth,” and that means that they shall go into oblivion.

If you were to go to a school in the East, you would find that the children have no slates and very few of them have wax tablets. These are rather expensive and so the schoolmaster spreads the floor with sand or earth—and you see the boys writing their copies on the ground. Then, of course, when they have finished their writing, the master just sweeps the floor and all the writing disappears. Was this the meaning of our Savior when He stooped down and wrote on the ground? When they brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, hypocrites that they were, you remember He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though He heard them not, as much as to say, “I shall rub it all out again—all that you have to say will be forgotten.”

So will it be with men who do not trust in God. Their names will be written in the sand and, in a short time, the great foot of Providence will obliterate them all and they will be quite forgotten! If you get honor in this life by sin, your fame carries its death within its own heart. The greatest name that ever rung forth from the clarion of fame shall die out into oblivion or infamy if its honors are earned by an evil life. Oh, you who dread a cold forgetfulness, live unto God, and then your names shall shine on forever! But if you live after the flesh, you shall die and leave your names for a curse unto the Lord’s people!

The text tells us that there shall come something besides this—they that forsake God shall, one day, be sore athirst even unto death, “because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.” There is for the soul but one fountain of water—flowing, cool, clear, always refreshing. “All my springs are in You,” said David. And so may we say, for our only source of supply is the Lord our God. If a man turns away from God, he forsakes the cool fountain—he goes to broken cisterns that hold no water—and he will perish of thirst. Oh, my beloved Hearers, I wish I were able to put this very strongly before you! You are such creatures that you must trust and love God, or else you will never possess that which you were created to enjoy—you must always be without the grand necessity of your being. You are vessels, but what will be the use of you if you are not filled?

You are denying yourselves bread when you deny yourselves God—I mean bread for your souls. You must have God in Christ Jesus or else you will be as one that is parched with thirst in the Sahara. He looks around him eagerly for a shell, but sees nothing but an ocean of sand! He rushes this way till the hot sand beneath his feet burns out of him all power to move! He struggles to his feet and turns in the other direction, but with equal disappointment. He lifts his hands. He cries. He tears his hair in utter despair. He stoops down; he scoops a hole in the ground. He would gladly dig to the very center of the earth to find drink, but all in vain! He must pine away and die. His mouth is an oven. His tongue a firebrand— himself the victim of death! So, poor Heart, there is nothing for you but God! If you forsake Him, you die.

Young man, you are miserable today. You used to enjoy the theater and even baser amusement, but you cannot rejoice in them, now, and I am thankful you cannot! You are becoming dissatisfied and wretched, but you need not remain so. Here is the living water, fresh and free, and the Spirit bids me cry, “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” The supply for your soul is only to be found in this one well, the well of Bethlehem, the well which springs up from the depths of eternal love in Christ Jesus our Lord! God still sits enthroned in Jesus as upon a glorious high throne—He receives thirsty sinners to Himself, there—and gives them drink till they are filled to the full.

Oh, when I take hold of my God, I do not seem as if I need anything else! If I have God in Christ, then I am all content, filled with all the fullness of God. “But troubles will come.” Never mind troubles, as long as you have your God! I feel, sometimes, like Rutherford when he said he could swim through seven Hells to get at Christ. So a man might well do! You will not mind the trials of life when once you know that God is yours. A boy once said to his fellow, “John, would you like to have been Elijah? Would you have dared to get into that chariot of fire with horses of fire?” “Yes,” said the other, “I would not mind as long as God drove.”

That is how Believers feel about everything. If God drives, let us be fully at ease, for all must be well! If the Lord is King, those who trust in Him are safe! Since Jehovah rules, we mount the chariot of fire or walk the waves of the sea and we are secure in either case. If the worst comes to the worst, we shall be taken to the best place of all, up to the Throne of God, to the right hand of the Host High! Brothers and Sisters, comfort one another with these words if you find sanctuary in your God! But if you trust not in the Hope of Israel, you must thirst forever and never attain to satisfaction.

III. Thirdly, and lastly, let us look at THE COMERS TO GOD. Those who come to God—how do they come? Very briefly, they come away from all the world. Poor Jeremiah had nobody to help him or comfort him—the best of the men that he met with were sharper than a thorn hedge—they only wounded him. Therefore he came right out from them and confessed that Jehovah, the Hope of Israel, was his God and his Sanctuary. He set himself quite alone for God and His fear. Come, then, you that wish to come to God, and find Him to be your Sanctuary! Come right out from the world. I do not ask you, just now, as my dear Brother Moody does, to stand up, but I believe that if I were to say, “Let those that follow after God stand up,” the bulk of you would gladly rise and acknowledge your Lord.

If we do not, at this moment, adopt that mode of confessing Christ, yet we will do it in some way. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, acknowledge your Lord! “Come out from among them and be you separate; touch not the unclean thing.” Come away, Lot, you cannot prosper and be happy in Sodom! You do not know or love the ways of that place. Lot settled there and thought he was going to get on first rate, but he was never happy. His righteous soul was vexed by the wicked citizens. I am glad it was so. Their ungodly conversation vexed righteous Lot and he deserved to be vexed. If you try to be like worldlings, I hope they will not welcome your imitation! Whenever I am told of a man’s holding with the hare and running with the hounds, I am always glad to hear that the dogs bite him! What business has he with the dogs? Come right out! O Soul, if you would have peace, come away to your God! Never take your place with those who shall be written in the earth.

How did Believers of old come to God? Jeremiah came sick and needing to be saved, for he cried, “Heal me, O Jehovah, save me!” That is the way to come! If you want to have God and His glorious high Throne to be your Shelter, come just as you are, sick and sorry! Do not stop till you have bettered yourself—all bettering is mere battering till we come to Christ— then He betters us in real earnest, for He makes us new creatures in Himself! Come along, then, and say, “Heal me and save me.” But come to God with faith. It was grand faith of Jeremiah which enabled him to say, “Heal me, and I shall be healed.” Sick as I am, if You will act as physician to me I shall be cured! If You save me, lost as I am, I shall be saved! Come along, poor Sinner. “Where, Sir?” you ask. To God in Christ Jesus! This is the Gospel—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Come to your God, come to your God in Christ Jesus with the full conviction that He can and will heal you! “Heal me, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved.”

And come with this acknowledgment on your tongue—“You are my praise.” Some of you can already say, “You are my praise.” “O Lord, I will praise You.” “Jehovah is my strength and my song.” Oh, I think if I were worn out with disease and if I had, to a large extent, lost my powers of speech and powers of thought, too, I could, if I were startled in the dead of night, sit up in my shirt sleeves and speak to the praise of the Lord my God! That is a subject upon which a child of God can surely talk in his sleep! We have a good God, a loving God, a tender God, a gracious God, a God full of long-suffering and mercy and faithfulness to us poor sinners—

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

This is good argument in prayer—“I have made my boast in You, O God. I pray You let not my glorying be stopped. Be to me as I have declared You will be.”

But suppose you cannot say so much as that? Then put it this way— “Heal me, O Lord, heal me this morning! Save me, O Lord, save me at once, and You shall be my praise. Lord, I promise that I will never rob You of the honor of my salvation—if You will but save me, You shall have all the glory of it.” Oh, how I used to feel, when I first sought the Lord, that if saved it must be all of Grace! I felt that I should never have a word to say in my own praise, but every syllable should be for Jesus. I was ashamed and confused, and could never open my mouth, any more, in my own defense, but all must be to my Redeemer’s praise! When I get to Heaven how I will bless and magnify His name! Meanwhile I would practice the holy exercise even here. O troubled ones, come to Him just as you are! Trust Him and He will save you! Then will your heart say—

*“Now for the love I bear His name  
What was my gain I count my loss!  
My former pride I call my shame  
And nail my glory to His Cross.”*

Henceforth I give myself up wholly to that one work of praising and magnifying and adoring the name of the Most High! After 50 years of life, I have no ambition but to glorify my Lord! Beloved, if you get the glorious high Throne to be your Sanctuary, I am sure you will praise the Lord, your King, forever and ever.

How is the preacher going to close with an appeal for the hospitals? This is the day for the Hospital Collection and I hope you will give largely—I think the text suggests it. If you pray for healing, help others who need healing! If your prayer is, “Save me,” if you expect the Lord to have mercy upon you, have mercy upon others! As you serve a great God, have large hearts and give liberally, like followers of the generous Lord Jesus. If the Beloved Physician has healed all your diseases, show your gratitude by what you do for the sick poor in the hospitals of London this day. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—Jeremiah 7:1-14; 17:1 -14.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—113,148 (PART II), 148 (PART I).  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2547 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“RETURN! RETURN!”  
NO. 2547

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1897, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1884.

**“Return now every one from his evil way.”  
Jeremiah 18:11.**  
As I read the Scripture in your hearing, a few minutes ago, [See the Expo  
sition at the end of the sermon. The verse referred to is Luke 13:3—The exposition was before

the sermon.—EOD.] I was greatly startled by one word in the first part of the chapter—“Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” How did those Galileans perish? I am solemnly afraid that some of you will perish just as they did. Christ says, “likewise,” that is to say, in the same way as they perished, so will you, unless you repent. Well, how did they perish? Their blood was mingled with their sacrifices. Will it be, can it be— shall it be—that some of you will keep on coming to the House of Prayer—that you will continue to join in all the exercises of our public service and yet that you will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you will perish—and your blood will be mingled with your sacrifices? Think of it, dear Friends! Your blood on your Chapel attendance, your blood on your Church attendance—your blood on your hymn singing and on your prayers—because you have not yielded yourselves up to God, or obeyed the Word of His Gospel! If my blood must be spilt through an act of Divine vengeance, let it fall anywhere but on my religion, for that would seem a doubly dreadful thing—to die at the altar and to let one’s blood be mingled with his sacrifice! Yet I do really fear that this must and will, in the necessary order of things, be the lot of some here who never forsake the gatherings of God’s people and yet, at the same time, who have never yielded their hearts to God.

Then, think of those on whom the tower in Siloam fell—how did they die? Christ says, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Why, they were destroyed by their own defenses—the tower was built to defend the place—yet it fell upon 18 of the inhabitants and slew them! It is an awful thing when a man’s self-righteousness damns him, when that which is his confidence becomes his condemnation, when the very thing in which he trusted shall totter to its fall and bury him beneath its ruins! That is the dread I have upon me, lest this calamity should happen to some of you, that your supposed tower of defense should prove to be your grave—and that you should find a sepulcher beneath your own confidences! Christ says it shall be so, “except you repent.”

My text is all about repentance. It is an exhortation from God, very brief and sententious, but very earnest and plain—“Return now every one from his evil way.” I want you all to notice that this is the call of mercy. God might have let you die to mingle your blood with your sacrifices. He might have let your tower fall upon you, to destroy you. Instead of that, the voice of Mercy still sounds in your ears—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?” And in the words of our text he says, “Return now every one from his evil way.” God help you to listen to the call and to obey it! It is a message of mercy and it means that God would have you saved and, therefore, He cries to you, “Return,” because He is willing to receive you and to blot out all your sin!

But remember that it is equally the call of a holy God, the God who knows that you cannot be saved unless you turn from your evil ways. A holy God will give no salvation to the man who continues in his unrighteousness. There is no Heaven for the man who will not leave his sin. You must quit your sin, or renounce all hope of salvation. You must turn or burn! You must repent or perish. God’s unsullied holiness will never alter this Law—you must be driven from His face in the day of His wrath unless you turn from your evil way in the day of His mercy! Hope not that there shall be any exception made for you to this rule, for there shall not be. Within the gate of pearl, none who are defiled, or who would defile the holy place, shall ever enter. If you would be a partaker in the glories of Heaven, you must be washed, cleansed, sanctified. You must be made to hate your sin, or else you can never enter where God is. Listen, then, to this urgent but gracious message which I trust that God, in His mercy, has sent for many of you—“Return now every one from his evil way.”

I. I want you to join me in looking at the words of my text as I try to press them home by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And, first, I will answer this question, WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY? It says, “Return.”

The picture is that of a man who is going the wrong way. He is trespassing, he is on forbidden ground, he is advancing in a dangerous road. And if he shall continue to go in that direction, he will, by-and-by, come to a dreadful precipice over which he will fall and there he will be ruined. A voice cries to him, “Return!” What does that word mean? It is very simple and that I may make it even more plain, perhaps, for practical purposes, let me say that the first thing such a man would do would be to stop. If I were out in the country, on a road which I did not know, and I heard a voice crying out to me, “Return,” I would certainly stop and listen. And if I heard the cry repeated with great eagerness and earnestness, “Return! Return!” I would pause, look around and try to see who it was that had called to me. I would look in front to see whether there was any particular reason for bidding me return, but I would look all around about me to try and discover for what motive the man had bid me go back. I wish that all of you who are wandering away from God would stop and consider where you are going. The trouble with some of you is that you will not think—you go blundering on, like some wild beast that cannot keep still. I beg you, just now, to stop a little while and think of what you have been doing, and to what your present course must lead, and in what woe it must end. Stop! In God’s name, I would arrest you! As God’s officer, I would put my hand on your shoulder and say to you, “You must stop! Pause and consider your ways. I cannot let you go on carelessly to your ruin, like a sheep into the slaughterhouse, or a bull going to be killed.” Stop, I pray you!

Suppose a man did stop? That would not be returning—it is but the commencement of the return when a man stops, but it will be necessary for him, next, to turn around. The order for him to obey is, “Right about face.” He must turn his face in the opposite direction from that in which he was traveling. I need not, perhaps, say much about what that opposite direction will necessarily be with some of you. If you are going on in sin, you know that your future direction must be the way of holiness. If you are trying to reach that refuge of lies—self-righteousness—the direction for you is, “Turn right around and look to Christ.” If you are to be just the opposite of what you now are, your own conscience may be your instructor as to the particular road you are to take. When God says, “Return,” it is plain that He means, “Turn your face in exactly the opposite direction from that to which it is now turned. Love what you now hate! Hate what you now love. Do what you have left undone. Leave undone what you have been accustomed to do.” There must be a total, a radical change in you if you are really to obey the command, “Return.” I think I hear you ask, “Who can effect this change?” And I am glad to hear that question, for I trust it will lead you to pray, “Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned!” May He, whose converting Grace can turn the sinner from the error of his ways, turn you, dear Friend, unto Himself!

There is something done towards returning when a man stops. There is still more done when he turns around, yet he does not actually return until, with persevering footsteps, the wanderer hastens back to him from whom he had departed. What God desires is that all His prodigal children should come home, that His stray sheep should be brought back to the fold, that the lost pieces of silver should be put into the treasury again. That, indeed, you who have wandered in sin should be as they are whom Christ has washed in His precious blood, whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and whom the Father has adopted and put among His children. Oh, that it might be so with you even now! I charge you, never be content until it is so. Give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have obeyed that gracious summons, “Return,” and have said to the Lord, “Behold, we come to You, for we know that it is Your love which has bid us return.”

So much in answer to the question, “What does the text say?” II. now I am going to dwell upon another word and ask a second question, WHEN ARE SINNERS TO RETURN? The text says, “Return now every one from his evil way.”

I do not expect or wish to please you all by what I say. I should think my main purpose was defeated if I did. I want to carry out the unpleasant duty of pressing upon you that this return should be immediate. “Return now.” Men are quite willing to promise to return when they have gone a little further—when, perhaps, they will have gone past all possibility of returning—but “now,” is always an ugly word to them. “Tomorrow,” they like much better. “Now,” is a monosyllable which seems to burn into their bosom like a hot coal and, therefore, they pluck it out and throw it from them.

But listen to me, dear Friends! The voice of God bids you to return, now, and I would urge you to do so because life is so uncertain that if you do not return now, you may not live to return at all! I need not quote the many instances of men, apparently strong and healthy, who have suddenly been taken from us. I often note, as you must have done, that sickly persons are spared to us while the robust and vigorous are called away. I could quote instances where the husband lives who, I thought, would have gone long ago—and the wife who seemed the more healthy of the two—is dead and buried. But the sickly go, too, and go sometimes just when we thought they were recovering. There was great hope that they had outgrown the weakness, or that the disease would never return, but, in a moment, it leaped upon them, like a lion out of the thicket—and they were gone. He who would have his estate rightly ordered when he is dead should have his will made—everybody says that. And he who would have his eternal estate ordered aright should yield himself at once to the Sovereign will of the Most High, for life is uncertain.

Return now, for the calls of Grace may not always come to you. You sometimes hear a sermon which touches you and pricks your conscience, but, in a short time you may be removed where you will hear no such sermons, or where, though you hear them, they may no longer impress you. I am afraid my voice is so familiar to some of you unconverted ones that you are getting like the miller who can go to sleep, notwithstanding the click of the mill—no, who goes to sleep better in his mill than he does anywhere else! Or like some men I have heard of, over there in Southwark, who work inside the great boilers. When a poor fellow first begins to labor in such a place, the deafening noise is horrible—he thinks he must die! But, after a while, he gets so used to the reverberation that he could well-near sleep notwithstanding all the hammering. It is much the same with hearing the Word of God! Therefore I pray you, if you have long listened to one who would gladly do you good, yield to the message he delivers to you! Before you grow so familiar with it that it loses all its power over your heart, accept it as good tidings of great joy! God grant that you may do so now! While Grace calls, do not refuse.

Remember, also, that your sin will be increased by delay. The longer you stay away from God, the more deeply you will sin. If you keep on in the wrong path, not only will you have sinned the more, but that sin will have taken a more terrible hold upon you. Habits begin like cobwebs, but they end like chains of iron. A man might more readily have swept away the temptation when it was new to him than he will be able to do when, having yielded to it many a time, the devil has learned the way to master him. May God help you to flee from sin as soon as you perceive it, lest you be caught in its net of steel and be held in it to your eternal destruction!

Moreover, it is well for us to return unto our God, now, because the sooner we return to Him, the sooner we shall enjoy His favor and the more delightful will our life become. If to repent and to return to God involved a lifetime of misery, I would yet urge it, for it would be worth while to spend the remnant of our days in bitter grief and then to be eternally blessed—it would be worth while to give away the pleasure of time for the sake of the joys of eternity! But it is not so, for he who repents of sin loses nothing of joy when he loses sin, and he who finds God, finds Heaven! Peace with God makes even this life to be a blessed life and he who has it begins, even here, to enjoy the happinesses of the glorified! Come, then, dear Friends, you cannot too soon be happy and, therefore, you cannot too soon be holy. You cannot too soon be safe and, therefore, you cannot too soon return from the evil of your ways.

Do you not see, too, that God will have the more service from you? The sooner you are brought to Him, the longer will you have of life in which to serve Him. I always bless God that I was brought to Christ in my youth, for it left a good long time of life to be spent in the Lord’s service. If any of you have gone past youth, into manhood and to middle age, or even to old age, then the word, “now,” should come to you with a sharp, clear crack, as of a rifle! It comes like a staccato note in music, “Now! Now! Now!” It comes to you over and over again with a definite, imperious accent, “Now!” “RETURN NOW!” Why, my venerable Friend, you are already 70 years of age—I have put the number too low, for if you are spared to see another birthday, your next will find you 80—yet you are unsaved! God be merciful to you, aged sinner! Even now, may you return from your evil way!

Yet once more, return now, because, if ever there is a reason for returning, that reason points to the present moment. If there is a reason why you should repent before you die, that reason urges you to repent today! If it is reasonable that God should expect a man to leave his sin, it is reasonable that God should expect him to leave it now. If there is a hope that a man will leave his sin sometime or other, there must be a better hope that he will leave it now than that he will leave it in a year’s time. Wisdom’s voice cries, “NOW!” It is folly that says, “wait.” Oh, that God Himself, by His own gracious Spirit, may now make you wise enough to turn from your evil way and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved!

III. Now may God help me, for a minute or two, while I try to answer this third question, WHO IS THE PERSON THAT IS TO RETURN? The text says, “Return now every one from his evil way.”

“ Every one.” Many of you have returned, blessed be God for that! But every man, every woman, every child who has not returned should hear the voice of the Lord repeating this message, “Return now every one from his evil way.” “Oh,” you thought to yourself, “I wonder whether So-and-So will think of what is being said.” Will you kindly forget him and think only about yourself? It would not be proper for me to point out individuals in this great crowd, but will you consider that I do point you out, one by one? The message of the text to each friend here who is unconverted is, “Return now every one from his evil way.”

“Well,” says one, “perhaps there will be some people converted through this sermon.” Do not talk so, I pray you. Will you be converted through it? “You are the man,” said the Prophet to David, and I would be just as personal in my address to every sinner here! I want you, my Friend, by Divine Grace to be turned from the error of your way. Why not? Some of you have been coming here a very long time. And there are some of you who are unhappy if you cannot come. You love the very sound of the Gospel and you are interested in everything which has to do with Christian work here. I cannot quite make you out, you are indeed strange people! I love you very much, but I cannot make out why you do not love your own souls better! You run about the house with the knives, the forks, the plates and the dishes, so that others may be fed, and yet you never eat anything yourself! I see you at the well and you are always ready, if you can, to turn the wheel and help to bring up the water for other people, but you never drink it yourself! What is wrong with you— some of you whom I might truly call loafers about this House of Prayer? I wish you would be real loafers, and eat of the Gospel loaf that is set on the table for all hungry sinners. Take a slice of it for yourselves this very hour!

But no, you like to be here, yet you are mere hangers-on. You take your turn in helping every good work, yet you do not give God your hearts. You must be fools to act in such a fashion! I do not want to say anything harsh or unkind, but that is exactly what you are! If you said that we were all wrong and laughed at our religion, I could understand you. You would be very wrong, but you would at least be consistent in it. You seem by your action to say that we are right—and yet not right! At least you seek to help us in our service, but you do not give yourself to the Lord. Why, you are, yourself, dying, and yet you run for the doctor for somebody else and all the while think yourself perfectly well! You are starving and yet you are eager to hand the bread out to the hungry—why do you not also take a bite yourself? O dear Hearts, what can be your hindrance in trusting the Savior? What is it that keeps some of you away from Christ? I try to put the Gospel so plainly and simply that all may understand it. I have had it said to me, lately, I daresay a dozen times, by persons in spiritual trouble who have come many a mile to see me— yes, some of them from the very ends of the earth—“nobody has encouraged and helped us as you have by your sermons. You seemed as if you did not want to put any of us back, but as if you longed to bring us all to the Savior—and that is why we have come to see you.”

Well, now, I think they would not have said that so often if it had not been true. I do not frighten you away from Christ. At least, I do not mean to do so, I would much rather beckon you to come to Him. It is not fear, I think, that has kept you back. What is it, then? Ah, perhaps we shall find out before we have done, for you are staked down somehow, and cannot escape. Possibly some of you are like the man we read of in the papers some time ago. He was walking by the seaside and stepped on a large chain and slipped his foot right through one of the links. When he tried to draw it back again, he could not, for he was held fast. The tide was coming in and there he was, a prisoner. He had to call long and loud before anybody came and by the time the people arrived, he had very much hurt his foot in endeavoring to extricate himself. He begged them to run for the smith, that he might come and break the iron. He came, but he brought the wrong tools with him so he could not accomplish the task. It would be some time before he could be back and, meanwhile, the tide had come in and the water was up to the man’s feet, so he cried, “Run for the surgeon. Let him come and cut my leg off! It is the only hope of saving my life.”

But by the time the surgeon came, the water was up to the man’s neck, so the doctor could not get down to where his foot was fast in the iron chain. And there was nothing that could be done for him. There he was, poor fellow, and the tide rolled over him and he was drowned. Some of you seem to me to be just like that man, held fast by some invisible force. Yet when I try to get at the chain, I cannot find out what it is, it is so far under the water! Perhaps you do not know, yourself, what it is. I am going to make a dive to try to get at it as I ask my last question concerning the text.

IV. FROM WHAT ARE THESE PEOPLE TO RETURN? The text says— *“Return now every one from his evil way.”*  
“From his evil way.” Then each man has a way of his own—an evil way of his own—some personal form of sin. “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Well now, my Friend, what is your evil way? If we can find that out, perhaps we shall learn why it is that you are not saved.  
What is your own way? Is it some constitutional sin to which you are prone? There can be no doubt that we all have some infirmity, or weakness, or tendency to sin more fully developed in us than in other people. There is one man who is a fine fellow in many ways, but he is dreadfully impulsive and gets into furious tempers. He is soon cool, again, and he is very sorry for what he has said and done, but there is not much good in that because if you scald anyone to death and then say that you are sorry, that does not bring him back to life! There are others whose tendency would be to the sins of the flesh, much more than is the case with a great many of their neighbors. Some are more inclined to pride and some to sloth, but there is something about the constitution of men, inherited from their parents, or brought on by their circumstances which leads each man towards some particular sin rather than to others. You know, dear Friends, what contrasts there are among men. There are some mean, stingy, cold-blooded fellows who would never become spendthrifts—it is a very great difficulty to extract even a sixpence from them. They could not be prodigals and spendthrifts, and there are others who never could be misers, except by a miracle, for they never could keep a penny in their pockets—it always burnt a hole through them, directly. These observations may help some of you to see whereabouts your own evil way may lie, according to the peculiarity of your constitution, circumstances and habits.  
“Well,” asks one, “what do you think is my evil way?” I will answer by putting another question to you, What is the sin into which you most frequently fall? I should think you can tell that—and that is the evil way from which you have most to fear. It is from that one way that you are especially called upon to return. What sin can you be most easily led into? Read the Bible through and you will find that one man was led into drunkenness, another into licentiousness, one man into anger, another into lying. Which has the greater power over you? Tonight, if you were tempted, to which temptation would you be most likely to yield? You do not know, you say. Well, then, let me put another question to you. When do you get most angry if anybody rebukes you? If you are rebuked for a sin you did not commit, you need not get angry about that. You can calmly say, “My Friend, you have made a mistake.” If you are chided for having done a thing of which you feel that you are perfectly innocent, you may even say, “Now, that is a lie.” But yet you need not be very greatly provoked. But, oh, if we know your tender places and we begin just to hint at some of your private goings on—just lay bare a little of your secrets—yes, then you get furious, do you not? Now what is it about religion that you dislike most? What is it in the preaching that makes you say, “Well, I will never go to hear that man again! He curls my hair so short, he comes quite close to the skin”? Well now, that will help you to find out what is your own personal evil way—and it is from that way that you are to return.  
Again, what sin of yours eats up the other sins? Look at a miser. He will not fall into licentiousness, because it is expensive and he cannot afford it. He is greedy for money, so he sins by covetousness, which is idolatry. He does not go and get drunk, for that is an expensive sin, and he thinks he cannot afford it. The love of money is his besetting sin. His covetousness is like Aaron’s rod—it opens its mouth and swallows up all the other sins. Here, on the other hand, is a man who is proud. He does not try to save money, for he spends it to flatter his pride. Everything must be in grand style for such a grand man as he is! You will not find him falling into drunkenness, or into the gross sins of certain other men because he is proud of being a respectable person. He has a character to keep up, so his pride swallows up all the other kinds of sin, and people call it, “a decent pride,” “a respectable pride,” “a proper pride.” Yes, that is one kind of devil that kills some other devils! So far, it is a good thing to have devils killed, but if he kills them by swallowing them—it only makes him so much the worse!  
Ah, look next at the man who is given to the sins of the flesh. You will not find that he is a miser! Poor wretch, he has not anything left that he can store up. I heard but yesterday of a man who was once in a good position of life, with a wife and children. I have known him as what is called a respectable man, worth several thousands of pounds. At the present moment, he is only earning a few shillings a week and I fear he will fall lower yet. He has had another house beside his own to maintain and a house that has swallowed up all his substance. He parted with his business for £500 and within a few weeks all that money was gone—and if it had been £50,000, it would have gone, for whoredom is a deep ditch that swallows a man, body and soul, fortune and everything! Mark my words, that man will die in the streets, one day, though he could have bought some of us up not so very long ago. That sin of his, you see, has swallowed everything up—it all disappears when he once goes that way. It is the same with gambling. When a man takes to the gaming table, it seems as if his whole soul runs out at that sluice and his entire life is just nothing to him. Wife, children, substance—all must go at the throw of the dice—or be staked on the running of a horse!  
So, you see, dear Friends, you can find out which is your sin if you can discover what it is that swallows up all the others and becomes the master of your entire being. Where does your money mostly go? You could have told that Joseph was Jacob’s favorite because he made him a coat of many colors. And there are some sins that wear the coat of many colors and often, as it were, it is dipped in the man’s own blood, for everything goes for that particular sin.  
I know that I am speaking to some such people. Turn, I beseech you, for before long you will be beggars if you do not. Turn from your sins, for before long you will be where hope can never come, where no messenger of mercy will invite you to return, but where the bell of eternity shall ring out its dreadful knell, “forever, forever, FOREVER!”—  
*“There are no acts of pardon passed  
In the cold grave to which we hasten,  
But darkness, death, and long despair  
Reign in eternal silence there.”*  
Therefore, “return now every one from his evil way.”  
But I have not hit on your sin yet, my Friend, have I? You have an evil way which you will not tell anyone. It is not as bad as any I have mentioned—it is a very respectable kind of evil way which you have. Your evil way is this, the evil way of self-righteousness. You do your very best. In fact, you think you do a little better than most people. You are not a Christian, but you are rather better than some Christians. In truth, you are so good a fellow that it is perfectly wonderful how the world bears up with such a good person as you are upon its surface! You utterly despise the evils I have been talking about and the people who commit them. You will not associate with them, nor say, “Good morrow,” to them, you are so good. Ah, yes, but do you know where such “good” people as you are go? Not Heaven, mark you, for all those who are in Heaven have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And yours, according to your own account, do not need to be washed! The day will come, I assure you, when, if this has been your evil way, it shall turn out to be as destructive as the way of the worst transgressor, for selfrighteousness is an open and gross insult to God! It makes out that the death of Christ was a superfluity! It tells God that He is wrong in charging a man with sin. It raises a clamor against God—it claims as a right, every good thing that God has to give—it does, in fact, uncrown the Savior, bid the Holy Spirit go His way as no longer needed, and throws the Gospel, which is the crown jewel of God, into the mud!  
I wish that we were all agreed, by the power of the good Spirit, that we would turn unto our God with contrite hearts. Come, dear Friends, let us first acknowledge our sin. Come, let us trust in the Great Sacrifice. Come, let us lay our hand on Your dear head, O Christ, while we stand here and confess our sin. Come, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us strong enough to forsake our sin. Let us ask Him to give us new hearts, and right spirits, that we may turn effectually from all sin and follow on to know the Lord. Children of God, pray for the whole congregation now! Let us pray—  
“O Lord, turn us! Turn us and we shall be turned! And, if You have turned us, help us to persevere in righteousness, and let us not turn again to folly. But oh, turn men and women tonight, for Your love’s sake—for Your mercy’s sake—for Christ’s sake! Turn the whole congregation of unsaved ones with their face to the Cross! And may they look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sin! And then may they look again unto Him and be lightened, as they see their sin effectually and eternally put away by the substitutionary Sacrifice of their redeeming God! Answer, O Christ, the cries of our soul, for Your own name’s sake! Amen.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 13:1-22.**

Verse 1. There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. It was a cruel and wicked act on the part of Pilate to wreak his vengeance upon the Galileans when they were occupied in offering the sacrifices of their religion.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? If men die violent deaths, if they perish in an accident, are they, therefore, to be accounted more guilty than the rest of mankind?

3-5. I tell you, no, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. Here, then, is a word of warning to those who have seen others die, all of a sudden, and who have wrapped themselves up in the robe of self-conceit, saying to themselves, “no doubt these people were much worse than we are. They have been taken away, but we still live.” Take heed, Sirs, for God’s justice is equal and unerring, and He will deal with you even as He has dealt with others! Our Lord next spoke a parable of warning to those who live in the midst of privileges, but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Let those to whom this parable belongs take note of the message it is intended to convey to them.

6, 7. He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbers it the ground? “In the first year, it may have been a bad season. The second may have been the same, but for a tree to be fruitless for three years, to have so long a time of probation, and yet to bear no fruit, proves it to be worthless. If I had found even a little fruit on it, I would have been hopeful that more would come, by-and-by, but these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Surely, there never will be any. It has had every opportunity. There is no need of any longer delay—‘cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?’”

8, 9. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down. The vinedresser has much patience, but there is a limit to it. He will not willingly lose a tree, but only one more year is to be given to this cumberer of the vineyard. Who can tell but that, in the case of some who are here, that final year is coming to a close? Oh, that the Lord would cause the fruitless to become fruitful before the year ends!

Next, in the chapter, we have a word of comfort to those who have been under the dominion of sin for many a day and who are almost in despair. Here is one of Christ’s Sabbath miracles.

10-17. And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people, there are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath. The Lord then answered him, and said, you hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed. So they will be again one of these days—all His present adversaries as well as all the old ones—those who deny His Deity, those who dispute His doctrines, those who refuse to yield obedience to His commands—those who know nothing of Him and who call themselves “agnostics.” “All His adversaries were ashamed.”

17. And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. There is a very striking contrast between the two parts of this verse—“All His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” The next parable is full of comfort to those in whom there is at present little Grace, but, being a living seed, it will become more.

18-22. Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? And whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. With His face toward the place where He should offer an Atonement for the sin of men, which was to be the climax of all His labors!

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HOPE, YET NO HOPE— NO HOPE, YET HOPE

NO. 684

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 8, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“You are wearied in the length of your way;  
yet you did not say, There is no Hope.”  
Isaiah 57:10.**

**“And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will  
everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.”  
Jeremiah 18:12.**

WHO can understand the subtlety of the human heart? Well said the Prophet, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” The physician of the body had need be skillful to track disease to its secret origin and to follow it through all its mysterious pathways in the mazes of the human body. But he who has to deal with souls has a task far harder, inasmuch as sin is more subtle than the virus of the most incurable disease, and the way in which it intertwines itself with every power of humanity is even more marvelous than the strange influences of plague and pest upon the human body.

Those whose business and office it is to deal with sick souls set it as their great object to be instruments in the hands of God of bringing diseased souls to trust in the great salvation which God has provided in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And simple as such a work may seem to be, every truly experienced minister is brought to confess that it needs a Divine art and Omnipotent power to bring a soul to rest simply upon Christ. All the subtlety of the human heart exerts itself to the utmost to prevent that heart from trusting in the Savior—and while evil is always cunning, it shows itself to be supremely so in its efforts to guard the Cross against the approaches of sinners. By the Cross, as the Savior said, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. The Cross develops the subtlety of man when we see his struggles and contortions to avoid resting upon its glorious provisions of Divine Grace.

There are two phases in spiritual life which well illustrate the deceitfulness of the heart. The first is that described in my first text, in which the man, though wearied in his many attempts, is not and cannot be convinced of the hopelessness of self-salvation but still clings to the delusion that he shall be able, somehow—he knows not how—to deliver himself from ruin. When you shall have hunted the man out of this, you will then meet with a new difficulty which is described in the second text. Finding there is no hope in himself, the man draws the unwarrantable conclusion that there is no hope for him in God. And, as once you had to battle with his self-confidence, now you have to wrestle with his despair.

It is self-righteousness in both cases. In the one case it is the soul content with self-righteousness. In the second place it is man sullenly preferring to perish rather than receive the righteousness of Christ. I ask the children of God to pray that I may be enabled to simply but earnestly deal with men’s souls this morning! It is their conversion that I am aiming at.

I shall neither strive to please your ears nor your tastes, nor do I court an opportunity for oratorical display. All I want is to lead the sinner, by God’s Grace, out of himself and then afterwards to lead him up from his self-despair. And oh, may God the Holy Spirit bring some souls by my means this morning to the foot of the Cross, and may they look up and know themselves to be saved through the finished sacrifice of our Great High Priest!

I. Considering the first text, we have to speak of A HOPE WHICH IS NO HOPE. “You are wearied in the length of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope. You have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved.” This well pictures the pursuit of men after satisfaction in earthly things. They will hunt the frequents of wealth. They will travel the pathways of fame. They will dig into the mines of knowledge. They will exhaust themselves in the deceitful delights of sin, and finding them all to be vanity and emptiness, they will become sorely perplexed and disappointed.

But they will still continue their fruitless search. Wearied with the length of their way, they still stagger forward under the influence of spiritual madness! And though there is no result to be reached except that of everlasting disappointment, yet they press forward with as much ardor as if a full assurance of success sustained their spirits. Worldlings seem far more resolved to die than some Christians are to live. They are more desperate in seeking their own destruction than Believers are in enjoying spiritual life. Indeed, they are content because they have found the life of their hand. Living from hand to mouth is enough for them. That they are still alive—that they possess present comforts and present enjoyments— this contents the many.

As for the future, they say, “Let it take care of itself.” As for eternity, they leave others to care for its realities—the life of their hand is enough for them. Their motto is, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” They have no foresight for their eternal state and the present hour absorbs them. Carnal minds with all their might pursue earth’s vanities, and when they are wearied in their pursuit they still say not, “There is no hope,” but change the direction, and continue the idle chase! They turn to another and another of earth’s broken cisterns, hoping to find water where not a drop was ever discovered before.

That, however, is not the subject of this morning. The text applies very eminently to those who are seeking salvation by ceremonies. This is a very numerous and increasing class. It is getting to be the current and fashionable belief that we are to be saved by going to holy places, receiving priestly baptism, Episcopal confirmation, eating consecrated bread, drinking hallowed wine, and repeating devout expressions. We are going back to the beggarly elements of Rome about as fast as we can and in a very short time we shall see the whole of this country covered by an Anglican Popery which will be far more hard to deal with than the more manifest Popery of Rome.

It is surprising that in an age which was supposed to be one of thought and common sense, men should so soon be dazzled with the gaudy toys of Romanism! I marvel that the childish processions, the babyism, the effeminate millinery, the infantile nurseryisms of Rome should have charms for reasonable men and women! Some of the churches during the past week would have made little children scream with delight—they would have felt that they were in the prettiest nurseries and toyshops which they had ever seen! O it is an age of folly in which men think to worship God with displays fit only for children’s sports!

There may be some hearer here who is pursuing salvation by outward ceremonies. Your path is certainly a very tedious one and it will end in disappointment. If you addict yourself to the fullest ceremony. If you are obedient to it in all its jots and tittles—keeping its fast days and its feast days, its vigils, matins and vespers, bowing down before its priesthood, its altars, and its millinery, giving up your reason and binding yourself in the fetters of superstition—after you have done all this you will find an emptiness and a vexation of spirit as the only result!

And it is probable that when you have once committed yourself to that course you will go on, wearied with the road, but too bewitched to be able to leave it! Pressing forward, you will be unwilling to confess that you have been mistaken. You will be conscious that you feel but little consolation but continue to pursue your downward course as if glory surely shone before you.

It is only Divine Grace that can enable us to follow Luther’s example, who, after going up and down Pilate’s staircase on his knees, muttering so many Ave Marias and Pater Nosters, called to mind that old text, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” He sprung up from his knees and forsook once and forever all dependence upon outward formalities and quit the cloistered cell and all its austerities to live the life of a Believer, knowing that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

Yet, dear Friends, albeit that I know only Divine Grace can turn you from the delusive path of vain ceremonies, I would like to suggest a doubt or two to you which may be helpful one of these days to make you choose a wiser course. Does it not seem to you to be inconsistent with the Character of the God of Nature that He should have instituted a plan of salvation so singularly complicated and theatrical as that which is nowadays taught us by priests? Nature is simple! Her grandeur lies in her simplicity. If you walk in the fields of our own happy land, or climb the lofty ranges of the Alps, you are delighted with the beautiful simplicity of nature in which there is an utter absence of everything gaudy, showy, and theatrical.

Everything has a practical design, and even the colors of the flowers, which are not without intent and design, enable the plant to drink in certain rays of light which shall best satisfy its need. There is nothing in nature for mere display! But you step inside a place of worship dedicated to salvation by ceremonies, and I am persuaded that your taste will be outraged, if that taste has been formed upon the model of nature. Frequently, on the Continent, I turned with loathing from gaudily decorated churches daubed with paint, smothered with gilt, and bedizened with pictures, dolls, and all sorts of baby prettiness. I turned aside from them in uttering, “If your god accepts such rubbish as this he is no god to me! The God of yon rolling clouds and crashing thunder, yon foaming billows and towering rocks is the God whom I adore. Too sublime, too noble, too greatminded to take delight in your genuflections and stage-play devotions.”

When I beheld processions with banners, and crosses, and smoking censers, and saw men who claimed to be sent of God, and yet dress themselves like Tom fools, I did not care for their god, but reckoned that he was some heathenish idol whom I counted it my glory as a man to scoff at and to despise! Do not fall into the notion that the God of nature is different from the God of Grace. He who wrote the book of Nature wrote the book of Revelation, and writes the book of experience within the human heart. Do not, therefore, choose a way of salvation utterly at variance with the Divine Character.

Has it never struck you that ceremonial salvation would be a very wicked way of salvation? What is there, for instance, about drops of baptismal water which could make men better? What is there about confirmation that should assure you of the forgiveness of your sins? What is there about receiving a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine that should confer Divine Grace? Might you not remain as bad at heart and as wicked after all as ever you were? And is it not a violation of the eternal principles of morality that a man should be endowed with Grace while his soul still clings to sin?

Now, if there is no effect in water to make you hate sin, and no result from the priest’s hands to make you love God, and no result from sacraments to make you holy and heavenly-minded—can you trust in them? Surely there must be some sort of congruity between the means and the result! Surely it is immoral in the highest degree to tell a man that by outward things, which cannot change the life, he shall have his sins forgiven! We shall have the iniquity of the Middle Ages back again if we have the faith of the Middle Ages proclaimed—and from all that may God in His Grace deliver us! The votaries of superstition have furnished us with a very solemn argument, for many of them, when they have lain dying, have turned their eyes to other places and have anxiously begged for full assurance of eternal life.

Superstition, strange to say, has been truthful enough to reply, “I have no rest to offer you.” For what does Rome offer when you have done all? Purgatory and its pains! It tells you that when you have done all, you may have to lie for hundreds of years in a place full of misery till you have been purged from sin! How very different from the Gospel which the Word of God reveals to you—that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved not only from the guilt of sin but from the love of sin—is enabled to be holy, is made a new creature, and without any purgatorial cleansing shall ascend to his Father and his God to dwell with Him forever!

So simple, so God-like, so Divine! How is it that so many cast it aside, and take up with these sillinesses which are the inventions of man? This whole Book through salvation is never said to be by anything done by priests—but salvation is everywhere spoken of as being by Christ through faith! There is not a place that gives a vestige of confidence to anybody who hopes to be saved by the performances of rituals—but everywhere salvation is presented to those humble, contrite souls who know and trust the Savior’s blood.

Perhaps these words of mine may not apply to many of you, and therefore we will turn to another phase of the same thing. A great mass of people, even though they reject priest-craft, make themselves priests, and rely upon their good works. A poor and wretched man dreamed that he was counting out gold. There it stood upon the table before him in great bags, and as he untied string after string, he found himself wealthy beyond Croesus’ treasures. He was lying upon a bed of straw in the midst of filth and squalor—a mass of rags and wretchedness—but he dreamed of riches!

A charitable friend who had brought him help stood at the sleeper’s side and said, “I have brought you help, for I know your urgent need.” Now the man was in deep sleep and the voice mingled with his dream as though it were part of it. He replied, therefore, with scornful indignation, “Get you gone! I need no miserable charity from you. I am possessor of heaps of gold. Can you not see them? I will open a bag and pour out a heap that shall glitter before your eyes.” Thus foolishly he talked on, babbling of a treasure which existed only in his dreams till he who came to help him accepted his repulse and departed mournfully. When the man awakened he had no comfort from his dream, but found that he had been duped by it into rejecting his only friend.

Such is the position of every person who is hoping to be saved by his good works. You have no good works except in your dreams. Those things, which you supposed to be excellent are really defiled with sin and spoiled with impurity. Jesus stands by you this morning and cries, “Soul, I have come from Heaven to redeem you. If you had any good works there had been no need for Me to come to save you, but, inasmuch as you are naked, and poor, and miserable, I came to earth and this face was bedewed with sweat of blood, and these hands were pierced, and this side was opened to work out your salvation. Take it! I freely present it to you.”

Will you, in your sleep this morning, make that sad reply, “Jesus, we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. We have neither cursed Your Father’s name, nor broken your Sabbath, nor done anything amiss”? If so, dear Friends, you are resting upon a delusion and will find it so when it is too late! The way of salvation by works, if it were possible, would be a very wearisome way. How many good works would carry a man to Heaven would be a question very difficult to answer. It would be such a way that though a man should work his fingers to the bone, yet he would never be able to clamber up the precipice—for Sinai is too steep and high for mortal feet to force a passage to the skies up its terrible battlements.

The way of salvation by works is totally contrary to that revealed in the Bible. If there is anything plain there, this is plain, “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” The way of salvation by works is a proud, rebellious way, by which man hopes to avoid humiliating himself before his God. How should the Lord bestow His favor upon the man who refuses to trust in His own dear Son? Shall the Lord yield to save men, and yet let them remain proud and boastful? Shall He save a man who refuses to owe that salvation to Divine mercy? You weary yourself, my Hearer, in your resolutions, and doings, and works, in the greatness of your way, and yet you will not confess that, “There is no hope.” May the Lord force that conviction upon you till you shall turn aside from all self-confidence and rest in Jesus Christ alone!

Many persons are looking for salvation by another form of selfdeception, namely, the way of repentance and reformation. It is thought by some that if they pray a certain number of prayers and repent up to a certain amount, they will then be saved as the result of their prayers and repenting. This, again, is another way of winning salvation which is not spoken of in Scripture. This is a way by which neither Law or Gospel receive honor. To repent is a Christian’s duty, but to hope for salvation by virtue of that, alone, is a delusion of the most fearful kind! The reason for salvation lies not in my repenting, but in Christ’s suffering—not in my renunciation of sin, but in Christ’s having borne my sin in His own body on the tree. Oh, that by God’s Grace I may have done with relying upon anything that comes from myself!

The idea of trying to repent in order to save yourself is so ridiculous that it has sometimes reminded me of the old story of the Dutchman, who, having no family, but having a great many cousins, left his estate in this way—all the cousins were to meet in the Town Hall on a certain day, and whoever could cry for him first, and could honestly say he wept out of sorrow for his death should have the estate. Now there was a very great difficulty here, because of the remarkable mingling of feeling. Could they get themselves into a state of mind so as to lament his death? Well, the largeness of the fortune and the desirableness of the estate at once dried up the tears!

I forget how the story ends, but it sufficiently shows the impossibility of lamenting in order to gain an object. The hopeful joy and the sorrow, if both possible in themselves, would effectually neutralize each other. The tears of true repentance must be as much the gift of God as Heaven itself, and if we were to have an offer to be saved on account of our repenting, repenting would be an impossibility to us. Repentance is a part of salvation, and when Christ saves us He saves us by making us repent! But repentance does not save—it is the work of God, and the work of God alone. Now why do you weary yourself in this way? For surely in it “There is no hope.”

My drift in all this rambling talk is just this—whatever it is, my dear Hearer, that you are looking to as a ground of confidence—if it is anything in yourself— pray you give up all hope, for though you have not seen it to be true, it is nevertheless assuredly so that there is no hope whatever by it. Where you have to do with the work it will be marred and spoiled and will end in confusion. Salvation is of the Lord, and your deliverance from your present state of sin and guilt must come from the right hand of the Most High! It cannot in any degree, or in any measure, come from yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is, in your works—your help must be found in Another from the first to the last.

I shall be accused, I know, of dispiriting you. I shall desire to plead guilty to the accusation! And if it shall even be urged again that I drive you to despair, I shall again plead guilty and glory in the result! I wish to preach everyone who would save himself into utter despair! If any man is hoping to save himself, I pray God that He may smite that hope dead on the spot—that it may be renounced forever. Sinner, oh that you would consent to yield up all confidence in yourself, for then there would be hope for you!

Most men must have a secret hope somewhere of a false kind, for, look at the way in which they are employing themselves. Most men are not seeking to escape from the wrath to come—they are busy in worldly things while Hell is near them. They are like idiots catching flies on board a ship which is in the very act of going down. Surely those men must have some fictitious hope somewhere or they would not act like this! We see many persons busy about their persons, decorating themselves when their soul is in ruin. They are like a man painting his front door when his house is in flames! Surely they must harbor some baseless hope which makes them thus insensible!

We see men who do not quail and tremble, though they profess to believe the Bible which tells them that God is angry with them every day. Surely their quietness of heart must arise from some secret hope lurking in their spirits! The rope of mercy is cast to the sinner and he will not lay hold of it! Surely he cannot be such a fool as to love to die—he must have some hope somewhere that he can swim by his own exertions and it is this hopefulness of the man in himself that is his ruin and his destruction. Until you are totally separate from all consciousness of hope in yourself, there is no hope that the Gospel will ever be any power to you!

But when you shall throw up your hands like a drowning man, feeling, “It is all over with me! I am lost, lost, unless a stronger than I shall interpose.” Oh Sinner, then there is hope for you! If we can once get you to say, “One thing I know, I cannot save myself. One thing I feel, I must have a stronger arm than mine to rescue me from ruin.” When you have come to this, O Soul, we will begin to rejoice over you and may God grant that our rejoicing may not be in vain!

II. We shall now turn to the second text. “And they said, THERE IS NO HOPE: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart.” Here we have NO HOPE—AND YET HOPE. When the sinner has at last been driven by stress of weather from the road of his own confidence, then he flies to the dreary harbor of despair. He is now convinced that there is no hope in himself, and like a simpleton he goes to the other extreme, and concludes, “Then I cannot be saved at all.”

He acts as if there were nobody in the world but himself, and begins to measure God’s power and God’s Grace by his own merit and power. Some before me, convinced of their own powerlessness, are ready to lie down in a fit of despair and die. “The preacher has been telling us there is no hope, then we will give it up.” My dear Friend, I know what will be the result if you go away with that impression—you will go off to your sins—for despair is the mother of all sorts of evil. When a man says, “There is no hope of Heaven for me,” then he throws the reins upon the neck of his lusts and goes on from bad to worse.

You will thoroughly misunderstand me if you go away with that impression. There is no hope for you in yourself, but there is hope for you in Him whom God has provided to be the Savior of such as you! Hopelessness in self is what we want to bring you to, but hopelessness in itself, and especially in connection with God, would be a sin from which we would urge you to escape. If you are sitting down in despair, I want to speak to you, first, of the God of Hope. Dear Friend, there is that in God— Father, Son, and Spirit—which may remove your fears so that you need never utter a single doubting word again!

You are saying, “I am full of sin.” That is true—you are much more full of sin than you think you are. “But I have been a great sinner.” That is likely—and you are a greater sinner than you will ever know yourself to have been. “But I don’t feel my sinnership as I ought to do.” That is very likely—and you never will do so. No man on earth ever did feel sin in all its guiltiness, for God alone knows the blackness of sin. “But I am altogether such a one that there is nothing in me to recommend me. I could almost wish I had been a great sinner, that I might feel a great repentance. I have nothing to recommend me.”

Now think of the loving kindness of God the Father. Do you remember how He revealed Himself in that parable of the prodigal son? That prodigal son had been ungrateful, wicked—very wicked. He had spent his life in all sorts of vice and had become filthy in person and loathsome in character. His associates were of the lowest race of men, and then brutes themselves. Yet the goodness which he had not in himself his father had. He was all sin, but his father was all mercy. He was all iniquity, but his father was all loving kindness. Now can you not see, if the prodigal were here, we might say to him, “There is no hope for you in yourself. Those rags cannot recommend you. The swine trough cannot be used as an argument.”

But then that would not be a ground for his stopping where he is, for “there is hope for you in your father. He is so good, so tender. He rejoices to receive his returning children.” And, Sinner, there is hope in God for you. His name is God That Is Good. He delights in mercy—it is His soul’s highest joy to clasp His Ephraim to His bosom. This very morning He has sent me to say to you, “Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

But you meet this invitation with another desponding suggestion. You say, “Why should I come before the Most High God? I have sinned, and what shall I bring as a recompense? Rivers of oil and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, if I could bring them, would not be acceptable to Him. If I had a mint of merits. If I had godly impressions. If I had high moral excellence I would come with that to God, and hope to obtain a hearing.”

But hearken, Sinner, do you not know the name of the second Person in the Trinity? It is Jesus Christ, the Son. Now, if you need merit, has He not enough of it? For what cause do you think He lived on earth threeand-thirty years and kept God’s Law? Did He keep that for Himself? What need for God to be a man and to become subject to Law at all? He must have kept that Law for someone, then—but not for righteous men, for such have kept the law themselves! He must have kept it for the unrighteous.

Now, can you not take that which Christ has worked out, and take it to yourself when He freely bids you take it? You talk of sin but have you never heard that my Lord Jesus died? Why Man, you have heard this hundreds of times! But I pray you open your eyes and see it! Do you see that Cross, the center one of the three? Thieves hang upon the other two, but God Himself hangs upon the one in the middle. God, in the form of Mary’s Son, hangs bleeding out His life in acute sufferings exquisite, unutterable! For whom does He die? Not for Himself! What cause that God should be a man and die? He suffers! He suffers for sin! For whose sin, then? Not for His own for He had none. For the sins of good people? What need of that? He dies for the sins of those who have committed sins—for the sins of transgressors such as you and I are!

Oh Soul, do you not hear the voice that said, “Look unto Me and live”? What? Jesus, am I not to do anything by way of merit? Am I not to be anything by way of preparation? Am I to stand and simply look at You and feel my sins forgiven? Blessed be Your name! What a simple plan of salvation! Now I feel my heart begin to melt. Now I hate the sins that nailed You there. Now do I give myself to You, to serve You all my life. This is good evidence of salvation when a man can thus speak: “I hate sin and I desire to serve Christ.” You can see that he is saved from the power of sin—the power of the Cross has made him a new man!

Oh Sinner, if you have no merit, you need not wish for any! Take Christ in your hands for He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! And all this for every soul of Adam born who trusts in Him alone! But I hear you complaining again, “Oh, but I have not the power to repent. You have told me this before and I cannot believe it—I cannot soften my heart— I am so powerless I cannot do anything! You have been teaching me that.” I know I have, but there is another person in the Trinity, and what is His name? It is the Holy Spirit. And do you not know that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmity?

Though we know not what to pray for as we ought, yet He teaches us to pray. It is true you are darkness, but then He is your light! It is true you are naturally dead, but the Holy Spirit gives us life! And the light of God is the Holy Spirit as He shows Himself to you. It is clear that you can do nothing without that Spirit—that should make you despair of self! But you can do everything with that Spirit! Now, lift those eyes of yours with which He has already taught you to weep! Lift them up to the Throne and say, “My Father, if I may dare to call You by that name, help me to trust Your Son! My God, I see in Yourself a Father’s love, in Your Son a Savior’s power, and in Your Spirit the Quickener’s life. Oh give me to feel Yourself within me, or, O God, if I may not feel it I will still believe it, for You cannot lie, and whether I have a comfortable evidence or not, I do this morning—utterly hopeless of anything in myself—I do this morning cast myself on You. “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.”

Why, Sinner, I do not know what it is that you may want, but I know one thing—it is provided for you in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and resting upon the great Savior whom God has provided, there is hope for you, my dear fellow creature! There is the brightness of a ray of hope this very morning, only may God turn it from a possible into an actual hope and give you a good hope of eternal life through believing in Jesus Christ!

Thus I have tried to turn you away from self to the Lord—but it may be I have some very hard cases to deal with—and so, two or three suggestions by way of smiting at the despair which some of you feel. A great Divine has said—and I think there is some truth in it—that a very great number of souls are destroyed through the fear that they cannot be saved. I think it is very likely. If some of you really thought that Christ could save you, if you felt a hope that you might yet be numbered with His people, you would say, “I will forsake my sins, I will leave my present evil way, and I will fly unto the strong for strength.”

Now though I have laid judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and sought to put the axe to the tree of all creature confidence, yet there is hope in Jesus Christ! There is hope in Jesus Christ, my dear Hearer, even for you! And I will give you these two or three reasons. In the first place, would it not be wise even if there were only a “perhaps,” to go to Christ and trust Him on the strength of that? The king of Nineveh had no Gospel message, He had simply the Law preached by Jonah, and that very shortly and sternly. Jonah’s message was, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” But the king of Nineveh said, “Who can tell?” And having nothing to rest upon—not a single word of promise—he humbled himself before God, he and his people, on the strength of a, “Who can tell?”

Ah, my dear Hearers, take care lest the men of Nineveh rise up in judgment against you! You have got much more than a, “Who can tell?” Oh Sinner, you are saying, “I cannot be saved.” But I ask you, Who can tell? “But I do not feel that there is hope.” Who can tell? “But I am such a sinner.” Who can tell? “Oh, but I am such a dull, heavy spirit! I cannot feel—there cannot be mercy for me.” But who can tell? Surely if but on the presumption of “Who can tell?” the men of Nineveh went and found mercy, you will be inexcusable if you do not act upon the same, having much more than that to be your comfort! Go, Sinner, to the Cross, for who can tell?  
But, in the next place, you have had many clear and positive examples. In reading Scripture through you find that many have been to Christ and that there never was one cast out yet. If you had seen some repulsed, you might conclude that you must be among them, but not one has been rejected by the Savior. Why should you be? We need not turn to books— there are living people here saved by Divine Grace. I myself am one. I had no more preparation for Christ than you have. I had not the shadow of anything to trust to any more than you have. When I heard the Gospel precept, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” I did look, and I am saved!

Oh my Soul, I am the witness for my Master that He is true! In a moment, no sooner had I looked than I had joy and peace, and I can promise you the same! Those wounds of Christ still stream with mercy! That head crowned with thorns still beams with the splendor of Grace! Do but look into His pierced side and you shall see a fount most deep and full—still flowing with blood and water to cleanse you, even you, from sin! Do not say you cannot come to Christ for He is not here—you cannot come upon your feet, but then your thoughts are the feet of your soul! Come to Him in thought. Come to Him in confidence. Come to Him in trust, and you cannot trust Christ and yet be cast away. You have living examples.

Moreover you have comfortable promises in the Word of God. I was thinking much yesterday of this promise—I wonder whether God has sent it to my heart for any of you—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” I was wondering whether I should preach from it, but anyhow it kept following me about—“Your hearts shall live that seek Him.” If you seek Him your heart shall live! Leap on the back of that promise and let it bear you, as the Samaritan’s beast bore the dying man to an inn where you may rest—I mean to Christ—where you may have confidence.

Here is another. “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Now you do call upon His name. There are many others. They have been quoted in your ears till you know them by heart. “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” And you know that precious one, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You see I had some black things to say at first—I had to tell you that the disease was incurable by natural means—but then the supernatural Physician can remove it! I had to tell you that the ship was sinking and could not be saved, but I have now to point you to the lifeboat which can never be wrecked. I had to warn you that your own arm is palsied, but I have to assure you that the Lord’s arm is not so shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear.

I had to remind you that you were hopeless bankrupts and could not pay a farthing in the pound, but I have to assure you that He has paid all Believers’ debts. I had to tell you that you were all so dirty in His sight that, in yourselves considered, you never could be accepted. But I have now to say, on the other hand, that every Believer is so clean and fair after being washed in Jesus’ blood that he is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Away, you broken cisterns! Oh, for the hammer of God to dash you into shivers! But come, come, come you thirsty ones to the everflowing, overflowing fountain! Here is nothing stinted! Here is no shortness of supply, no illiberality of gift—come as you are!

The fountain flows freely and richly for you, who, having nothing in yourselves, are willing to have everything in Christ Jesus! Do not be saying, “There is no hope,” for there IS hope! There is more—there is security—there is certainty to every soul that trusts in Jesus!

To conclude, do you not know, poor Sinner, you who believe in Jesus this morning—do you not know the news? Then I will tell you a secret. Do you not know that if you now prostrate yourself at the foot of the Cross, you are God’s chosen one? Your name is engraved on the hand of Jesus, on the heart of God! Before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round—before the primeval darkness was pierced by the sun’s first ray you were dear to the heart of Deity! You are His elect, His beloved one! And do you not know that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but the Covenant of His love shall never depart from you? Neither shall His Grace be removed, said the Lord, who this morning has manifested His mercy towards you!

Though you are but just now converted, there is laid up for you in Heaven a crown of life that fades not away. Jesus pleads for you this very day! He this day prepares one of the many mansions for your eternal dwelling place! Be of good courage! Angels are singing, Heaven is rejoicing over YOU! The Church on earth is glad concerning you! And one day, when the great Shepherd shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory—and all this for you, poor helplessly ruined sinner—helpless in yourself, but saved in Christ Jesus! May God add a blessing to this simple testimony this morning and His shall be the praise.

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THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS  
NO. 395

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1861, BY REV. C. He. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Jeremiah 23:6.**

MAN by the Fall sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned. He was therefore no longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command. He therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he committed and in that which he omitted, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked. Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the Fall for His people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command—He has removed by His precious blood.

His agony and bloody sweat have forever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by His one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in His flesh. He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Still it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eye of God without sin. But it was required of man that he should actually keep the command. It was not enough that he did not break it or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He must keep it—he must continue in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

How is this necessity supplied? Man must have a righteousness or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience or else God cannot reward him. Should He give Heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the Law? That were to give the reward where the service is not done and that before God would be an act which might impeach His justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the Law and reward him for so doing? Surely, my Brethren, none of you are so drunk as to think that this righteousness can be worked out by yourselves.

You must despair of ever being able to keep the Law perfectly. Each day you sin. Since you have passed from death unto life the old Adam still struggles for dominion within you. And by the force of the lusts of the flesh you are brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members. The good you would do, you do not—and the evil you would not, that you too often do. Some have thought the works of the Holy Spirit in us would give us a righteousness in which we might stand. I am sure,

my Brethren, we would not say a word derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is divine. But we hold it to be a great cardinal point in divinity that the work of the Spirit never meant to supplant the merits of the Son. We could not depreciate the Lord Jesus Christ in order to exalt the office of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that each particular branch of the divine salvation which was espoused by the Persons of the Trinity has been carried out by each One to perfection. Now as we are accepted in the Beloved, it must be by a something that the Beloved did. As we are justified in Christ it must be by a something not that the Spirit has done but which Christ has done. We must believe, then—for there is no other alternative— that the righteousness in which we must be clothed and through which we must be accepted and by which we are made meet to inherit eternal life, can be no other than the work of Jesus Christ.

We, therefore, assert—believing that Scripture fully warrants us—that the life of Christ constitutes the righteousness in which His people are to be clothed. His death washed away their sins. His life covered them from head to foot. His death was the Sacrifice to God. His life was the gift to man by which man satisfies the demands of the Law. Herein the Law is honored and the soul is accepted. I find that many young Christians who are very clear about being saved by the merits of Christ’s death, do not seem to understand the merits of His life.

Remember, young Believers, that from the first moment when Christ did lie in the cradle until the time when He ascended up on high, He was at work for His people. And from the moment when He was seen in Mary’s arms, till the instant when in the arms of death He “bowed His head and gave up the ghost,” He was at work for your salvation and mine. He completed the work of obedience in His life and said to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave me to do.” Then He completed the work of atonement in His death and knowing that all things were accomplished, He cried, “It is finished.”

He was through His life spinning the web for making the royal garment and in His death He dipped that garment in His blood. In His life He was gathering together the precious gold. In His death He hammered it out to make for us a garment which is of worked gold. You have as much to thank Christ for loving as for dying and you should be as reverently and devoutly grateful for His spotless life as for His terrible and fearful death. The text speaking of Christ, the son of David, the branch out of the root of Jesse, styles him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Having introduced the doctrine of imputed righteousness, I proceed to map out my subject. First, by way of affirmation. We say of the text—it is so—Christ is the THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Secondly, I shall exhort you to do Him homage. Let us call Him so—for this is the name whereby He shall be called. And thirdly, I shall appeal to your gratitude. Let us wonder at the reigning grace which has caused us to fulfill the promise, for we have been sweetly compelled to call him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

First, then, He is so. Jesus Christ is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. There are but three words, “JEHOVAH”—for so it is in the original—“OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” He is Jehovah. Read that verse and you will clearly perceive that the Messiah of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the Gentiles, is certainly Jehovah. He has the incommunicable title of the Most High God. “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and a king shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely—and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Oh, you Arians and Socinians who monstrously deny the Lord who bought you and put Him to open shame by denying His divinity—read that verse and let your blasphemous tongues be silent—and let your obdurate hearts melt in penitence because you have so foully sinned against Him. He is Jehovah, or, mark you, the whole of God’s Word is false and there is no ground whateer for a sinner’s hope. We know and this day we testify in His name that the very Christ who did lie in the manger as an infant was infinite even then. That He who cried, cried for very pain as a child, was nevertheless saluted at that very moment as God by the songs of the creatures that His hands had made.

He who walked in pain over the flinty acres of Palestine was at the same time possessor of Heaven and earth. He who had not where to lay His head and was despised and rejected of men, was at the same instant God over all, blessed forever more. He that sweat great drops of blood did bear the earth upon His shoulders. He who was flagellated in Pilate’s hall was adored by spirits of the just made perfect. He who did hang upon the Tree had the creation hanging upon Him. He who died on the Cross was the ever-living, the Everlasting One.

As a man He died, as God He lives. As Mary’s son He bled, as the son of the Eternal God He had the sway and the dominion over all the world. In nature Christ proves Himself to be universal God. Without Him was not anything made that was made. By Him all things consist. Who less than God could make the heavens and the earth? Bow before Him, bow before Him, for He made you and should not the creatures acknowledge their Creator?

Providence attests His Godhead. He upholds all things by the Word of His Power. Creatures that are animate have their breath from His nostrils. Inanimate creatures that are strong and mighty stand only by His strength. He can say concerning the earth, “I bear the pillars thereof.” In the deep foundations of the sea His power is felt and in the towering arches of the starry heavens His might is recognized to the full. And as

for grace, we claim for Christ that He is Jehovah in the great kingdom of His grace. Who less than God could have carried your sins and mine and cast them all away? Who less than God could have interposed to deliver us from the jaws of Hell’s lions and bring us up from the pit, having found a ransom?

On whom less than God could we rely to keep us from the innumerable temptations that beset us? How can He be less than God when He says, “Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world”? How could He be omnipresent if He were not God? How could He hear our prayers—the prayers of millions scattered through the leagues of earth and attend to them all and give acceptance to all—if He were not infinite in understanding and infinite in merit? How were this if He were less than God?

Let atheists scoff, let deists sneer, let the vain Socinian boast, let the Arian lift up his puny voice—but we will glory in this fact—that He that bought us with His blood is Jehovah—very God of very God. At His footstool we bow and pay Him the very homage that we pay to His Father and to the Spirit—

*“Blessings more than we can give,  
Be Lord forever Yours.”*

But the text speaks about righteousness, too—“Jehovah our righteousness.” And He is so. Christ in His life was so righteous that we may say of the life, taken as a whole, that it is righteousness itself. Christ is the Law incarnate. Understand me, He lived out the Law of God to the very full and while you see God’s precepts written in fire on Sinai’s brow, you see them written in flesh in the Person of Christ—

*“My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in Your Word,  
But in Your life the Law appears  
Drawn out in living characters.”*

He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From His eye there never flashed the fire of unhallowed anger. On His lip there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of His heart no fault was hidden. In His understanding was no defect. In His judgment no error. In His miracles there was no ostentation. In Him there was indeed no guile. His powers being ruled by His understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection’s very self so that never was there any flaw of omission or stain of commission.

The Law consists in this first, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” He did so. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. Never man spent Himself as He did. Hunger and thirst and nakedness were nothing to Him, nor death itself if He might so be baptized with the baptism wherewith He must be baptized—and drink the cup which His Father had set before Him. The Law consists also in this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In all He did and in all He suffered He more than fulfilled the precept, for “He saved others, Himself He could not save.” He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving.

He loved man better than His own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of Hell and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls His Father gave Him should be cast away. He carried out the Law, then, I say to the very letter. He spelt out its mystic syllables and verily He magnified it and made it honorable. He loved the Lord His God, with all His heart and soul and mind and He loved His neighbors as Himself. Jesus Christ was righteousness impersonated. “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” He might well say.

One thousand eight hundred years have passed since then and blasphemy itself has not been able to charge Him with a fault. Strange as it may appear the most perverted judges have nevertheless acknowledged the awful dignity of His character. They have railed at His miracles. They have denied His Godhead. But His righteous character I know not that they have dared to impugn. They have hatched jokes about His generation. They have made His poverty a jest and His death has been the theme of ribald song. But His life has staggered even the most unbelieving and made the careless wonder how such a character could have been conceived even if it be a fiction and much more, how it could have been executed if it be a fact.

No one that I know of has dared to charge Christ with unrighteousness. Or with a want of devotedness to God. See then, it is so. We do not stay to prove His righteousness any more than we did to prove His Godhead. The day is coming when men shall acknowledge Him to be Jehovah and when looking upon all His life while He was incarnate here, they shall be compelled to say that His life was righteousness itself. The essence, however, of the title, lies in the little word “our”—“Jehovah our righteousness.”

This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on Him—this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of His immaculate righteousness. This is the sacred rivet by which our souls are joined to Him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul touches Him and He becomes to us All in All, “Jehovah our Righteousness.”

You will now observe that there is a most precious doctrine unfolded in this title of our Lord and Savior. I think we may take it thus—When we believe in Christ by faith we receive our justification. As the merit of His blood takes away our sin so the merit of His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ were our works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves—as though our hands had been busy at the loom, as though the fabric and the stuff which have been worked up into the fine linen which

is the righteousness of the saints, had been grown in our own fields. God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though  
His life had been our life—and accepts, blesses and rewards us as though  
all that He did had been done by us, His believing people. Accordingly, if  
you will turn to the thirty-third chapter of this same Prophet Jeremiah  
and look at the sixteenth verse, you will see it written, “This is the name  
wherewith she shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” I  
know that Socinus in his day used to call this an execrable, detestable  
and licentious doctrine—probably it was because he was an execrable, detestable and licentious man.  
Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other  
persons. They are so well-acquainted with their own characters and so  
suspicious of themselves that they think it best, before another can express the suspicion, to attach the very same accusation to someone else.  
Now we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not execrable, but most delightful. That it is not abominable, but Godlike. That it is not licentious,  
but holy—and let others say what they will of it—we will repeat the praise  
which we have been singing—  
*“Jesus, Your perfect righteousness  
My beauty is, my glorious dress”*  
and we will wait for the day when all things shall be tried by fire, for we  
feel confident that—  
*“Bold shall we stand in that great day,  
For who anything to our charge shall lay,”*  
when we are clothed with the righteousness divine?  
Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the  
righteousness of Christ lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of  
Scripture. How did we fall, my Brethren? We fell by the imputation of  
Adam’s sin to us. Adam was our federal head. He represented us. And  
when he sinned we sinned representatively in him. And what he did was  
imputed to us. You say that you never agreed to the imputation. No, but I  
would not have you say thus—for as by representation we fell—it is by the  
representative system that we rise. The angels fell personally and individually—and they never rise.  
But we fell in another and we have therefore the power given by divine  
grace to rise in another. The root of the Fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed—thus we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder  
that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine and I ask you—how  
are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has  
been offered for sin by Christ? Very well, then, but that satisfaction must  
be imputed to them or else how is God just in giving to them the results of  
the death of another—unless that death of the other be first of all imputed  
to them?  
When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to all believing souls we do not hold forth an exceptional theory but we expound a grand Truth which is so consistent with the theory of the Fall and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the Gospel clear. I think it was this doctrine which Martin Luther called the article of standing or falling of the Church. I find a passage in his works which seems to me to refer to this doctrine rather than to justification by faith. He ought certainly to have said, “Justification by faith is the doctrine of  
standing or falling of the Church.”  
But in Luther’s mind, imputed righteousness was so interwoven with  
justification by faith that he could not see any distinction between the  
two. And I must confess, in trying to observe a difference, I do not see  
much. I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil—but then imputed  
righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it. And if you dig  
down through the great Truth of a sinner’s being justified by faith in  
Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that  
simple doctrine rests.  
And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—“THE  
LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Brethren, the Law-giver has Himself  
obeyed the Law! Do you not think that His obedience will be sufficient?  
Jehovah has Himself become man so He may do man’s work—do you  
think that He has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—He who girds the angels  
that excel in strength—has taken upon Him the form of a servant that He  
may become obedient—do you think that His service will be incomplete?  
Let the fact that the Savior is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be  
bold. Be very courageous. Face Heaven and earth and Hell with the challenge of the Apostle. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Look back upon your past sins—look upon your present infirmities—  
and all your future errors and while you weep the tears of repentance, let  
no fear of damnation blanch your cheek. You stand before God today  
robed in your Savior’s garments, “with His spotless vestments on, holy as  
the Holy One.” Not Adam when he walked in Eden’s bowers was more accepted than you are—not more pleasing to the eye of the all-judging, the  
sin-hating God than you are if clothed in Jesus’ righteousness and sprinkled with His blood.  
You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human  
righteousness. Your garments are divine. He had a complete robe, it is  
true, but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete but  
Heaven has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of  
this great Truth and boast exceedingly and glory in your God. And let this  
be on the top and summit of your heart and soul—“Jehovah, THE LORD  
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
You will remember that in Scripture Christ’s righteousness is compared to fair white linen. Then I am, if I wear it, without spot. It is compared to worked gold. Then I am, if I wear it, dignified and beautiful and worthy to sit at the wedding feast of the King of kings. It is compared, in the parable of the prodigal son, to the best robe. Then I wear a better robe than angels have, for they have not the best. But I, poor prodigal, once clothed in rags, companion to the nobility of the sty—I, fresh from the husks that swine do eat, am nevertheless clothed in the best robe and am  
so accepted in the Beloved.  
Moreover, it is also everlasting righteousness. Oh, this is, perhaps, the  
fairest point of it—that the robe shall never be worn out. No thread of it  
shall ever give way. It shall never hang in tatters upon the sinner’s back.  
He shall live and even though it were a Methuselah’s life, the robe shall be  
as if it were woven yesterday. He shall pass through the stream of death  
and the black stream shall not foul it. He shall climb the hills of Heaven  
and the angels shall wonder what this whiteness is which the sinner  
wears and think that some new star is coming up from earth to Heaven. He shall wear it among principalities and powers and find himself not a  
whit inferior to them all. Cherubic garments and seraphic mantles shall  
not be so lordly, so priestly, so divine as this robe of righteousness—this  
everlasting perfection which Christ has worked out—and brought in and  
given to all His people. Glory unto You, O Jesus, glory unto You! Unto You  
be hallelujahs! Forever, Hallelu—jah! You are You—”Jehovah, THE LORD  
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
II. Having thus expounded and vindicated this title of our Savior, I  
would now APPEAL TO YOUR FAITH. Let us call Him so. “This is the  
name whereby He shall be called, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
Let us call Him by this great name which the mouth of the Lord of Hosts  
has named. Let us call Him—poor sinners!—even we, who are today smitten down with grief on account of sin. I want this text to be fulfilled in  
your ears and in your case today. You are guilty. Your own conscience acknowledges that the Law condemns you and you dread the penalty. He  
that trusts Christ Jesus is saved and he that believes on Him is not condemned.  
To every trustful spirit Christ is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
Call Him so, I pray you. “I have no good thing of my own,” you say? Here  
is every good thing in Him. “I have broken the Law,” you say? There is His  
blood for you. Believe in Him, He will wash you. “But then I have not kept  
the Law.” There is His keeping of the Law for you. Take it, Sinner, take it.  
Believe on Him. “Oh, but I dare not,” says one. Do Him the honor to dare  
it. “Oh, but it seems impossible.” Honor Him by believing the impossibility. “Oh, but how can He save such a wretch as I am?”  
Soul! Christ is glorified in saving wretches. As I told you the other day,  
Christ cures incurable sinners—so I say now He accepts unacceptable sinners. He receives sinners that think they are not fit to be received. Only trust Him and say, “He shall be my righteousness today.” “But suppose I should do it and be presumptuous?” It is impossible. He bids you, He commands you. Let that be your warrant. “This is the commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” If you cannot say it with a loud voice, yet with the trembling silence of your soul let Heaven hear it—yes, Jesus, “All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin, yet I dare with fervent venture of these quivering lips to call You and to  
call upon You now, as the Lord my righteousness.”  
And you who have passed from a state of trembling hope into that of  
lively faith, I beseech you call Him so. Let your faith say, as you see Him  
suffering, bleeding, dying, “Thus my sins were washed away.” But let not  
your faith stop there. As you see Him sweating, toiling, living a selfdenying laborious life, say, “Thus the Law was kept for me.” Come up to  
the foot of Sinai now and if you see its lightning flashes and hear its thunders roar, be brave and say like Moses, “I will ascend above those thunders, I will stand enwrapped within the storm-cloud and I will talk with  
God. I have no cause for fear, there are no thunderbolts for me. For me no  
lightning flash can spend its arrow, I am perfectly, completely justified in  
the sight of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Say that, child of God! Does yesterday’s sin make you stammer? In the  
teeth of all your sins believe that He is your righteousness still. Your good  
works do not improve His righteousness. Your bad works do not sully it.  
This is a robe which your best deeds cannot mend and your worst deeds  
cannot mar. You stand in Him, not in yourself. Whatever, then, your  
doubts and fears may have been, do now, poor troubled, distressed, distracted Believer, say again, “Yes, He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
And some of us can say it yet better than that—for we can say it not  
merely by faith, but by fruition. We remember well the day when we first  
called him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Oh, the peace it brought,  
the joy, the gladness, the transport! Since then we have proved it to be  
true, for we have had privileges we could not have had if He had not been  
our righteousness. We have had the privilege of reconciliation with God.  
And He could not be reconciled to one that had not a perfect righteousness. We have had access with boldness to God Himself and He would  
never have suffered us to have access if we had not worn our Brother’s  
garments.  
We have had adoption into the family and the Spirit of adoption and  
God could not have adopted into His family any but righteous ones. How  
should the righteous Father be God of an unrighteous family? Our  
prayers have been heard and we have had gracious answers and that  
could not have been—for He could not hear the prayer of the wicked. He  
could not have heard us—if it had not been that He seemed to hear Christ crying through us and to have seen Christ’s merits in us. And therefore He granted the desire of our hearts. We have had in daily rich and sweet experience such manifestations of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ that to us it is a matter of fact as well as a matter of faith—a matter of praise as well as a matter of profession—that Jesus  
Christ is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
Brethren, your divinity must be experimental or it will not profit you. I  
would not give a straw for your theology if you learned it merely out of a  
college, or out of a system of man’s teaching. No, no, we must prove these  
things to be true in our lives. I can say it and I must say it—the testimony  
is not egotistical—I know there is a comfort in the faith of Christ’s imputed righteousness which no other doctrine can yield. There is something that a man can sleep on and wake on, can live on and die on, in the  
firm conviction that he is received by God as though the deeds of Christ  
were his deeds—and the righteousness of Christ his righteousness. Take away his filthy garments from him, set a fair miter on his head,  
array him in fine linen. O, Joshua, priest of the Most High, greatly Beloved, come forth now in your garments and offer acceptable sacrifice, seeing you wear the garments of Jesus, our great High Priest.” Let us, then,  
call upon His name and extol Him in our worship as “THE LORD OUR  
RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
And now let the whole universal Church of Christ, in one glad song call  
Jesus Christ the Lord their righteousness. Wake up, you isles of the sea.  
Shout, you wilderness that Kedar does inhabit. You people of God, scattered and peeled, banished among the heathen, vexed with the filthy conversation of the idolaters—from your huts, from the destitute places that  
you inhabit, sing—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!” Let no heir of  
Heaven be silent at this hour. Let every soul be stirred. Though tempesttossed and half a wreck, yet, mariner in Christ, say, “You are the Lord my  
righteousness.”  
Though cast down into the deep dungeon, you despairing soul yet say,  
“The Lord my righteousness.” Let no one of the entire believing family  
keep back his song but together let us sing, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” You, you spirits that walk in white, you glorious ones that,  
“day without night circle His Throne rejoicing.” You saints that before this  
day beheld Him and died, not having received the promise, but having beheld it afar off—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David and Solomon and all the mighty host, sing you, sing you, sing you unto Him today—and let this be the summit of your song—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
Our spirit bows before Him now. Sweet fellowship beyond the stream!  
We clasp our hands with those that went before. And while the cherubim  
can only say, “Holy, holy, holy. He is righteous,” we lift up a higher note  
and say, “yes, thrice holy, but THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS is He.” Let none, then, of all His saints in Heaven and in earth, refuse to call  
Him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
III. I now conclude, in the third place, by appealing to your GRATITUDE. Let us admire that wonderful and reigning grace which has led you  
and me to call him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
When I look back some ten or twelve years upon a foolish boy who  
cared little for the things of God. Who was burdened with an awful sense  
of sin and thought that he never could be pardoned—a lad so often driven  
to the borders of despair that he was willing to make away with his own  
life because he thought there was no happiness on earth for him. I can  
only say for my own self, “O the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that  
ever I should stand not only conscious that He is the Lord my righteousness, but to preach Him to you!”  
O God, you have done wonderful things! You said by the mouth of Jeremy, “This is the name whereby He shall be called.” I call Him so this day  
from my inmost soul. Jesus of Nazareth! Suffering Man! Glorious God!  
You are the Lord my righteousness! If I were to pass this question round  
these galleries and down below, oh, what hundreds of responses would  
there be from such as joyously obey the summons of gratitude! And  
among those about to be added to the Church (I am sure they would permit me to tell for the honor of the glorious grace of God), there are very  
many who are special instances of that grace which has sweetly constrained them to call Christ their righteousness.  
Some of them, according to their own confession before us at the  
Church meeting were not only reveling in drunkenness, one until he had  
well near drank away his reason by thirty years of habitual intoxication.  
But others of them were unclean and unchaste till they had rioted in debauchery and gone to the utmost lengths of crime. There are many in this  
place today who would not, though they would blush for the past, refuse  
to tell to the honor of redeeming grace, that once they had committed  
every crime in the catalogue except murder.  
And if they have not committed that, it was nothing but the sovereign  
grace of God that restrained them. Some members of this Church have  
sinned in every part of the world—have sinned in every quarter of the  
globe—have committed every form of lust and vice—and if you had asked  
them ten years ago whether they should ever be in a place of worship they  
would have repelled with an oath what they would have thought an insult  
and would have cursed you for supposing that they should so degrade  
themselves as to profess the faith of Christ. Brothers and Sisters, I should  
not be surprised if you were to stand up now and say, “Yes, still Jehovah  
Jesus is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
Oh!—  
Who would have thought that the lip of the blasphemer should fulfill that very prophecy—that the tongue that could scarce move without an oath should, nevertheless, glorify Christ—that the heart that was black with accumulated lust—the mouth which must have become a very sepulcher, breathing forth deadly fire, has now become a place for song and the heart a house for music, while heart and tongue say, “Yes, He is the Lord  
my righteousness this very day!”  
It would be a wonder if God should vow that the devils should yet sing  
His praise. But I do not think it would be a greater wonder than when He  
makes some of us sing His glorious praise. Brethren, you and I know that  
there is nothing in free-will doctrine. For in our case, at any rate, it was  
not true. Left to ourselves, where should we have been? What could  
Arminianism have done for us? Oh, no, it was irresistible grace that  
brought us to call him “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” It was that  
divine shall that broke in pieces our will. It was that strong arm that  
broke the iron sinew of our proud neck and made us bow, even us, who  
would not have this Man to reign over us. It was His finger that opened  
the blind eye. For once we could see no beauty in Him. It was His breath  
that thawed our icy heart.  
Yes, once we felt no love to Him—  
*“But now, subdued by Sovereign Grace,  
Our spirit longs for His embrace;  
Our beauty this our glorious dress,  
Jesus the Lord our righteousness.”*

*“Wonders of grace to God belong; Repeat His mercies in Your song.”*  
And this shall be our glory here and our song forever—“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”  
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WINNOWING TIME  
NO. 862

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 17, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 23:28.**

IT is remarkable that God has traced so much of the misery of the children of Israel in the period of their degradation to the unfaithfulness of those governors, priests and prophets who ruled over them. The crying evil of a nation’s crimes lay at the door of these foolish shepherds. At first it would seem that the main stress of calamity rested on the common people—and the time-serving rulers enjoyed ease and affluence as the fruit of their own corruption. But when the Most High arises to judgment, He begins with those “pastors” who have foully betrayed their sacred trust. As one who has seen their way with His watchful eyes and heard their lies with His ever-listening ears, He denounces them with terrible threats.

While, on the other hand, He looks with compassion on the unhappy victims of strange delusion and cruel oppression—and compares them to a flock hard driven and mercilessly scattered. No, more, He claims this people as His own flock, whose wrongs He will avenge, whose rights He will restore, whose fears He will relieve and whose prosperity He will secure. The sin of those false prophets is exposed in terms which leave them no shadow of excuse. It was a profanity that dared to invoke the Divine name for their horrible wickedness. It was a folly that perverted every kind of truth—and it was a mischief that made the land mourn and dried up all its pleasant places. Therefore the anger of the Lord went forth like a whirlwind in its fury, yet like arrows shot from His bow it singled out the head of the wicked and executed vengeance on the real offenders.

Here, then, in this chapter, we have some of God’s most withering threats and some of His most gracious promises. The abettors of sin are made a prey and the victims of sin are delivered. Is not this according to the manner of God? Whenever God’s Word deals with things truthful, be they material objects or living persons, however weak and feeble they are, it always speaks of them tenderly and handles them gently. God Himself has an eye of respect for everything that is real and veritable. Notwithstanding a delicacy of texture or an infirmity of constitution, He considers the things that are in their own order with generous condescension. His care is lenient and His mercy very tender—He does not quench the smoking flax, nor will He break the bruised reed.

But God hates every false thing. He scorns the hypocrite and the dissembler. The words of Jehovah are keen and cutting, sometimes even sarcastic, as He withers the specious with a laugh of ridicule. There is a sacred bitterness in the tone with which the Prophets and the Apostles—and far above them, the Lord and Master of Apostles and Prophets—speak of everything that is false and feigned, hollow and equivocal. You find no sparing in the rod of His hand, nor any gentleness in the rod of His mouth. What words could be more terrible than such denunciations as these—“O generation of vipers, who has warned you to escape from the wrath to come”? “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made you make him twofold more the child of Hell than yourselves”?

The Savior cannot endure specious guile, however fair its show. True image of the invisible God, Himself, He hates the cursed trailing serpent. He speaks right—but when beneath that which seems to be honest and of good report, treachery lurks unseen—He conceals not such a holy detestation as becomes One whose eyes are too pure and holy to look upon iniquity or countenance a fraud. Let me beg you to notice the peculiar sharpness and biting severity of the text—“What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” Like the edge of a razor it cuts. As a saber flashing over one’s head—a sword gleaming to the very point, a fire lurid with coals of juniper—we are appalled as we glance at it! It strikes with implacable resentment.

There is no word of mercy towards the chaff—not a thought of clemency or forbearance. He blows at it as though it were a worthless thing, not to be accounted of, a nothing that vanishes with a puff. The wheat He gathers and stores up. He houses it in His garner, for there will be many a plowing of the fields and many a sowing of the seed and many a harvesttime to follow for the precious grain. But as for the chaff, He has nothing to say of it—He scatters it with the blast—“What is the chaff to the wheat?” Let this apprehension of the severity of God towards everything that is fictitious, counterfeit and false, move us to enquire scrupulously into those matters concerning which our truthfulness must be brought into judgment.

I. IN APPLICATION TO ALL MINISTRIES of God’s Word, let us, first of all, face the question, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” It is quite certain that there always have been some faithful ministries—weighty, powerful, full of thought and emotion—ministries ordained of God, by which the Spirit of God works and through which the saints are gathered together, edified, sanctified and perfected. On the other hand, in all ages of the Church’s history there have been ministries which, with much appearance of well-doing—much glitter of oratory, much garnish of eloquence— have yet never been serviceable to the Church of God!

These ministries may have been of service to the outside world. They have been ministries, indeed, which have preached, “Peace, peace,” where there was no peace. They have been ministries dispensing sedatives and narcotics to men’s consciences—ministries that have not appealed to the hearts—but pandered to the tastes and passions of the hearers. In every age and in every place that the Gospel has been proclaimed, some have been found ready to mistake the force of rhetoric for the power of the Holy Spirit—the persuasiveness of impassioned speech for the convictions of saving faith.

Nor can we doubt, no, we know without doubt that it is so now—even at this present time there is the ministration of wheat and the ministration of chaff. If the spiritual man, who discerns all things, should just traverse the streets of this metropolis—take the round of its religious Meeting Houses and begin to examine the ministry in each—he would soon find that there are some which bear the stamp of Divine Truth and energy, while there are others, alas, which stand only in the wisdom of men—equipped with the learning of the schools, but destitute of the power which comes from above!

What comparison, now, can these two vocations bear in the sight of God? He has in His heart a high esteem for that ministry which He has ordained and for every minister whom He has anointed. But as to the other, He accounts it as a thing of nothing—less than nothing and vanity. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” What is it? Of what use is it? What service can it render? Men follow it with much approbation and applause and accept it as though it were a service to be thankful for—an institution to be highly prized! But God snuffs it out and He says, “To what end? Where is the profit? What is the chaff to the wheat?” O that some of us who are called to preach and some who are called to teach here in different ways, may remember that we, as well as others, are being tried and tested by the Most High God! And that the question which, perhaps, we are ready enough to apply to our neighbors, is no less suitable to ourselves! God may be saying concerning us, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” if our ministry is also chaff, as well as theirs.

Well, it behooves us to take heed, for the day shall declare it. He that has built wood, hay and stubble shall find his work perish in the fire! And happy shall it be for him if he, himself, shall be saved, for it shall be in his case, “so as by fire.” That ministry which comes from God is distinguished altogether from that which is not of His own sending by its effects. It is sure to be heartbreaking. Have you been from your childhood under the ministry of the Word and have you never been made to loathe yourself in the sight of God? Has the sword of the Spirit never pierced you? Have you never felt rebuked, accused? Has the rebuke of the Almighty never staggered you as with a heavy blow which felled you to the earth? Have you never gone out of the sanctuary to weep, to be ashamed, to clothe yourself in sackcloth and ashes and to be afraid to look up to Heaven?

If this has never been your case, either you must be a hardened one, indeed, or else the ministry under which you have been sitting is not a true ministry at all, for God says, “My Word is like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces.” If the Word, therefore, which you have been accustomed to listen to has never broken you in pieces, it matters not how melodious the voice you may have been listening to! The external accessories of worship may have been provided with ever so much care and taste and lavish expenditure. Yes, and the solemn swell of the organ, the gorgeous pomp of architecture and the comely array of vestments may all have helped to charm you! Yet be sure of this, it is not the voice of God to you if it has not broken your heart! If you have not been made to feel yourself lost, ruined and undone by the Word of God, I charge you by the living God to be dissatisfied with yourself, or else with the ministry under which you are sitting! For if it were God’s ministry to your soul, it would break your heart in shivers and make you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Not less, also, is a God-sent ministry clothed with power by God’s Spirit to bind up the heart so broken. Oh, this is a test of many ministries! A sinner who never had a broken heart on account of sin can sit down comfortably in any place of worship. But he who has ever really felt the plague of sin, will soon distinguish between the true physician and him who, though he pretends to have the diploma, knows nothing of the art of heavenly surgery! When God sends peace and pardon and mercy to your soul through a ministry, that ministry will be proven at once to your satisfaction to be of God’s appointment! It is the instrument through which God’s voice has spoken to you! Have you ever found it so when the Word has been preached?

I know that those ministries which consist only of fine sounding words, stories, stage productions and all the ornate strains and paltry tricks of actors, can never satisfy the thirst of a living soul! These are not true preachers, but mimics who retail that empty stuff—that scum upon the pot—that froth which will never satisfy a bleeding heart! O Beloved, you may sing what songs you will to a sad heart, but no music can charm away its griefs! Only let a ministry be full of Jesus—let Christ be lifted up and set forth, evidently crucified in the midst of the assembly—let His name be poured forth like a sweet perfume and it shall be as ointment to the wounded heart! And then it will be recognized as the ministry of wheat, and not a ministry of chaff to your souls.

Further, the ministry which God does not send is of no service in producing holiness. Dr. Chalmers tells us that when he first began to preach, it was his great end and aim to produce morality and in order to do so he preached the moral virtues and their excellences. This he did, he says, till most of the people he thought honest turned thieves and he had scarcely any left that knew much about practical morality. But no sooner did Chalmers begin to understand, as he afterwards did so sweetly, the power of the Cross and to speak about the atoning blood in the name and strength of the Eternal Spirit, than the morality, which could not be developed by preaching moral essays, became the immediate result of simply proclaiming the love of God in Christ Jesus!

After all, dear Friends, we look to you as our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. If the members of our Church are unholy, our ministry must lack power. Or if, on the other hand, the ministry is, by the Grace of God, blessed to the promotion of holiness in the hearers so that they cannot sin cheaply, or transgress in any way without doing violence to an enlightened conscience—and if many are led, step by step, to the attainment of purity and excellence through the power of the Truth of God which is delivered—then the ministry is proved to be a ministry of wheat and not a ministry of chaff.

Now, I do not, in saying this, intend an incriminating criticism upon any particular Christian man, or any individual Christian minister. I make a close search into my own ministry, now, and the ministry of others necessarily comes in view while so doing. I counsel you, my dear Friends, when you have a choice of the ministry you can attend, do not select a man merely for his learning—nor according to his standing in society—nor according to the excellence of his speech. Remember, all these may be but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal—they may mean nothing and less than nothing! But, on the other hand, should the preacher be illiterate, if God’s Spirit evidently rests upon the man and he speaks from his heart to your heart and God has blessed his message to you, it will be better for you to frequent the most humble shed where God is present than to worship in the most respectable edifice where you will have nothing but the words of man, without the living power of the living God!

My soul is growing more and more convinced that the great need of some of us is not to cull the flowers of rhetoric tastefully and polish our sentences till they glide daintily into your ears, but to let the speech come forth with unchecked freedom—the outpouring of our hearts in simplicity under the power of the Spirit! When we have really put ourselves into God’s hands to feel the Truths of God that we have to say, we need not be overly nice about picking our words. To come up into our pulpits without thinking both of the subject itself and the order of stating it would seem to me a species of presumption. But, having well pondered the matter, we should come with this stern resolve—“I will cast off that glittering metaphor. I will neglect that glowing period.

“I will not seek any sort of oratorical praise for myself, but I will deliver God’s Word in such words as shall seem to be nearest to my own heart and most likely to get at men’s hearts and men’s consciences. And with God’s help, whether they shall have the ring of the cymbal, or the tune of the tinkling brass about them or not, I shall be able to truthfully say that I have not made your faith stand in the wisdom of man, nor in the power of words, but in the power of the Gospel itself and of the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit, which must go with that Word, or else it will not be a savor of life unto life unto your soul.”

O dear Hearers, what you need—what we all need—is to have less and less of that which comes from ourselves and savors of the creature, and to have more and more of that which comes from our God, who, though we cannot see Him, is still in our midst—the Mighty to will and to do—for His power is the only power and His life is the only life by which we can be saved, ourselves, and those that hear us!

II. Turning aside, now, from that point with all the lessons it might suggest, let us for a few minutes APPLY THE TEXT, AS INDIVIDUALS, TO OURSELVES. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” Beloved, I trust there are many of us here who are genuine in our profession of religion—who cannot and who dare not allow the suspicion of hypocrisy to rest upon us! We feel that, unless we have been awfully deceived, we have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the subjects of a very great change—we know we are—we would be false to our own consciousness if we were to say that we doubted it.

Moreover, we are at the present moment in the possession of enjoyments which will not let us think ourselves to be in the gall of bitterness. We know what communion with Christ means. We know the power of prayer. We have had such answers to prayer that for us to hesitate in avowing it would be perfidious mock-modesty, wicked deception, lying before God. We know Christ and we are found in Him, not having our own righteousness, but wrapped about with His righteousness. No doubt, we are all well aware that if we have wheat in us, there is chaff, too. Which is more, it may be difficult for us to tell.

Some Christians are greatly puzzled when we begin to talk about the experimental riddle which the Christian finds in himself. But, if they are perplexed, we cannot help them out of the difficulty except by describing the case. I know in my own soul that I feel myself to be like two distinct men. There is the old man—as base as ever. And the new man that cannot sin, because he is born of God. I cannot, myself, understand the experience of those Christians who do not find a conflict within—for my experience goes to show this, if it shows anything, that there is an incessant contention between the old nature—O that we could be rid of it!—and the new nature, for the strength of which God be thanked! Do you not find it so?

Though old Ralph Erskine’s remark, in his, “Believer’s Riddle,” may be a little strong, still we can find the marrow of truth in it. He says— *“Down like a stone, I sink and dive,  
Yet daily upward soar and thrive.  
To Heaven I fly, to earth I tend,  
Still better grow, yet never mend.  
As all amphibious creatures do,  
I live in land and water, too.  
To good and evil equal bent,  
I’m both a devil and a saint.”*

You know how he means it—not that the Christian is such in his life—but that he finds within himself very strong tendencies to evil, as well as powerful tendencies to good. Though in his general character faith overcomes, for he is so kept that the Evil One touches him not, yet while he is preserved among the godly he cannot help discovering his kindred with the children of disobedience—among whom he sometime walks. I know that saying of Solomon’s, “I am black, but comely,” would suit me. I have serious doubts, sometimes, about the latter part of it, but never much doubt about the former, “I am black.”

It strikes me that the more we look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s Word and in the light of God’s Holy Spirit and compare ourselves with the blessed Person and the perfect Character of the Lord Jesus, the more we shall have to hold up our hands and say, “Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me.” I think we cannot have looked into our hearts and not find chaff to be there as well as wheat. This suggests great searching of heart in connection with the question, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” O Brethren, let us feel that the chaff is to be all gotten rid of! Let us feel that it is a heavy burden to moan and groan under—that it is not a grievance we should be content with! Let us make no provision for the flesh! Let us not ask that any chaff may be spared to us! May such a strong and mighty hurricane of Divine Grace go through our souls that every particle of chaff shall be taken from us and only the pure wheat be left in the garner, to the glory of God!

I hope that although we feel the tendency to sin, there is not one sin that charms or enslaves us. That every vain thought shocks us. And that there is not one particle of evil which we would not be happy enough to lose—

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

The principal thought I have on this subject, however, is that there is not only a great deal of our sin which is palpably chaff, but that a great deal of our religiousness is chaff, likewise. Do you ever find yourselves borrowing other people’s experience? What is that but chaff? Do you ever find yourselves at a Prayer Meeting glowing with somebody else’s fervor? What is that but chaff? Does not your faith sometimes depend upon companionship with some fellow Christians? Well, I will not say that your faith is chaff, but I think I may say that such growth in faith as is altogether the result of second causes and not immediately of God is very much like chaff.

I wonder how much religion some of us would have if it were all set to cool! There seems to be a great volume of it now while we are living in a warm and genial atmosphere with our friends and comrades in the Gospel. Suppose we were exposed to the trial of a bleak night? Suppose we were taken away from the Church of which we are members and made to live in the country where we had no fellow Christians to talk with? I wonder how much of the substance and fervor of our religion we should preserve! It is wonderful how great appearances often diminish and grow small when circumstances change. Remember, Christian, just so much and no more than would survive such an ordeal is the total that you possess now! The rest that seems to be, counts for nothing.

I am afraid we sometimes think we grow very fast, when, in fact, our progress is like the growth of the mushroom rather than the growth of an oak. When the Christian sees not his signs and fears that he does not grow, he often is growing in Divine Grace—growing downwards, being rooted in humility, getting a deeper sense of his own nothingness and unworthiness—and consequently a higher sense of his Lord’s fullness and loving kindness. Then he is truly growing! Alas, that he should sometimes think, “Now I am strong. Now I am rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing.” Then it is he deceives himself. He is priding himself in chaff where he needs to have wheat. I would pray the Lord, dear Brethren, that you and I may never cheat our own souls with shams. O that our attainments may stand the test! Let us ask God to take out of us everything that is not real!

Depend upon it, that is a great prayer to offer, “Lead us not into temptation.” All temptations are treacherous. But self-congratulation is the very essence of guile. “Lord, take from me all the gilt. Leave me nothing but the gold. Take from me all the paint, the graining and the varnish and leave me nothing but what is veritable and bolla fide.” It is a prayer for every Christian to offer. “Search me, O Lord, let me know the worst of my case. Do not let me stand dressed in borrowed plumes, but let me be to my own consciousness, so far as may be, what I really am.” “He that thinks himself to be something when he is nothing,” says the Apostle, “deceives himself.” The Lord grant that we may not perpetrate that folly. We may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”

Perhaps, Brethren, some of you are passing, just now, through a severe ordeal. You have been tried, exercised, tempted, and much tossed about, and you think you are losing a great deal. So you are, but what a blessed loss if you are only losing your chaff! When the goldsmith puts the lump of gold into the firing pot, he may perhaps think, “Now, the precious metal is dissolving and getting smaller and smaller in quantity.” But, oh, what beautiful losing it is, when the loss is nothing but the withdrawal of the dross and the pure gold shines and sparkles with a yet brighter luster because of that loss which it has endured! May your loss and mine be only the loss of our chaff!

III. And now, very briefly, THIS TEXT MAY HAVE A VERY STRONG BEARING UPON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” What a vision is that which salutes the eyes of the seer as he now looks upon the visible Church of God! It is a great threshing floor! Was there ever such a one before? On it are piled heaps and heaps upon heaps! Men rejoice and are glad and they say, “This is the threshing floor of Zion, and these are the sheaves from Israel’s garners.” Be it so.

Soon the threshing time arrives and the wheat and the chaff are there. Do you see these men congregated and massed together? You may call them by different names, but God regards not that. He looks upon that threshing floor as one and He sees lying together the heaps of chaff and of wheat. Now, imagine that we could have, back again, among us the days in which Popery was rampant. Suppose that a strong blast of persecution were to come and sweep through our Churches, whether established or nonconforming—where would they be? Do you believe that all those multitudes who go up to a House of Prayer, now, would go there if by so doing their lives were placed in jeopardy?

Take any of our Churches. Take this Church and do you suppose that all of you who now profess to be Christians would be willing to burn at the stake for your Master? I wish we could believe it, but we cannot. I dare not tell you we believe it, because some of you have been put to much smaller tests than that—and what has become of you? There have been Church members who, because they have been laughed at—and laughter breaks no bones—have been ashamed of their profession! There have been some who could not bear even a taunt or a jeer—and many a young man has not dared to pray at night, lest those who slept in the same room should ridicule him.

“If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, how can you contend with the horses?” And if, in this land of peace, you have grown weary under a little temptation, what will you do when the floods are out—how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? The nautilus is often seen sailing in tiny fleets in the Mediterranean sea, upon the smooth surface of the water. It is a beautiful sight! But as soon as ever the tempest wind begins to blow and the first ripple appears upon the surface of the sea, the little mariners draw in their sails and betake themselves to the bottom of the sea and you see them no more. How many of you are like that?

When all goes well with Christianity, many go sailing along fairly in the summer tide, but no sooner does trouble, or affliction, or persecution arise—where are they? Ah, where are they? They have gone! “They went out from us, because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us.” Yes, in all Churches there is no doubt that the wheat and the chaff are mixed together. I think those whose lot it is to look after the Church—and, my dear fellow Members, you have all an interest in it—ought to guard well the admissions into the Church. We must not shut out one of the Lord’s lambs, but, at the same time we must watch that we do not in any way add to the Church without due care and anxious prudence, for “what is the chaff to the wheat?”

I do fear that sometimes, during revivals, there have been great additions which have been no enriching of the Church. Names have come only to encumber the Church books and persons, also, have come only to disgrace the holy name by which we are called. O may God grant that if there must be chaff with the wheat, it may not be our fault—that we may not encourage it! The Savior says that while men slept, the enemy came and sowed the tares among the wheat. I suppose the best farmers do sleep and must sleep sometimes. And, consequently, the enemy comes in and the tares spring up among us, let us watch as we may! But, at any rate, let us not suffer these tares to be sown in open daylight before our very face. Watch and pray, as a Christian Church, each one of you as members of it, that we may not be allowed to flatter ourselves with a nominal increase unless it is a real increase from God, for “what is the chaff to the wheat?”

Suppose the report should be that there are so many added to the Church, but suppose that they are not added to the Lord, now, nor found in Christ hereafter? We have done those people serious damage by, as it were, endorsing their pretensions to Christianity when they have no real claim to it. We may have helped their delusion! We may have sewed pillows to their armholes, yes—we may have rocked the cradle of delusive slumber into which they have fallen and out of which they will never wake until they open their eyes in Hell! “What is the chaff to the wheat?” I wish that such a text as this would go whistling through some of the Churches! I would like to hear of its being preached from every pulpit in London and I would pray the Holy Spirit to make the application of it to the conscience of every hearer.

Your admission into the Church by infant sprinkling. Your admission into the Church by confirmation. Your admission into the Church by the right hand of fellowship, or your admission into the Church by Believers’ immersion—all go for nothing unless you have been admitted into union with Christ! Your sitting at the Lord’s Table. Your coming often to holy communion. Your being found regularly occupying your place in public worship. Your joining in the solemn hymn. Your bending with others in earnest prayers—these things are all nothing and less than nothing and mockery—unless your heart has been renewed! Unless you have the Spirit of Christ you are none of His. “You must be born again.”

O that some such a protest as this would go through professing Christianity! Alas, that so much of it is only ginger-bread—nothing but mere confectionery-religion! Many of our spiritual fortifications are like the Chinese forts that were made of brown paper. O for a single shot from Christ’s cannon of Gospel Truth—and how much of our nominal Christianity would stand? People say, “How severe! How uncharitable!” No, Sirs, everything that falls, falls because it ought to fall. Whenever the preacher is stern and severe and tries the Truth of God in the crucible, that which melts ought to melt. That which crumbles ought to crumble. But God’s Truth never can be overthrown. It can stand any test! “The grass withers and the flower thereof fades away, but the Word of our God endures forever.”

True religion has nothing to fear from discussion and criticism. It is only the false and the pretentious that have to fear when God sends the winnowing fan into His Church—for, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”

IV. And now, lastly, we may use this text and use it sorrowfully and solemnly WITH REGARD TO THE WHOLE MASS OF HUMAN SOCIETY. The whole mass of our population may be divided into the wheat and the chaff. Both are mixed up together now, and it would be impossible for you or for me to divide them. They are in courts of law and the houses of commerce. They are in the Exchange and in the committee rooms. They are in busy thoroughfares with their various shops and in the open streets among those that ply different callings. They are in here in this Tabernacle and in the many Churches and Chapels where multitudes assemble. We are all mixed up together—the wheat and the chaff.

And it is amazing how united the chaff is with the wheat, for look, the wheat once slept in the bosom of the chaff! The chaff was the outward husk which was necessary to the wheat’s production and yet the very chaff in which the wheat was nursed is to be burned—while the wheat is to be saved! Think of that, mother! Think of that, father, if you have godly children and you yourselves are not saved. Your children were nursed upon your knees and were cherished in your bosom and yet if that fair girl, if that dear boy shall find Christ, while you shall be left, unsaved— the nearness of the relation between the father and the child will not avail you any more than the nearness of relation between the husk and the grain! The wheat and the chaff must be separated—must be!

In this world the separation does not take place, but when this passing world is done, it will surely occur. The farmer is not always in a hurry to separate his wheat from the chaff, but when the due time comes it must be done. You do not find him indulging in any hesitant thought, or saying to himself, “I will not tear away that chaff from the wheat, after all.” No, but without a touch of pity, when the winnowing fork has to be used, the chaff is driven away while the good wheat is secured. You have a godly wife, but you are unconverted. Oh, how will you like to be separated from her whom you love? Ah, you have babes in Heaven, taken away from some of you before you ever heard their speech in an audible sound—or perhaps taken away as soon as they could lisp their first plaintive syllables and give the tokens of their loving recognition of your relationship.

They have gone up to Heaven—and, Father, will you be lost? Mother, will you be divided from them? You must be! You must be unless you find the Savior, through whose precious blood they also have been saved! God makes short work with you, you see. “What is the chaff to the wheat?” as if He had nothing to say to it, but just lets it go. It is the wheat He cares for. Let the harshness of the expression, which is apparent rather than real, awaken you and make you ask yourselves—

*“When You, my righteous Judge, shall come To fetch Your ransomed people home,*

***Shall I among them stand?  
Shall such a worthless worm as I,  
Who sometimes am afraid to die,***

***Be found at Your right hand?  
I love to meet among them now,  
Before Your gracious feet to bow,  
Though vilest of them all.  
But can I bear the piercing thought—  
What if my name should be left out,  
When You for them shall call?”***

There is chaff on the best threshing floor. There are ungodly sons and daughters in the best families. Unconverted persons are to be found in intimate association with the holiest men and women. Two shall be grinding at the mill—one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be in one bed and one shall be taken and the other left. God will make a division— sharp, decisive, everlasting—between the chaff and the wheat. O you thoughtless, frivolous, light, chaffy, giddy spirit—can you bear the thought of being thus separated forever? When the farmer parts the wheat from the chaff, I suppose it is not reasonable to expect that he ever does it perfectly. Let him do it as well as he may, there will be some portion of chaff left in with the wheat.

Not so when God holds the fan in His hand! He dispatches the work with inimitable precision. None of the chaff shall escape, nor shall a grain of the wheat be lost! No specious professor shall be spared, nor shall the humble disciple be driven away. God will make all the sheep pass under the hand of Him that tells them, “The Lord knows them that are His.” In that day He will soon detect the impostor and sever him from the real saints. And this division, when it is made, will be final! The chaff and the wheat will never come together again! Saint and sinner will have no more communion with each other! Ponder well the distinction between their state. There is the wheat—there, in that blessed land we love to sing of, where there are robes of whiteness and eyes that know not tears—there, there is the wheat!

And there is the chaff—there, in that land of which we cannot speak without alarm—a land of darkness, as darkness itself. A land of confusion, where there is no order. A land of death and ruin and despair. A land that eats up the inhabitants with pain and anguish and lamentation! That is where the chaff must go! Are you prepared to go there? Alienated from God. Out of Christ. You will be out of Heaven and out of Heaven means to be in Hell! There are but two places of destiny. Are you ready for this? “No,” you say, “God forbid it!” And so say I, too—God forbid it! May you and I be found in peace in the day of His appearing, for, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.”

The way of salvation is to trust Christ, trust Jesus! Jesus died for our sins! Jesus took our guilt upon Himself and was punished for all who trust Him. Trust Him! Christ was the sinner’s Substitute and took the sinner’s guilt and now God can be just in punishing Christ instead of you, and in saying to you, “Go free, through the blood of My dear Son.” God give you Divine Grace to trust in Jesus. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 23:23.*  
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GOD’S FIRE AND HAMMER  
NO. 2460

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1886.

**“Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”  
Jeremiah 23:29.**

As we noticed while reading the chapter, there were a great many pretenders in the times of Jeremiah, so that when the true Prophet of God came forth and declared, “Thus says the Lord,” he was met by false prophets who contradicted him and said something the very reverse of what he had to say and yet prefaced their utterance with the same declaration, “Thus says the Lord.” This, of course, tended very much to harden the hearts of the people against the Divine message, and it also grievously embarrassed Jeremiah. He hardly knew how to meet it—it seemed to checkmate him.

This evil also greatly grieved the Lord, for it was not according to His mind that these men should pretend to speak under His Inspiration and to speak as if they felt the burden of the Lord, when He had never sent them and they had not delivered His message. He therefore gave a test by which the true could be distinguished from the false. In the verse before our text, the Lord asks, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” That which these false prophets said was but chaff compared with the Divine message delivered by Jeremiah, which was as wheat—so the Lord puts the matter thus, “You hear these men speak and you are interested and pleased, and you say to yourselves, ‘This is fine oratory, this man has a grand way of speaking.’ You admire his style, his eloquence, his depth of thought and all that, but I say to you, ‘Is not My Word like as a fire?’ It comes not as a thing of beauty, but with force, with energy. It comes to you, not that you may stand and look at it, but it has within itself a burning and consuming force. And by this shall My Word be known from the word of man—that it has a mystic power about it which cannot be found in the words of men. And it is a breaking force, as when a mighty hammer strikes the rock, and strikes it again and again till even the solid granite is compelled to yield.”

The false prophets had no such force in their words. They did not pretend to have any fire in what they said. They spoke very pleasingly and very flatteringly—they made the people vain—they told them, in effect, that nothing would happen but what would delight them! They might go on in their sins, but it would be all right. They might indulge the most bland hopes that everything in the future would be according to their own wishes. That was man’s word, but when the Lord spoke by His servant, Jeremiah, His Word was “like as a fire.” There was something burning about it—human nature did not like it—but human nature was made to feel its force and power! When the false prophets spoke, they would bow and cringe to the people and say all manner of soft and pleasing things. But when Jeremiah spoke, in the name of Jehovah, every Word seemed to tell upon his hearers! It was as when a mighty man lifts up a sledgehammer and brings it down with all his force upon the stone he means to break. The message did not comfort the ungodly, but it broke their hearts, for the Prophet was seeking, if possible, to separate them from their sins.

We will begin with the statement which is made so plainly here, the Word of God has power in it. It is like fire. It is like a hammer. It is like fire and hammer combined and it operates upon men’s hearts much in the way in which the fire and hammer of the smith operate upon the iron, fashioning and shaping it according to his design. When I have spoken upon this point, I will seek, first, to illustrate this statement. And then to put it to a practical test.

I. First then, THE WORD OF GOD HAS POWER IN IT.  
And first, the Lord Himself says it is like a fire. I am now speaking of God’s Word. Not, mark you, God’s Word as it is declared by certain men. Not as it may come to you garnished with force of eloquence, beauty of poetry, animation of expression and the like—but the Word of God itself—the Truths of God which are revealed in this wonderful Book, the Truths which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to make known to the sons of men. These are “like as a fire.” You who are the people of God must often have felt greatly comforted, encouraged and cheered when you have been hearing the Gospel, just as when, on a cold day, and you are half numbed with cold, if your eyes are blindfolded you know when you are coming near a fire by the genial glow which you feel. You delight yourself in the Word of the Lord as you warm your hands at a bright cheery fire! Is it not so when God’s Word is preached? Men may laugh at us and say that we have a very sweet tooth for certain doctrines, but even dogs know when they are well fed. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib”—and we are not so foolish that we do not know what Truth it is that cheers and comforts our heart and what kind of teaching it is that makes us glad in the midst of the winter of our discontent.  
There is far too much teaching, nowadays, that will not comfort a mouse! You might hear it to all eternity and never be relieved of a single ounce of the burden of life. You might come in and out of the House of God and you might, perhaps, say, “Yes, it is very pretty,” but what is that to a man who has the burden of life to carry and the battle of life to fight? But when you hear the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, it lifts you up out of your discouragements and makes you say, after all, “It is worthwhile to live, it is worthwhile to suffer, it is worthwhile to press forward, for we see the great love the Lord has toward us, and what good things He has laid up in store for them that love Him.” The Word of the Lord is like a fire, for it warms and comforts the hearts of His people. There is such a thing as unction—I cannot tell you what it is, but I can tell you when I hear a sermon from a man who has it—and I can tell you when I hear a sermon that is without it. And I know that if it is God’s Word, there is a savor, an unction, a sweetness, a delightfulness about it that makes our very hearts leap and dance within us because of the blessed and glorious sound of the Gospel of God! Happy are the people that know this joyful sound!  
But next, fire is only at work very moderately when it yields us comfort. It has also the effect of paining and awakening. You put your finger in the fire and you will know that it burns! You lay your hand upon a red-hot bar of iron and you will not need anybody to tell you that there is fire within it! So, even if you are an unconverted man—if you have, as yet, no knowledge of the power of the Gospel of God—yet if you come in contact with it, I will guarantee you that you will know it! Very likely you will show that you know it by getting very angry, growing very indignant. Men do not like being singed and scorched by the Gospel! When a fellow has burnt his hand, he does not feel pleased with the hot iron—and the Gospel often operates upon men most beneficially when it excites their wrath. I have not much hope of the sinner who keeps on hearing the Truth of God and saying, “Yes, I like that kind of preaching. I quite enjoy our minister’s sermons.” I have a great deal more hope of a man when he says, “I will never hear that fellow again, I cannot bear to listen to him,” and goes out in a rage! He will come back before long—the hook is in his jaw—he is feeling the sharpness of it and he will not be able to get away from it.  
The Word of the Lord is as a fire and if a man touches fire, it will burn him and he will be made to know that he has come into contact with it. Have you not, dear Friends, felt it to be so? If you have sat for years under a ministry and have remained not only unconverted, but unmoved— if you have always felt perfectly pleased and satisfied with yourself and with what you have heard—I should think it cannot have been the Gospel of Jesus Christ! If it has been the true Gospel of the Grace of God, I am sure that it will either make you angry with yourself, or angry with your sin, or angry with itself, for, if you do not hate your sin, you will hate the Gospel with all its lovingness! God’s Word is so stern a witness against everything that is evil, that it is like fire, in that it pains, startles and awakens. Men cannot go to sleep when their fingers are on fire— neither can they when the true Gospel is sounding aloud in their ears!  
Fire also has a melting power and so has the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, dear Friends, there are some of us who once had hearts of steel—nothing seemed able to move us and melt us but we came under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God and under the sound of the Gospel—and soon we began to feel, we began to tremble, we began to be in distress, we began to lament, we began to seek the Savior, we began to trust Him! All things were changed under the influence of this Divine fire. Oh, that we could get the hearts of many hardened ones into the very center of the blessed flame till the holy heat should make them flow like melted wax before the Presence of the God of Israel! Certainly the Gospel has a wonderful power to melt the heart of man.  
More than that, the Gospel has a consuming power. When it first comes into a district, it finds people indifferent to it, but possibly it begins by burning up some one of their vices. It may be that drunks are reformed. Then, straightway, the men who get gain out of this evil merchandise are sure to be indignant about it! They see the demon of drunkenness cast out of men and they cry, “Our gains are gone!” And they are angry, but they cannot stop the fire. Once fairly set alight, it will burn, blaze and spread till others shall cast away their evil habits and turn unto the living God!  
I cannot help noticing in history the consuming power of the Gospel of Christ. There have been old systems of iniquity that have been hoary with age, but when, at last, they have been attacked by the Church of God with the sword of the Spirit and the Gospel of Christ, they have been utterly destroyed! There was, for instance, that abominable institution of slavery—and there was a part of the Church of Christ which tried to palliate it and spoke of it as “a Divine institution, a peculiar institution,” and I know not what! But when the Church of God denounced slavery as a thing utterly inconsistent with Christianity, the thing was burnt up right speedily and passed away! There are many more social and political wrongs that will have to perish through the burning power of the Gospel—and there is much in our hearts and much in our lives, and much all round about us that will have to go as the Gospel fire burns more and more vigorously! But remember that it must be God’s Word that will burn out the evil. We cannot do much with our poor thinking and tinkering—it is the eternal Truth of God, the everlasting verities brought to bear upon the sons of men that shall soon separate between the dross and the gold, consuming the one and leaving the other pure!  
But our text also says that God’s Word is like a hammer—“and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.” So that, whenever a minister has the Gospel to use, this simile should teach him how he ought to use it—with all his might, let him strike with it mighty blows for his Lord! I should think that it does not require any great education to learn how to use a hammer. I do not know, it may, but it seems that to use a hammer aright, one has nothing to do but to strike with it. A stone-breaker, for instance, gets a good strong hammer and a heap of stones to strike at— and he has but to hit them as hard as he can and to keep on hitting till all are broken. Brothers, when you preach, take the Gospel hammer and strike as hard as you can with it!  
“Oh, but I must try to improve the look of my hammer! It must have a mahogany handle!” Never mind about the mahogany handle! Use your hammer for striking—hammers are not for ornament—they are meant to be used for real hard work! And when you come to use the Gospel as it ought to be used, the result is wonderful! It is a rock-breaking thing. “Oh,” you cry, “there is a very obdurate man there!” Strike at him with the Gospel! “Oh, but he ridicules and scoffs at the Truth of God!” Never mind if he does—keep on smiting him with the Gospel. “Oh, but, in a certain district, I have wielded this hammer against the rock for years and nothing has come of it!” Still go on wielding it, for this is a hammer that never failed! Only continue to use it! Everything is not accomplished with one stroke, nor, perhaps, with 20 strokes. The rock that does not yield the first time, nor the second time, nor the third time, nor the 20th time, will yield at last! There is a process of disintegration taking place at every stroke—the great mass is inwardly moving even when you cannot see that it is doing so. And there will come, at last, one blow of the hammer which will seem to do the deed. But all the previous strokes contributed to it and brought the rock into the right state for breaking it up at last. Hammer away, then, Brothers—hammer away with nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The heart that is struck may not yield even year after year, but it will yield at last!  
I trust that I am speaking the truth about some of my hearers who have been listening to me for a long time. I have hammered at you with all my might—I do not see that I have done much, yet, but I do know that this hammer does not go to be beaten and, as long as you live, and I live, it will do the same work! In the name of the everlasting God, the Gospel shall still be brought to bear upon your heart and conscience! O God, grant that we may not be disappointed at the result of our labors, but may the hard hearts yield, after all, to the blows of the Gospel hammer!  
If any of you are in the habit of hearing sermons which are very fine, very elegant, very logical, very proper, yet if they never strike you as the hammer strikes the rock—if they never aim at breaking your hearts—do not waste any more Sundays in hearing them, for they are not God’s Word! This Word is a hammering Word and if the preacher’s message does not strike you—if it does not ultimately break you in pieces—it is because it is not the Word of God to which you have been listening! This is the test which God, Himself, gives to distinguish the true from the false, “Is not My Word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”  
Now put the two together—the fire and the hammer—and you will see how God makes His servants who are to be instruments for His use. He puts us into the fire of the Word! He melts, He softens, He subdues! Then He takes us out of the fire and welds us with hammer strokes such as only He can give, till He has made us fit instruments for His use! And He goes forth to His sacred work of conquering the multitudes, having in His hands the polished shafts that He has forged with the fire and the hammer of His Word!  
So far I have dealt with the statement of our text, that the Word of God has power in it like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.  
II. Now I want, in the second place, to ILLUSTRATE THIS STATEMENT by noticing certain parts of God’s Word which have, to our personal knowledge, operated both as a fire and a hammer upon the hearts of men.  
A large part of God’s Word is taken up with the revelation of His Law and you cannot fully preach the Gospel if you do not proclaim the Law of the Lord. Men will never receive the balm of the Gospel unless they know something of the wounds that sin has made. If the Law of God is faithfully and fully preached, what a fire it is! What a hammer it is! That Law which takes cognizance of our words and our thoughts. That Law which we are constantly breaking by sins of omission and sins of commission. That Law which declares that God will by no means clear the guilty, that Law which must be followed by punishment upon those who disobey it— for the Lord our God is a jealous God and He will not have His Law trampled upon—that Law

is both a fire and a hammer! When once the Spirit of God blesses the solemn declarations about the Law of God so as to bring them home to the conscience, what a hammer it is! What a fire it is!  
I shall never forget the time when I felt that fire so that I could not rest day or night and when I felt that hammer till I seemed broken in pieces with its tremendous blows! That Law which will justify no man till he keeps it perfectly. That Law which condemns every man who has violated it but once. That Law which demands death as the penalty for each offense. That Law which casts man into prison, out of which he can never come till he has paid the uttermost farthing—that Law is, indeed, a fire and a hammer and many have been burned and broken by it! Remember how John Bunyan felt its force for years? Many of us for briefer times have, nevertheless, realized that there is no teaching in the world that is so terrible as the proclamation of God’s Law—nothing that so breaks the heart in pieces as a true revelation of the just demands of the Most High God.  
But, beloved Brothers, have you not also felt that there is fire-work and hammer-work in the teaching of the Gospel? Oh, how often have we seen men who have not been moved, even by the Law of God, at last won to Christ by the preaching of the Gospel—the Gospel of Free Grace and dying love, full forgiveness for the greatest sinners—immediate, irreversible pardon given in a moment to every sinner who believes in Christ! Oh, how this Gospel has acted like a fire and burned up all the sinner’s opposition! How this Gospel has also been like a hammer to break down human obstinacy! The Gospel of redemption through the precious blood of Jesus. The Gospel which tells of full Atonement made. The Gospel which proclaims that the utmost farthing of the ransom price has been paid and that, therefore, whoever believes in Jesus is free from the Law, free from guilt and free from Hell—the proclaiming of this Gospel has made men’s hearts burn within them and has dashed out the very brains of sin and made men joyfully flee to Christ! So, preach the Gospel, then— the Gospel of justification by faith, the Gospel of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of final perseverance through the unchanging love of God. Preach the whole of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God as it is revealed in the Covenant of Grace and you will be doing fire-and-hammer work of the very choicest sort!  
Above all, Brothers, what fire-and-hammer power there is in the doctrine of the Cross! The ever-blessed Christ of God has the sins of all His people laid upon Him and He is fastened to the Cross of shame. He whom angels worshipped is hanged up as a felon! He bleeds and dies for guilty men. When every other piece of artillery has failed to break open the gates of the city of Mansoul, the battering ram of the Cross has made every timber start. Man must yield when the power of the Spirit of God applies to his heart the doctrine of the precious blood! The old, old story of the Cross has more power in it to melt the heart of man than all the other stories that were ever told! You must often have felt it to be so, you who are servants of God! Have you not often been melted and broken down by the story of the Cross? Yes, and you are not ashamed to be so broken down—rather do you strike upon your breasts with indignation that your hearts should be so hard to break—and your wish is that you may always be deeply sensitive to that sacred tragedy, that Divine story of Him who was “found guilty of excess of love,” but guilty of nothing beside. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, one might go on to illustrate the Truth of this statement, that everywhere God’s Word has power as a hammer and as a fire, but especially those parts of it which speak of the Law, the Gospel and the Cross!  
III. Time fails me, so I must close my discourse by asking you to PUT THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT TO A PRACTICAL TEST—“Is not My Word like as a fire, says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”  
Let us, first, try it upon ourselves. You are very sad, are you? Your heart is cold. Now, Brother, read a chapter from the Word. Open the Bible. Sit down and study it. Ask God to bless it to you and I am sure you will soon be delighted to find that it is like a fire to warm and comfort you. When you are sad, do not run into your neighbor’s house, do not sit down, alone, and weep in sullen despair—get to the Word of the Lord! There is such sweetness in it, there is such power in it that in a short time you shall have beauty instead of ashes and songs instead of sighs.  
You say that you are not sad, but you are very sleepy. You have become very drowsy and dull in the ways of God. You have not the earnest spirit you used to have, nor half the spiritual life and vigor you once felt. Very well, then come to God’s Word—read it, study it, listen to it, find out where that Word is faithfully preached and go there! Oh, how quickly the Lord has blessed some of us in times of great barrenness! A single sentence has brought us out of our lethargy into holy energy. One chapter of that Word has operated upon us more swiftly than a charm. “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Cling to the Gospel, whatever the state into which your heart gets—if you would again enjoy your first love, remember where you received it—it was in the hearing of the Word! Therefore, go and hear it, again, and search the Scriptures for yourself, that you may be revived and restored.  
Perhaps another friend says, “I have lost so much of my comfort, assurance and joy, that I feel as if I had grown quite cold and hard and insensible.” Why need you be cold when God’s Word is like a fire? Why need your heart remain like a rock when God’s Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Get back to the Gospel, dear Friend—that is the cure for your hardness and coldness! I saw, the other day, a man whom I used to know as a very energetic Christian. He went away from us and joined another church where the pastor is an eloquent man, and he has been there for years. I said to him, “Well, how are you getting on?” He answered, “Oh, I hardly know! I always like to hear the minister preach.” “But how does your soul prosper?” I enquired. “Ah,” he replied, “you have puzzled me, now, for ever since I have been there I have not dared to think whether I have a soul or not! The fact is, that kind of preaching does not do for people who have souls.” “Oh, dear, me!” I said to him, “if I were you, I would flee from the place! If the preaching does not feed your soul and make you grow in love to God and in likeness to Christ, what is the good of it?” We must feel the power of the Word upon our hearts if we would be strong and active in service for our Lord! But it is according to the nature of God’s Word that he who feeds thereon should be changed into its nature. As the Word of the Lord is quick and powerful, if you feed on it, it shall make you live and it shall fill you with true power—it shall sanctify and purify you, and make you to reflect the Character of God.  
And next, Brothers and Sisters—still using our text practically—as God’s Word is like a fire and like a hammer, if we have used it upon ourselves, let us try to use it upon others. I have an opinion that there are a great many persons in this world whom we give up as hopeless, who have never really been tried and tested with the Gospel in all their lives. I am afraid that there are in this place persons of whom we speak as unlikely to be converted, who have never been fully brought under the influence of the fire of God’s Word, or beneath the fall of the hammer of the Gospel. “I brought one person,” says somebody. I am glad you have, my dear Friend, but have you ever spoken faithfully to that person about his soul? “Well, I do not know that I have. I have said a little to him.” Have you ever plainly put the Gospel before him? “Well, I do not think he was quite the person to be spoken to in that fashion.” Ah, I see that you thought you were going to burn him without using fire and to break that rock without lifting the hammer! The fact is, you believed that something better than the Gospel fire was needed in his case, or that something gentler than the Gospel hammer was needed. Will you not try that oldfashioned hammer upon him? Will you not try that old fire upon him?  
I have heard of congregations where men have said, “There is no good to be done there.” And I have wondered if they were to try preaching one of the old-fashioned sort of Gospel sermons—if they could get Mr. Whitefield to preach, or have someone to preach the same truth as Whitefield preached—what results would follow? When people say that the hearts of the people are not affected by the preaching in any place, I ask, “But was it the Gospel with which you tried to affect them? Was it the very Word of God that was preached?” Our words are like paper pellets thrown against the wall—they effect nothing! But God’s Word is like a shot fired from one of the greatest Woolwich cannons! When it comes, it crashes through every obstacle and destroys everything that is opposed to it.  
Why should we not always set the whole Truth of God before those whom we seek to save? I believe that sometimes, even in Sunday schools, children are taught “to love gentle Jesus,” and so on, as if that were the way of salvation. Why not tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why is love to take the place of faith? Let it be the same Gospel for the children that you give to the adults! Try them with the same Gospel and see what will come of it—and let this work be attempted everywhere.  
“But,” says someone, “there are certain districts where you cannot do any good if you try to preach the Gospel. You must fiddle to the people and drum to them—and then you must have amusements and entertainments for them, you must have penny readings and concerts.” Very well, convert sinners that way if you can, dear Friends—I do not object to any method that results in the winning of souls! Stand on your head if that will save the people, but still, it seems to me that if God’s Word is like a fire, there is nothing like it for burning its way! And if God’s Word is like a hammer, there can be nothing like that Word for hammering down everything that stands in the way of Jesus Christ! Why, then, should we not continually try the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel?  
“Well,” says one, “but the poor people are dirty—we must have various sanitary improvements.” Of course we must! Go on with them as fast as you can—the more of such things, the better! There is nothing like soapsuds and whitewash for dirty people and dirty places, but you may whitewash and soap them as long as you like, yet that will not save their souls without the Gospel of Christ! You may go to them and plead the cause of temperance with them and I hope you will—the more of it, the better. Make teetotalers of every one of them if you can, for it will be a great blessing to them! But still, you have not really done anything permanent if you stop there. Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! Try the Gospel! When the Gospel was tried against the world in the days of Paul—when the power of the great empire of Rome had crushed out liberty and when lust of the most abominable kind made the world reek in the nostrils of God—nothing was done but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified! And the common people heard of Jesus Christ, heard of Him gladly, and believed in Him! And very soon, down went the false gods, down went the brutal lusts of the Roman empire and a great part of the world was permeated with the Gospel! And it needs to be done again and it must be done again! But remember that it is only to be done by that same Word of the Lord which did it the first time. And the sooner we get back to that Word, the better. And the more we throw away everything else but the simple proclaiming of that Word, the more speedy will be the victory and the more swift and sure will be the triumph for our God and for His Christ!  
O Sirs, if you want to have your hearts renewed, it is the Gospel that must melt them! If you want to be saved, it is the Gospel that must save you! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” This is the substance of the Revelation from Heaven—accept it and God bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 23:1-32.**

Verse 1. Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says the LORD. What a dreadful woe this is upon all false shepherds—those who profess to be sent of God to instruct the people, but who are not sent of God at all, whose labors only result in the scattering of the sheep and destroying them instead of gathering them to Christ for their salvation!

2-4. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people: You have scattered my flock, and driven them away, also have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD. And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them who shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD. If the undershepherds do not feed the flock, God, Himself, will do it, for His own redeemed flock shall not be torn of wolves, nor left to perish in the lands where they are driven. That Great Shepherd of the sheep will do what others fail to do, but this does not take away from them their responsibility and it must be the most solemn responsibility that rests on mortal man to profess to be a shepherd of souls, yet not to be sent of God.

6. Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. We are looking for that glorious King! Oh, that He would soon come! He is the great Monarch who shall absorb all other monarchies, for, “He shall reign forever and ever.”

6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. What a glorious name for our King who is made of God unto us “righteousness.” We may well rejoice to think that all the perfect righteousness of our great King and Lord shall belong to us, for this shall be His very name, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

7, 8. Therefore, behold, the days come, says the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD lives, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, the LORD lives which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries where I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land. There are better times for Israel than Israel has ever known as yet! The glories of Egypt and of the Red Sea are yet to be eclipsed. And there are better times in store for the Church of God than she has seen as yet!

9. My heart within me is broken because of the prophets. In Jeremiah’s day there was a set of men who pretended to be prophets, yet who contradicted the Lord’s servant at every point.

9. All my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of His holiness. Jeremiah had really received the Word of the Lord and it seemed to overpower him—as that Word was full of terror, he felt like one who was overcome with wine.

10, 11. For the land is full of adulterers, for because of swearing the land mourns; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house have I found their wickedness, says the LORD. It is an awful thing when wickedness abounds even in the House of God and it is to be feared that, in many places, the Church of the present day is not clear in this matter.

12. Therefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. What an awful description of the doom of the profane prophets and priests! Slippery ways are bad enough in the light, but, “their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness.”

12-14. They shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, says the LORD. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused My people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing. It was bad enough for Samaria to go astray. There was a mixed race there, so it was no wonder that their prophets were foolish, but oh, that in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, there should be false prophets—that was worst of all! This was the style of these prophets—

14, 15. They commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none returns from his wickedness: they are all of them unto Me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. When preachers are bad, who wonders that people are worse? If the prophets go astray, how shall those who follow them find the right road?

16. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain. That is one mark of a false Prophet—he makes you feel that you are a fine fellow, that there is something good in you—“They make you vain.”

16. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. That is another of the marks of a false Prophet. Such a man as that is a great thinker—he has thought out his theology, himself, he has imagined and invented it, himself—“They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.”

17. They still say unto them that despise Me, The LORD has said you shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. This is yet another mark of the false Prophet. He always tries to smooth down the consequences of sin. “In the future state,” he says, “sin may occasion some temporary inconvenience, but all things will come right, sooner or later.” That is a man sent of the devil! He is no servant of the living God! By these three tests you may prove who are the false prophets—they make you vain, they speak out of their own heart, not out of the mouth of God, and they try to make it easy for you to sin by denying the greatness of the penalty attached to it.

18, 19. For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. This is God’s Word—He does not prophesy smooth things to the wicked! He does not promise slight consequences of sin, but “a whirlwind” and, “a grievous whirlwind.”

20-22. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until He has executed, and till He has performed the thoughts of His heart: in the latter days you shall consider it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. False prophets are futile and vain—no good result comes of all their teaching. But oh, if they had known the Word of the Lord! If they had really been sent of God, what a difference there would have been! God grant that none of us may pretend to teach others what we have never learned, or to speak for God if God has never spoken to us!

23-26. Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the LORD. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the LORD. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in My name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? Yes, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. They profess to be prophets of their own heart, but “they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart,” for that which comes out of man’s heart is like the heart, itself, and man’s heart “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

27, 28. Which think to cause My people to forget My name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten My name for Baal. The Prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream. Let him tell it as a dream, for it is nothing more than that! If he has dreamt it, let him say, “This is a dream that I have dreamed, but it is only a dream.”

28. And he that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. Let him speak it as the Word of the Lord.  
28. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the LORD. Man’s thoughts, man’s conceptions, at their very best, are but as chaff—only the Word of the Lord is the true wheat.  
29, 30. Is not My Word like as a fire? says the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, that steal My Words every one from his neighbor. Borrowed sermons—pages of other people’s experience— fragments pulled from old or new divines—nothing of their own, nothing that God ever said to them, nothing that ever thrilled their hearts or swayed their souls—God will not acknowledge such teaching as this!  
31. Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He says. They have not any hearts—they only use their tongues. They say, “He says,” as if God had said to them something which He has never said.  
32. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the LORD. See how heavily God deals with the false prophets of Jeremiah’s time? He will deal with equal severity with any who preach or teach anything other than the Gospel of His blessed Son—the pure Revelation which is written in this Book! God grant that none of us may be deceived by them, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

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HEART-KNOWLEDGE OF GOD  
NO. 1206

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1874, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord.” Jeremiah 24:7.**

WITH what blindness has sin struck the heart of man, for man does not know his own Maker! It is implied in the text that in his heart he is ignorant of Jehovah, though in Him he lives, and moves, and has his being. What an impotence has sin brought upon the mind of man, since being ignorant of God he is also incapable of finding Him out! This, also, may be most readily gathered from the text. The fact that a promise is made in the Covenant that to the chosen shall be given hearts to know the Lord is a clear proof that without the Divine teaching and without the reception of a new heart from the Lord, man not only does not know, but cannot find out his God!

You boast of your intellect, O vain Man, but your foolish heart is darkened so that you stumble in the noonday as at midnight. You have eyes, and you say, “I see,” but your eyes are closed, your ears are dull of hearing and your heart has waxed gross. And your soul has become so dull that only He who formed the ear can make you hear. And only He who fashioned the eye can give you sight.

How can we sufficiently admire the condescension of God, that He should stoop to instruct the heart of man? Man forgets his God, but God does not forget him. Though man knows not God, yet God knows him and, seeing that his powerlessness to grasp Divine knowledge lies in his heart, He visits him in Grace and renews the fountain of his strength and the center of his nature by giving him a new heart and a right spirit.

The infinitely glorious God might have regarded it as a matter of indifference whether such an insignificant creature as man knew Him or not. He might well have said, and it had been consistent with the majesty of His justice to say it, “Seeing that you do not desire to know Me, you shall not perceive Me. And inasmuch as you close your eyes to Me, you shall continue in outer darkness. Because you will not glorify Me as God, your hearts shall abide in midnight, I will leave you to your own devices.”

But the Lord of Love said not so to the sons of men, upon whom His heart was set! On the contrary, He has made a Covenant of Mercy on our behalf and His speech is the reverse of what we might have expected. He declares in the words of the text, “I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah.” What is meant by this great promise of the text is not merely that God will lead the converted to know that there is a God, because that may be known without a new heart. Any man possessed of reason may know that there is a Supreme Being who created all things

and preserves the universe in existence.

The heavens declare the Glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork. The tokens of Divine skill and power are so abundant that, “The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are already seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.” The knowledge intended here is much deeper than that which comes from observation—and only affects the intellect. To know that there is a God is a lower step which every man takes except the fool who has said in his heart, “There is no God.” The text promises that the favored ones shall know that God is Jehovah! So the original text has it, “I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah.”

God leads men to see that the God revealed in Scripture and manifested in the Person of the Lord Jesus, is the God who made Heaven and earth. Man fashions for himself a god after his own liking. He makes to himself, if not out of wood or stone, yet out of what he calls his own consciousness, or his cultured thought, a deity to his taste who will not be too severe with his iniquities or deal out strict justice to the impenitent. He rejects God as He is and makes other gods such as he thinks the Divine One ought to be. And he says concerning these works of his own imagination, “These are your gods, O Israel.”

The Holy Spirit, however, when He illuminates our minds, leads us to see that Jehovah is God and beside Him there is none else. He teaches His people to know that the God of Heaven and earth is the God of the Bible, a God whose attributes are completely balanced, Mercy attended by Justice, Love accompanied by Holiness, Grace arrayed in Truth and Power linked with Tenderness. He is not a God who winks at sin, much less is pleased with it, as the gods of the heathen are supposed to be. No, He is a God who cannot look upon iniquity and will, by no means, spare the guilty.

This is the great quarrel of the present day between the philosopher and the Christian. The philosopher says, “Yes, a god if you will, but he must be of such a character as I now dogmatically set before you.” But the Christian replies, “Our business is not to invent a god, but to obey the one Lord who is revealed in the Scriptures of Truth.” The God of Holy Scripture is Love, but He is also possessed of justice and severity. He is merciful and gracious, but He is also stern and terrible towards evil. Therefore unregenerate hearts say, “We cannot accept such a God as this,” and they call Him cruel and I know not what besides.

Herein they are idolaters—they set up another god and forsake the true God—and it does not alter the case if they plead that they make no graven image, for the First Commandment says, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The Lord teaches His people that He is Jehovah, who brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. He teaches them He is the Jehovah who smote Pharaoh with plagues and drowned his hosts in the Red Sea. The Jehovah who led His people through the wilderness, but cast out their enemies from before them with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. The Jehovah that redeemed His people, but chastened them for their iniquities and took vengeance upon their inventions.

The God of Sinai is the same God as the God of Calvary. “I am Jehovah your God,” is His solemn proclamation, and it is well for the soul when it understands and knows that Jehovah, He is God, yes, Jehovah, He is God alone. When the heart is content to believe in God as He is revealed and no longer goes about to fashion a deity for itself according to its own fancies and notions, it is a hopeful sign. The main stress of the promise lies, however, in this—“I will give them a heart to know ME.” That is, not merely to know that I am and that I am Jehovah, but to have a personal knowledge of Myself. I can scarcely express the idea which I wish to convey to you, but you all know the difference between knowing who a man is—what his character is and all about him—and knowing the man himself.

There are hundreds of people of whom we know a great deal. We are favored by some prying gentleman or other with stories of how our great men dress, what they say, what they eat, when they eat and all sorts of minute details of their personal habits. Still, despite all this information, we do not know these people—we should speak falsely if we said we did. To know them we must be on speaking terms with them. There must be a mutual recognition. There must be dealings of some kind between us.

Now, it is so in the far higher matter of which we now speak. It is not enough to know that our Creator is the Jehovah of the Bible and that He is perfect in Character and glorious beyond thought—to know God we must have perceived Him—we must have spoken to Him! We must have been made at peace with Him. We must have lifted up our heart to Him and received communications from Him. If you know the Lord, your secret is with Him and His secret is with you. He has manifested Himself unto you as He does not unto the world. He has made Himself known unto you by the mysterious influences of His Spirit—because of this you know Him.

I cannot explain this knowledge, but it is delightful to remember that many of you understand what it means by experience. Is it not sweet to traverse the world discerning God on every side? Your Father ever near! Is it not a blessing to be in trouble and find Him helping us? To be in a dilemma and to hear His voice saying, “This is the way, walk you in it”? To be depressed in spirit and to feel that His comforts rejoice our souls? To be exulting in joy and to feel that His Presence calms and sobers us and keeps us from undue delight in created things? It is inexpressibly honorable and joyful to walk with God as Enoch did, to speak with Him as Abraham did of old, as a man speaks with his friend, or to be hidden in the hollow of His hand, as Moses was in Horeb! This is to know God after the manner of the text.

My Hearer, do you know God? Have you beheld the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you discerned the Father in the Son? Do you see all the attributes of God shining mildly through the Mediator, toned down to our capacity, lest the effulgence of the Deity should blind our finite sense? Do you know God by going to Jesus as your Savior? He that has seen Christ has seen the Father! “No man knows the Father save the

Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” If you know Christ and are found in Him, then, Beloved, you know the Lord and are among the blessed company who are taught of the Spirit, for flesh and blood have not revealed the Lord unto you!

We will consider our text in the following manner. We will first of all describe the seat of this knowledge—“I will give them a heart to know Me.” Then the necessity of this knowledge. Then the excellency of this knowledge and, lastly the source of this knowledge. May the Holy Spirit aid us in speaking upon each topic.

I. THE SEAT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE—“I will give them a heart to know Me.” Observe that it is not said, “I will give them a head to know Me.” As I have already said, man’s great stumbling block in coming to God does not lie in his reason—there is a difficulty in his reason, but not the major one. The first and primary impediment to his knowledge of God lies in the affections. Man’s heart is set upon that which is evil—consequently he wants a God after his own fashion—who will smile upon sin, or at least tolerate it.

The Lord complains in the Psalm, “You thought that I was altogether such an One as yourself”—it is the tendency of man to think that God is like himself. The impure in heart cannot conceive of a pure God! If he could conceive Him, he would detest, rather than worship Him. “The pure in heart shall see God,” is one of the opening benedictions of the Savior’s ministry. But the impure in heart cannot see God and cannot, therefore, know Him! The heart is the seat of the blindness—there lies the darkness which beclouds the whole mind. Hence to the heart the light must come and to the heart that light is promised.

I understand by the fact that the knowledge of God here promised lies in the heart, first, that God renews the heart so that it admires the Character of God. The understanding perceives that God is just, powerful, faithful, wise, true, gracious, long-suffering and the like. Then the heart, being purified, admires all these glorious attributes and adores Him because of them. You can in a measure test your knowledge of the Lord by the enquiry—Do you approve the Character of God? Perceiving the God of the Scriptures to be the true God, do you admire Him as He reveals Himself? I must repeat what I have already said. There are many who have imagined God to be what they would like Him to be and then, of course, they admire the image which they have set up.

But to see God as the Scripture reveals Him, especially in His holiness, is a gift of His Divine Grace! Have you noted how David sings in the 103rd Psalm, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name”? It would have sounded more in accordance with the context to have said His gracious name, for he goes on to speak of the Lord’s deeds of Grace—“who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.” But that which the Psalmist most admired was the Lord’s holiness in all this—the way in which He could deal mercifully with the guilty and yet retain His spotless holiness. Holiness is the great terror of the ungodly and, therefore, it is a token of our knowing God in our hearts when we can bless His holy name.

How do the angels praise Him? Do they sing, “Mighty, mighty, mighty, Lord God of Hosts”? Or, “Bounteous, bounteous, bounteous Creator of the universe”? No, but, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.” They adore the whole of God and God as a whole—holiness means completeness of character, the absence of everything like excess, the presence of everything that is perfection. O my Soul, can you, in some measure, see the infinite perfection of the Lord in all points? And seeing, do you admire? Do you see Him as a consuming fire, burning up evil? And do you approve Him as such? Do you see His sovereignty, His hatred of sin, His immutability, His jealousy and yet admire Him? Do you, indeed, delight in even the sterner traits of the Divine Character, knowing that under all aspects the Lord is good?

Then in you is fulfilled the promise, “I will give them a heart to know Me”! The heart-knowledge promised in the Covenant of Grace means, however, much more than approval. Grace enables the renewed heart to take another step and appropriate the Lord, saying, “O God, You are my God, early will I seek You.” All the saved ones cry, “This God is our God forever and ever. He shall be our God even unto death.” The man who only knows the Lord with his head regards Him as anybody’s God, or another man’s God. But the man who knows the Lord with his heart exclaims with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

By an act of appropriating faith the gracious man cries out, “The Lord is my Portion says my soul,” and then in return he dedicates himself to the service of his God. And there is fulfilled in him that other promise of His, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.” Admiration of God leads on to appropriation and this to something higher, still. All true knowledge of God is attended by affection for Him. In spiritual language, to know God is to love Him. “He that loves not, knows not God, for God is Love.” “I love the Lord,” says David, “because He has heard my voice and my supplication.” He had been no stranger to the Lord, but had conversed with Him in prayer and received tokens of favor and, therefore, his love overflowed.

He cries out in another Psalm, “I will love You, O Lord, my Strength,” and then he goes on to heap up and pack together a host of words of love and praise—“The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” Where the Lord is fully known, He is intensely loved. The spouse first described her Beloved as the apple tree among the trees of the woods, and then she cried out, “I am sick of love.” At another time, after drawing a full-length portrait of her Lord, she could not refrain from exclaiming, “His mouth is most sweet, yes, He is altogether lovely.” Such is our love of God when we know Him—that we feel bound to glory in Him before others.

“My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” It is the great passion of the renewed soul to glorify

God, whom He knows and loves. Knowledge without love would be a powerless thing, but God has joined this knowledge and love together in a sacred wedlock—and they can never be put asunder. As we love God we know Him—and as we know Him we love Him. Admiration, appropriation, affection are crowned with adhesion. To know a thing by heart is, in our common talk, to know it thoroughly. When a child knows his lesson by heart, we hope that he will not forget it.

That which is learned in the head may be unlearned, for our understanding is very fickle and our memory frail, but that which is written upon the heart cannot be erased. Holy Scripture asks, “Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?” These she dotes upon and, therefore, she will not forget them. Can a woman forget her sucking child? No, she cannot, because her knowledge of her child is heart knowledge. Memories of the heart abide when all others depart. A mother’s love, a wife’s fondness, a sweet child’s affection will come before us even in the last hours of life. When the mind will lose its learning and the hand forget its cunning, the dear names of our beloved ones will linger on our lips. And their sweet faces will be before us even when our eyes are dim with the shadow of approaching death.

If we can sing, “O God, my heart is fixed, O my heart is fixed,” then the knowledge which it possesses will never be taken away from it. To know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, is not a fleeting attainment, but shall abide with us and increase until we know even as we are known. This is not the knowledge which shall vanish away, but that which shall be perfected when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Now, beloved Friend, have you such a knowledge of God? Do you admire, appropriate, love and cleave to the Lord, your God? Can you hope that you have been taught of the Lord according to that promise, “They shall know Me from the least even unto the greatest.” Do not say, “I am so little in Israel that I cannot be expected to know.” Does not the Covenant promise imply that the least must know the Lord as well as the greatest? This blessed knowledge is essential to every Christian! Do you possess it? If not, do you desire it? If so, plead for it, and say, “I beseech You show me Your Glory. Let me know You as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.” He will hear you if you plead for Jesus’ sake.

II. This brings us at once to the second point, namely, THE NECESSITY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. If we think a minute we shall see how necessary it is. To know God is a necessary preparation for every other true knowledge because the Lord is the center of the universe, the basis, the pillar, the essential force, the All in All, the fullness of all things. Not to know God is as if a student should attempt to construct a system of astronomy and be altogether ignorant of the sun! Or a mariner should be a stranger to the sea! Or a farmer should not know the existence of seeds! The place which God occupies must be settled in our minds or we shall have no arrangement in our knowledge—and our science will be nothing but a conglomeration of truth and error.

You may learn the doctrines of the Bible, but you do not know them truly till you know the God of the doctrines. You may understand the precepts in the letter of them and the promises in their outward wording, but neither precept nor promise do you truly know until you know the God from whose lips they fell. The knowledge of God is, at once, the beginning and the end of wisdom. The ancient sage said, “Man, know yourself.” He spoke well, but even for this, man must first know his God. I venture to say that no man rightly knows himself till he knows his God—because it is by the light and purity of God that we see our own darkness and sinfulness.

There must be a perfect model before us before we can discern our own departures from perfection. You must have a standard by which to weigh yourself or you cannot tell whether you are lacking or not. God is the Standard and until a man knows the Standard he does not know how far he has fallen short of it. The proper study of mankind is God. And that attended to, the next appropriate subject of study is man. We must know God, or our other knowledge may be dangerous to others and certainly will be hurtful to ourselves. It will puff us up or load us with responsibilities which we shall not be able to meet. For the highest and most practical purposes, without the knowledge of God, we abide in utter ignorance.

The knowledge of God is necessary to any real peace of mind. Suppose a man is in the world and feels that he is right in every way except with regard to God, and as to Him he knows nothing? Hear him say, “I go about the world and see many faces which I can recognize and I perceive many friends upon whom I can trust, but there is a God somewhere, and I know nothing at all about Him. Whether He is my friend or my foe I know not.” If that individual is thoughtful and intelligent he must suffer unrest in his spirit, because he will say to himself, “Suppose this God should turn out to be a just God and I should be a breaker of His Laws? What a peril hangs over me. How is it possible for me to be at peace till this dreadful ignorance is removed?”

The Old Testament Scripture says, “Acquaint now yourself with God and be at peace.” There is no peace to the heart while God is unknown. He is the God of peace and there can be no peace till the soul knows Him. Does it not strike you as being most certainly so? To leave this point unknown would be to leave in jeopardy the most vital part of happiness, the hinge upon which our eternal destiny must turn. Are you doing this? Or is the Lord known to you? That this knowledge of God is necessary is clear, for how could it be possible for a man to have spiritual life and yet not know God? The very first being which a man discerns when he is quickened into spiritual life is the Father of Spirits. His first cry is, “Father, I have sinned,” and all his life he cries, “Abba Father.”

Prayer is his breath, but he cannot truly pray to an unknown God. Faith is his life, but how shall he believe in Him whom he does not know? I cannot imagine such a being as a spiritual man who knows not God. It is a self-evident impossibility—to be of the sons of God and not yet know the Father! To be pressed upon the Father’s bosom. To receive the Father’s forgiveness and yet to be an utter stranger to that forgiving God is impossible—it is utterly inconceivable! The knowledge of God is an absolute necessity of the spiritual life, without which we cannot see or enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Certainly it is necessary for the spiritual life when fully developed above. In Heaven and not know the King who reigns there? The golden harp in your hand and not know for whom to sweep its melodious strings? White-robed in Glory and not know the Redeemer in whose blood our robes were washed? Absurd supposition! It cannot be endured for a moment! Sinner, you must know the Lord! If you do not know Him you are not a partaker of His Grace, but you abide in darkness. Into His Heaven you can never enter till He has given you a heart to know Him! Do not forget this warning, or trifle with it.

III. Our third theme is THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. And here I shall spend a little longer time and I hope I shall not tire you. I shall not weary those who care more for sense than sound. One of the first effects of knowing God in the soul is that it turns out our idols. Paul tells the Galatians in the 4th chapter and 8th verse of his Epistle, that it was when they knew not God that they did service unto them which by nature are not gods. But when they knew God, or rather were known of Him, they turned from their idols at once.

A knowledge of God! O my Brothers and Sisters, it creates an abhorrence of idols—especially of those which have enslaved our own hearts. It seems to us most monstrous that the ancient Greeks and Romans could have worshipped the deities which their poets fabled for them. And yet, at this very time, as I have said, men imagine for themselves a god such as they would choose and then they worship this god of their own fabrication. Only let the Lord reveal Himself to the soul. Let the heart know the true God and away these idols go! With loathing are they cast to the moles and to the bats. Get a view of the Jehovah of Revelation—shining through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you say—“What have I to do, anymore, with idols?”

With holy scorn you pour contempt upon the gods of man’s invention and glory, instead, in the living God, the God of Israel! Your hearts burn with the jealousy of Elijah and flames with indignation against the rivals of the Lord of Hosts! You would take the prophets of Baal and let not one escape, because they have dared to set up “the image of jealousy” in the temple of the Most High and have seduced the minds of men to pay their worship to the gods that are not God! Beloved, God so enamors the soul of the converted man, so engrosses every spiritual faculty, that he cannot endure an idol, however dear in former times! And if, perhaps, in some backsliding moment an earthly love intrudes, it is because the man has withdrawn his eyes from the splendor of the Deity. When once he gets his eyes back, again, to the God of Love, then does Dagon fall before the Ark of the Lord and not so much as the stump is left! Blessed Lord, let us know You, for then we shall know our idols no more.

The second good effect of the knowledge of God is that it creates faith in the soul. To prove this I might give a great many texts, but one will suffice. From Psalm 9:10, “they that know Your name will put their trust in You.” We cannot trust an unknown God. But when God reveals Himself to us by His Spirit, then to trust Him is no longer difficult. It is, indeed, inevitable! Whenever a man does not believe God, it is because he does not know Him. If you doubt His willingness to pardon sin, you do not know the abundance of His mercy. If you doubt His skill to bring you through your present difficulties, you do not know the infinite resources of His wisdom. If you dream that He cannot deliver you in this, your time of need, you have closed your eyes to the unlimitedness of His power. If you think He has forsaken you, you have failed to know His immutability. Know Him and you must trust Him!

Thirdly, this knowledge of God not only creates faith, but creates good works, also. Turn to 1 John 2:3 and you read, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments”—meaning it is absolutely certain that wherever there is a knowledge of God there must follow the keeping of His commandments. And it is certainly so—know the Lord and with holy reverence you will obey Him. See what a great deal the Apostle ascribes to the knowledge of God in Colossians 1:9—“For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” What was to be the benefit of this? Let us read on—“That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”

See what a string of excellent Graces spring out of our being filled with the knowledge of God?! It is a tree which bears 12 manner of fruits! The soul that knows the Lord is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season. Daniel says (11:32), that “The people who do know their God shall be strong and do great exploits,” so that courage, valor and prowess are learned in this sacred school! A heart to know the Lord begets and nurtures every virtue and every Grace—and is the basis of the noblest character—the very food which feeds Divine Grace till it matures into Glory!

Brothers and Sisters, to know God has over us a transforming power. Remember how the Apostle writes (in 2 Cor. 3:18), “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The knowledge of God is the most effectual influence under Heaven, for the Spirit works thereby, and by its means we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us. Everything that we learn and know affects our character in some measure, even as the flesh of an animal tastes of its food. A constant sight of any object, good or bad, tells upon us.

We heard a German missionary say, last Monday night, that when he was in Coomassie, the sight of dead bodies and of mangled corpses from week to week so hardened him to it that the horror was almost gone.

Every thought which crosses the mind affects it for the better or the worse. Every glance is molding us, every wish fashions the character. A sight of God is the most wonderfully sanctifying influence that can be conceived of! Know God and you will grow to be like He. Dear Hearer, have you beheld this marvelous vision?

The knowledge of God has a further effect. It causes us to praise Him. Here is a proof text—“In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel.” Wherever the Lord is known He must be magnified! It is not possible for us to have low thoughts of Him, or to give forth mean utterances concerning Him, or to act in a miserly way towards His cause when we know Him practically. There are some men whom we know whose presence renders paltry actions impossible—you feel that you could not act towards them in any but a generous manner. To know them elevates you! You must do the good and the great and the generous thing when they are concerned.

So, when once we know God it is much more so, for to know Him constrains us to praise Him, not only with our lips, but with our lives! It makes us feel that nothing is good enough for Him and we would even die for His name’s sake. We wish for a glorious high throne on which He may be exalted above the highest heavens, King of kings and Lord of lords. The knowledge of God brings comfort and that is a very desirable thing in a world of trouble. What does the Psalmist say? “God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” Do you know Him? Then He is your refuge. Blessed be God, in days of storm we put into this harbor and in days of battle we fly to this castle and dwell in this high tower. If you know God you will not be ruffled, or if for a little while you are disturbed, your heart will soon come back to its rest. You will cast your cares on Him, wait patiently for Him and rejoice in Him at all times—and surely it shall be well with you.

To know God also brings a man great honor. I cannot attempt, at this time, to explain the noble text which I am about to quote. I throw it out as a pleasing theme for meditation. It is the 14th verse of the 91st Psalm. “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name.” Think of it—“set on high”—and set on high by the Lord Himself! And all as the result of knowing the name of the Lord! There is no getting on high and staying there, no dwelling above the world and sin, no sitting in the heavenlies, no triumphing over death and Hell except by knowing God! When we do know Him, our meditation of Him shall be sweet. Then shall our head be lifted up above our enemies round about us. Then our heart shall mount above the cares and sorrows of the world and our soul shall dwell on high, where our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks.

One thing more, and that is, the man who knows the Lord will have usefulness given him. And to prove that I will quote a passage in 2 Corinthians 2:14—“Now thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish.” Do you not see that the Apostle knew Christ and Christ’s name was in him as ointment poured forth? The man who knows God has a savor about him and wherever he goes he will be a power among men! The savor of Christ will come streaming out of him, as incense from a censor filled with glowing coals!

Our usefulness very much depends upon our knowledge of God. We cannot teach others of things that we do not know ourselves. If we have no savor in us there cannot be a savor coming out of us. We shall only be a drag upon the Church in any position if we are destitute of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. But if we are filled with a knowledge of Christ, then the sweet savor of His name will pour forth from us as perfume from the flowers!

Thus I have put together many things upon which we cannot expatiate, but they will make you see how excellent a thing it is to know the Lord in the heart.

IV. Our fourth point is, THE SOURCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. Upon this I will dwell but briefly. We are clearly taught in the text that it is a Divine work—“I will give them a heart to know Me.” None but the Creator can give a man a new heart. The change is too radical for any other hand. It would be hard to give a new eye, or a new arm, but a new heart [intellect] is still more out of the question! All the preaching, teaching and reforming in the world cannot do it. The Lord Himself must do it!

As surely as God made you, God must make you new or you will never know Him. It is evidently a work of pure Grace. “I will give them a heart,” not, “They shall grow into it, or purchase it,” but, “I will give it to them.” He freely gives to whomever He wills, according to His own declaration, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” It is evidently a work which is possible. All things are possible to God and He says, “I will give it to them.” He does not speak of it as a desirable blessing, but unattainable. On the contrary, He says, “I will give them a heart to know Me.”

It is a work which the Lord has promised to do. How many precious passages there are in Holy Writ in which the Lord declares that this shall be done? I have lately read them with much sweetness to my own heart. Here are some of them. In Hosea 2:19, “I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies, I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.” Then in the 8th chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, in the 2nd verse we read, “Israel shall cry unto Me, my God, we know You.”

That wonderful passage in Jeremiah 31:33-34, is so nearly reproduced by the Apostle in the 8th of Hebrews that I need only read the New Testament version (Heb. 8:10-12). “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” So then it is a promised blessing! A blessing all Divine and Divinely guaranteed to those with whom Jehovah has entered into Covenant.

The sum of my discourse is this. If you have received this heart to know the Lord, bless Him every minute of your existence for this choicest of all blessings without which you could not enjoy any other Covenant blessing! Never cease to praise the Lord, for He has favored you above measure in giving you so priceless a blessing. But suppose you stand in doubt as to whether you know God? How should you act? Listen to good counsel— consider your ways and turn unto the Lord your God, even now. Confess your ignorance, dear Friend. A sense of ignorance is the very vestibule of knowledge.

Go before God this very day with an acknowledgment that you know nothing. Tell Him how ignorant, blind and stupid you are. Confess it all before Him. That being done, remember that it is by the knowledge of Christ that you are to be justified—“By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many” (Isa. 53:11). Study the Character of Christ. Contemplate, with eager attention, His work and Person. See God in Christ Jesus and when you have done so, cry mightily unto the Lord, saying, “You have given this promise in Your Covenant! Lord, let it be a promise unto me and do You fulfill it. You have said, ‘I will give them a heart to know Me.’ Lord, give me a heart to know You!”

“For this,” He says, “I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” Go and inquire of Him concerning it. He will give you that heart! He will reveal Himself to you and you shall yet have to bless and praise His holy name, that He has turned you from darkness to light, and from the ignorance of your natural estate unto the true knowledge of His name. God grant it may be so with you this very day!

Time flies, we are almost at the end of the year and some of you still remain ignorant of God! Shall the year return to Heaven to accuse you? Let not this blessed Sabbath go until you have thought upon your ways and turned your steps unto His testimonies! May His Spirit sweetly incline you to seek His face and He will be known of you. God grant His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 31:18-37.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—908, 231, 489.  
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THE TWO YOKES  
NO. 1032

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Thus says the Lord: You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron.” Jeremiah 28:13.**

ALL through the book of Jeremiah you will observe that the Prophet taught the people not only by words, but by symbols. At one time he took his mantle and hid it in the earth till it was soiled and worn, and then taught them something by wearing it. At another time he took an earthen pot and broke it in their presence. And on this occasion he put a yoke about his own neck as the token that Israel should be subdued beneath the power of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a strange method of teaching. I have sometimes heard complaints made by those who are fond of criticizing things they know nothing about—when a teacher puts a Truth of God very plainly, if he shall, as it were, act what he says—he is upbraided at once as being histrionic.

I know not what ungenerous words are hurled at him. Yet after all, this was what Jeremiah did. He taught the people by signs and symbols. So, too, our Lord Himself. I doubt not that when He uttered those words, “Consider the lilies,” He stooped down and plucked a lily. And when He said, “Consider the ravens,” He pointed to the ravens flying overhead in the sky. At any rate, we know that once He took a little child, and set it in the midst of them. What an outcry there would be if I were to take a little child and set him here and preach about him! If we used any kind of symbol, to what ridicule we should expose ourselves! The fact is, we might do much more good if we regarded less the general current of public opinion and ventured to do strange things that the Truth of God might come home to a slumbering generation, and the Word of God, which must be learnt by them or they must perish, were made to stick in their minds.

The Prophet Jeremiah, though exceedingly faithful in his mission which he discharged as God would have him discharge it, and with many tears in great love and deep anxiety, nevertheless had a great obstacle in his way. He was met by false prophets who withstood and contradicted him to his face. Not so very surprising either. It must ever be expected that it will be so. If God shall speak by any man, there shall be some other who proclaims that God speaks by him to the contrary. If there is a Christ, there will be an Antichrist. If there is a Simon Peter, there will be a Simon Marcus. If there shall be raised up by God a Luther, there shall be an Eckius, or some other controversialist who shall seek to resist and overthrow him.

Let no man’s heart, then, fail him if he is flatly contradicted when he bears testimony for God. Let him rather expect it and go on never caring, for the fact is, the Truth of God will outlive error. In the long run the Word of God, before which all other things are as grass and as the flower, the perishing flower of the field—the Word of God shall endure forever and triumph over the ruin of all the words of men! Tremble not, you feeble adherents of the Truth who fear lest your weakness should make the Truth, itself, weak, and the strong logic and the powerful rhetoric of its adversaries should overturn the oracles of God! It cannot be! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Gospel, mighty though they are both in power and in sophistry. The Truth of God shall abide! The right shall prevail, for God is faithful, and Christ must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

With this, by way of preliminary observation, we will now come to the text and endeavor to make some use of it for ourselves. Hananiah took off the symbolic yoke, the wooden yoke, from Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. Jeremiah comes again, and says, “You have broken the yoke of wood, but God has commanded that you shall now wear yokes of iron.” They were not benefited, therefore, by the change, but the reverse. This is suggestive of a broad principle. From the symbol, which was applicable in one case, we draw a general Truth of God. Whenever men say of God, “Let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us,” they may do so if they will—but instead of the yokes of wood they will be sure to get yokes of iron. If they will not submit to the government of Christ, they will have to submit to the tyranny of Satan.

Some yoke they will have to wear, and if they reject the easy yoke of the Christ of God, the wooden yoke, as it were, which He puts on men, there shall be made for them yokes of iron which they shall neither be able to break off nor yet to support. So our thought will run this way. First, that men must wear some yoke or other. Secondly, that the yoke of Christ is a very easy one. And, thirdly, that when it is refused, it is inevitable that men should wear a heavier one.

I. MEN MUST WEAR SOME YOKE. It is so naturally. There is no stage of life in which this is not the case. The child must bear the yoke in his youth. He is an unhappy child that is under no control. Probably there is nothing so ruinous to a man as to be allowed to have his own way while yet his judgment is not ripe enough to guide him. And when we advance into youth we are usually placed in some position of life where we are under obligations to some superior, be he parent, or guardian, or employer.

Nor if we become what is called our own masters, does it make much difference. As things go now, I think there are no people that are their own masters, for the masters are bound to yield to the terms which the servants dictate—and this condition of things is getting more and more rife. I shall not discuss the right or wrong of this—where questions arise between capitalists and skillful laborers—but I will say that if the employed claim liberty, the masters might very well be allowed a portion of that choice prerogative. As it is now, I am sure he that says, “I am a master,” is as much under the yoke to his servants as the servant is under the yoke to his master!

That a man who lives in the midst of society should hold some relationship to all around him is indispensable. But men are always for changing their forms of government. Some nations have a revolution almost with every moon, but for all that there is still a yoke upon them. And if it were ever to come to anarchy, to mob rule—ah, I guarantee you, it would be a yoke of iron, and of red hot iron, too. God save us from it! No yoke is so hard to bear as that yoke which a people put upon themselves when they reject all order, break through all law, and will not submit to any principle or any government, however just or righteous.

You cannot get on in this world without a yoke of some sort. We are not going to wear a tyrant’s yoke, any of us. Let lords and lands have what masters they will—in this land of ours we will be free and our own masters still. The selfishness of individuals or of classes must never determine the boundary lines of power or of privilege—for we can only maintain our freedom by every one of us paying that right obedience to the law which is due from every citizen—if we would promote alike his own comfort and the common good. Away from those lower grounds into higher spheres—it is certainly true that we must wear the yoke. God has made us, and not we ourselves—and God has made us to be His servants.

We are daily in dependence on Him for the bread we eat. If any man shall say he is not dependent upon God, I will at least reply to him, “You are dependent for the air you breathe and the power to breathe it. The life that is within you hangs upon a thread, and that thread is in the hand of the Most High.” Every moment each one of us is most certainly sustained by God. And in return for this support, there is something asked, namely, that we would submit to His will. That we would obey His Law, which is perfect, and just, and right, and that having sinned against Him we should rebel no longer or continue His enemies, but be reconciled to Him. We are made dependent creatures, and from that very fact we must wear a yoke unto God.

Moreover, dear Friends, we are all so constituted as creatures with such passions and propensities that when we break one yoke—the yoke which it is meet we should wear, and do not serve God—we at once bend our necks to another yoke and begin to serve something else—we serve ourselves, and oh, the slavery of serving one’s self! He that makes his belly his god and bows down to the lusts of the flesh serves a tyrant, indeed! Something or other we must serve, not only because we are dependent creatures, but it seems to be stamped upon us that we must follow some great principle, and must yield ourselves to some spiritual influence. A yoke of some kind or another we must submit to.

The man who shall say, “I am perfectly free, and I live for nothing but myself,” is so mean an animal that he is hardly worthy to be called a man. In his boasted exemption from all regard to his fellow creatures and to his God, he sets himself up in his own esteem—and that after a diabolical model—alone and apart in his awful selfishness like an iceberg to melt away, and maybe to crush others as he moves along his course. What is he but a beacon against which all are to be warned? Sir, the yoke fits the human neck, and the human neck was made to wear it. We must have some God, we must have some ruler, we must have some principle which shall master us, and be it ours, in God’s name, to choose the right and the best master, or else, woe be unto us!

II. Not to dwell longer upon our first point, I proceed to notice THAT THE YOKE OF CHRIST IS AN EASY YOKE. It is, as it were, a yoke of wood. Let us dwell upon this awhile. God grant that some who have never worn that yoke may, by the Holy Spirit’s power, be led to carry it. If you become a servant of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Man of Nazareth, He asks of you nothing but what is absolutely right. His life, which is the Christian’s Law written out in living characters, is perfection itself! His precepts which distil like dew from His lips are all pure and good, just and kind.

It ought to be enough for a man, and would be enough for him if he were not fallen, to know that all Christ’s rule is right and to submit to it at once. When God gives a man a noble spirit, he pants to enlist in honorable service. He craves a post in the council or the camp. His heart’s enquiry is, “Where can I find a leader who will always lead me aright? Where shall I discover a Law which will never lead me into evil if I obey it? Where can I discover an example which I may imitate in its very jots and tittles, and yet never be found any other than I ought to be?” I commend to such spirits, Jesus, the Christ of God, for there is nothing in His precepts or His practices, in His profession or His life that is not consonant with righteousness of the highest order, majestic in its compass, and scrupulously minute in its obedience.

The yoke of Christ is framed in our interest. The Law of Christ is drawn up and dictated by our Counselor for our welfare. If man were infinitely wise and could draw up a code for himself which would involve no hardship and entail all that was happy, he could devise no regulations more healthful, more profitable, or more pleasant than those of the Savior. He would discover that to believe in Jesus was the highest wisdom. To repent of sin the most delightful necessity. To follow after holiness the most blissful pursuit and to serve God the greatest delight! Service and Sovereignty blend here, as when Joseph became Prime Minister of Pharaoh he was lord over all the land of Egypt.

To serve God, in very truth, is to reign—and to become a servant of Christ is to be made a king and a priest unto God—to be ennobled with as much dignity as human nature can bear! Jesus Christ, if He forbids you anything, only forbids you what would harm you. Say any of you of sin— “‘Tis sweet”? Ah, and so are many poisoned things! Your nature goes after it. Yes, and many a sick man’s nature craves for that which would be his poison! The Lord Jesus denies to those who take His yoke nothing but that which would be injurious to them. His is a blessed yoke because it is the yoke of righteousness, and it is the yoke of personal benefit.

Moreover, Christ’s yoke is not exacting. If He assesses us with one hand, He more richly endows us with the other hand. He, in His Grace, always gives to us of His bounty what He asks of us as our duty. Under one view of Divine Truth, faith is man’s act. The Holy Spirit never believes for anybody. A sinner must believe himself. It is a personal act. But yet in another phase of it, it is the Holy Spirit’s work in the man—He gives the faith which the man exercises towards God. If, then, faith in Jesus is required, it is not a hard thing because the Spirit works in men the very faith which Jesus seeks of them!

If to repent of sin is thought difficult—how shall we get tears out of a rock?—the reply is, true repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and when it is sought of the Lord it is never denied. Christ is exalted on high to give not only the pardon of sin, but to give the repentance which comes before the pardon! To give repentance and remission of sins is the very office of Christ. If, then, the precepts should seem difficult, the difficulty is removed because the virtues and graces which are a matter of precept are also a matter of promise. What is commanded in one Scripture is conceded in another as an absolute gift of God according to the Covenant of His Grace. It is an easy yoke, then, Sinner!

Do you say, “I cannot believe”? Have you asked for faith? Is your heart hard? Have you asked to have it softened? If you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come for a broken heart, for it is His gift. He will give you all—all that His Gospel demands, for He is Alpha and Omega, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. It is an easy yoke, then, since He gives what He requires! That the yoke of Christ is easy, I might call to witness all those who have ever proved it. Never did a man wear it but he always loved to wear it!

I think I have heard that Queen Elizabeth carried the crown in the procession of her sister, Mary, at the coronation, and she remarked that it was very heavy. but someone standing by told her it would not be heavy when she had to wear it herself. So the precepts which some men do but carry in their hands seem very heavy—but when a man comes to know Christ and to love Him—those very precepts become light and easy. “I could not,” says one, “be a Christian as I am. It would be very hurtful to me—I should have to give up much that I have learned to prize.” Ah, but suppose you were made a new man in Christ Jesus? There would be nothing irksome at all about renouncing old habits.

Here is a raven. To tutor it into cleanly living, it must forego all carrion—it must feed upon these sweet and pure grains. The raven might pine and repine at this as a hardship unless by some transmuting influence the raven were turned into a dove. Then it would be no hardship to forsake the carrion which its new nature would loathe! Nor would it be grievous to feed upon the clean winnowed grain, for its appetite would crave it. And, O Beloved, the life of the true Christian is not a life chafed and galled with vexatious prohibitions! Pursuits which to the nonChristian heart are distasteful and repulsive, to the renewed heart are a matter of intense delight! A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man, when he dives into the sea, shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight because he is in the element and it entirely surrounds him.

The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness. But when once those men are cast into the element of Divine Grace, then they bear 10 times more and feel no weight but are refreshed with joy unspeakable! Christ’s yoke is easy, for the new heart rejoices in it. The yoke of Christ is rendered easy by the bright example of Christ and by the blessed fellowship with Him to which His people are called. Christ Himself carried it. Have you never read in Grecian history—I think there are one or two cases to the point—how the Grecian soldiers, on their long marches grew exceedingly weary and wished that the war were over, they felt so dispirited. But there was a man whom they almost adored as a god—Alexander himself—and they saw him always sharing their toil. If the road were rough, the monarch walked with them—if they were short of a draught of water, Alexander would share their thirst. At the sight of him every man grew strong!

Oh, it is grand to the Believer to feel that if there is a trial or a difficulty in the Christian, Christ has borne it and Christ is with us bearing it still! Not like the scribes and Pharisees who laid heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon men’s shoulders and they themselves would not touch them with one of their fingers. Our Lord has taken the load Himself and carried it, and He now says to the disciples, “Take My yoke upon you—the very yoke I carried—and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: I have borne the trial which you have to bear and endured to the end, as you shall do through My Grace.”

There is one remarkable fact about the yoke of Christ which I should like to mention. All who have borne it have always had Grace given equal to the weight of the burden. I have never yet discovered one cross-bearer among the children of God who ever expressed regret that to become a Christian he had to take upon himself the yoke. I have been familiar with deathbeds—I have witnessed strange scenes—the bony hand of Death pulls back many curtains and plucks off many masks from faces that were accustomed to wear them. One thing, however, I can solemnly say I have never seen. I have never seen a Christian weary of His Master’s service. I have never heard from an aged pilgrim a word of complaint against Christ, or against His yoke.

There have been a great many Christians beyond all suspicion of fanaticism, of whom none would suppose that they strove to act a part inconsistent with their true character—yet not one has had to regret that he served Christ. You know the words so often quoted of him who regretted that he had not served his God with half the zeal that he had served his kind! But I never remember, nor do any of you ever remember having heard of one who, in life’s last hour, bemoaned his allegiance to God or bewailed the ardor with which he followed Christ. Surely, if remorse had ever begotten such a thought, someone would have been bold to utter it! And, verily, verily, if such an incident had ever occurred, there would have been no lack of historians to record it!

Another thing I think tells strongly in favor of this yoke of Christ. The servants of Christ are always anxious to get their children into the same service. Often do I hear men say, “I don’t want to bring my boy up in my trade. The work is dirty, the hours long, and the pay small.” I have heard them say, “I should not like to see my boy in our office. There are so many temptations,” and so on. Did you ever hear a pious man say, “I should not like my boy to be a Christian”? Did you ever hear a godly matron say, “I should deeply regret to see my daughter become a follower of Christ”? No, but what they have possessed for themselves they have longed to have for their children!

I remember well hearing my grandfather’s earnest prayer for all his household. It always lay near his heart that his children and his children’s children might fear the Lord. I have lively recollections of his devotions. My father, whose prayer you heard just now—how often have I heard him pray for his children! And I can truly say the prayer that is nearest to my heart is for my sons, that they may serve the Lord. There is nothing I desire so much beneath the skies! Now if Christ’s yoke were hard, we could not wish to bring our children under it. We have natural affections and common sense as well as you, and having tried Christ so long ourselves, that is our desire for our posterity.

I have tried Him now (what shall I say?) these 20 years. Had I found Him a hard Master I would not beguile you or belie my own conscience. I speak the truth—there is no lord like Christ—and no service like Christ’s. I would that every young man and every young woman here believed in His name and submitted to His authority, and that they would take upon themselves, through His Grace, His easy peace-giving yoke.

III. If not, what then? THOSE WHO REFUSE TO WEAR THE EASY YOKE OF CHRIST WILL HAVE TO WEAR A WORSE ONE. “You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their places yokes of iron.” Observe! Adam wore an easy yoke in Paradise—he broke it. He and his posterity have had to wear yokes of iron ever since! Death has come into the world with all its train of woes. I need not enlarge enough that it is a case in point. Whenever a child of God, a true child of God, under pressure of temptation, turns aside from the right path, he is always made to feel that after he has broken the yoke of wood, he must wear a yoke of iron.

John Bunyan’s illustration will serve me well here. The two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, when they went on their way, came to a place where the road was full of flints that cut their feet, and there were thorns and briers in the way. By-and-by one of them said, “Here is a meadow on the other side of the hedge, and if we were just to pass through the gap we might save a corner—it would be sure to come out in the way again—and so we should be certain to avoid the rough places.” Bunyan well describes how, when they got into By-Path Meadow the night and the flood overtook them, and they wished to find the road again—longing for it, rough as it had been! But Giant Despair laid hold of them, took them to his dungeon and beat them within an inch or their lives! And it was only by mighty Grace that they escaped.

Take care, Christian, take care! Though you shall not utterly perish, you may often have to go with broken bones through a sin. David—ah, you remember his sin, his repentance, and his life of sorrow—how he went to his grave halting, still, as a consequence, an entail of his crimes! Do not, therefore, shrink from Christian duty because it is onerous. Never, O Christian, turn aside from the straight road, the highway of rectitude because it threatens you with shame or loss. That first loss will be vastly less than the later losses you will incur by seeking to avoid it!

Jonah resisted the word of the Lord that came to him, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh,” but he had to endure the perils of a voyage, encounter the fury of the tempest, and at length to sink to the bottom of the sea—and yet to Nineveh, after all, he must go! If you shirk a duty you will be brought up to it, yet, but it will be with bitter pain. Be not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near you.

The principle of our text is very applicable to all backsliders. We have known men that set out, apparently, on the road to Heaven—made a profession of being Christians—but after awhile they tired and fainted, and walked no more with us. Christianity was to them a yoke, and they put it off. I wonder whether they have improved their condition. I believe not. I will single out a person here—may his conscience single him out. When you lived in the country, every Sabbath you went with your wife and family to the House of God. Were you a Methodist then? Never mind—you were very earnest, whatever place it was you attended. And you and your little family were very happy, too.

But you came to London and after awhile the general idle habits of our London people in the morning came over you. You were content with one service a day. You did not seek Church membership nor cast yourself in the way of God’s people. By-and-by it was not one service a day you attended, it was none at all—or else you called it religion to go and hear the music and see the religious theatricals in certain great houses in London. I know not if you called that worshipping God when you were only whiling away the hour with sensual gratifications. And at last you gave up all presence of being a Christian or of frequenting places of worship.

Now I will ask you a question. You have got rid of the yoke of wood— how about your shoulders now? Your Sundays, are they very pleasant? Your family, is it very happy? Your mind, is it very much at ease? Oh, no! I know while I am talking to you, you wish yourself back in the little village again listening to the minister’s voice once more. I know your Sundays are distasteful and comfortless, and your week days, when you think about your condition, are wretched and reproachful, and your children are not growing up in the way you could wish. Ah, Sir, I pray God to make that yoke of iron very heavy to you! Do you long to get rid of that and come back and take the yoke of wood again? May God, in His infinite mercy, bring you back if you are His child! Or if you are not of His family may He put you among His children and teach you to walk worthily.

We have known those who have backslidden in another way. Here you are now. Perhaps you used to be a professor of religion but the little shop was situated in a neighborhood where a good deal of trade was done on Sunday. You heard it said by the neighbors, “I do not know how it is you can shut up as you do.” The wife did not like it, nor the husband either. It was, however, done by slow degrees, but now it is always done, and you cannot both come together—there is only one can come, and the other must stay at home. Well, you have given up Christ’s yoke, and Sabbathkeeping seems to be too hard a thing for you. Are you better off? Are you really better off? Are you happier? Are you really happier? Something in your soul answers my question—you know you have a yoke of iron now, instead of a yoke of wood. May God help you to break away from your present slavery, and may you become a true heir of Heaven.

It may be I have here before me one who was led into backsliding by a very common occurrence. Young woman, I knew you once when your face was radiant with happiness while we preached Christ and sung the hymns of Zion! But you married, and your marriage was not in the Lord. An unbelieving husband was your choice. You thought the yoke of Christ was hard when we reminded you of the precept, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” You rejected the yoke of Christ. How have you found it since? I have seen a great many such marriages, and I have only seen one—I have seen one, it is fair to say that, but I assert I never saw but one—in which I could get anything like an acknowledgement of happiness from the ill assorted pair.

Here and there it has happened perhaps, that God has forgiven the fault, but it almost always leads to alienation of heart and to utter departure from the living God! And often, too, to disappointment and heart-breaking—and to wretchedness such as I shall not attempt to describe. Those that break Christ’s yoke and become backsliders shall find an iron yoke given in its place! To take another class of illustrations. There are those in the world who will not have the yoke of Christ in the matter of religion—they prefer another. For instance, there are superstitious persons who are not satisfied with the Bible—they need tradition. They are not content with the teaching of the ancient Church of Christ, as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles—they hanker after those modern upstart Churches that call themselves Catholic and Apostolic, and amuse themselves by raking up the grotesque fashions of the Middle Ages.

What is the consequence? Do these perverts, who cast off the yoke of the true Christian religion, get an easier yoke? Ask them. Their penances and their mortifications—their fast days and their festivals—their communions and their celebrations—oh, what do they get for them all? Is there one of them who can say he is saved? It is one of their cardinal doctrines that no man can know he is saved, so that the only position they get in this life is to slave on with a dim hope and to die with a grim rite! And, according to one faith, when they die they go—even if it were the best man in the Church—they go to “purgatory”! Ah, cheerless prospect! If I were a Roman Catholic I would turn a heretic in sheer desperation because I would rather go to Heaven than go to “purgatory”!

I cannot see any advantage that is offered to a man—if he gets all he can get—it is not worth having. Who among you would slave his life away in voluntary humiliations, buoyed up with the cheering faith of purgatorial fires as the goal of your days? Where is the gain of it? And there is no Church under Heaven, except the true Church of Christ, that says to men, “Believe, and live. Lay hold on Christ, and you are saved.” We present to you, in Christ’s name, the greatest gift beneath the sky— and other Churches dare not pretend to offer it! They will only tell you that you may get into a state in which you may be saved, perhaps, but they do not know quite certainly. It may be you shall fall away and perish after all, but as to an absolute certain salvation in perpetuity, received by an act of faith, they know not what it is! They put upon a yoke of iron most grievous to their necks.

And look at self-righteous men and women who try to work their own way to Heaven. The Pharisees of old—what a slavery their life was! Any man who is seeking to be saved by his good works makes himself a slave. He must know in his conscience that his good works are imperfect and therefore he has no title, no sure, clear title to Heaven! Only the man who takes Christ to be his Wisdom, his Righteousness, his Justification, his Redemption, his All and in All—knows that he is saved! And he that gets Christ has all that God asks of him. He has his sins punished in his Savior. He has had the Law fulfilled by his Savior and he is thus saved. Those who will not have Christ, put upon their necks a horrible yoke! Oh, beware of superstition! Beware of self-righteousness! These are iron yokes, indeed!

But what remonstrance shall I address to the unbeliever who says, “I shall believe nothing. I am a skeptic. I will not bow my neck to Revelation”? Well, Sir, you will be sure, before long, to bow your neck to some tremendous absurdity. If you can once get a skeptic to tell you what he does believe, you will generally find that his credulity is on a par with his infidelity. What he relishes he feeds on without question—what he dislikes he rejects because somebody shrugged his shoulders at it. I have sometimes tried to muddle my way through chapters of German neology. Thank God I have felt this is not the way of life, or else certainly I should never find it, though I had a doctor of divinity on either side to assist me!

It is too hard and difficult for any intellects unless they happen to be of the German type, to be able to find a way through its labyrinths, and even they miss it, I am afraid. The men who do not believe in God believe that this world was not made at all, but grew. If you were to sow some mustard and cress in your garden, in the form of the initials of your boy, and it came up as A or B, and you took him into the garden and said, “Now, nobody ever sowed that seed. It grew there in that way,” you could not make him believe it. But these philosophical speculators believe that this big world, and sun, and moon, and stars came forth without a Creator! They can believe anything. You cannot convince the simplest boy in the street that somehow or other he was developed from an oyster, or some creature inferior to that, and yet these profound thinkers bow themselves down to such a belief as this! Verily, it is fulfilled in these days as of old, professing themselves to be wise, they become fools! He that will not believe the simple Revelation of God will presently find himself committed to systematic misbelief which distracts reason, oppress the heart, and shackles the conscience. He wears a yoke of iron instead of a yoke of wood.

Still giving but a word to each case, we have hearers who, when they listen to the Word of God, are haunted with reproach but never softened with repentance because of their sins. They go on hardening their necks and persevering in their iniquities. Impenitent Sinner, mark this word. The day will come when inasmuch as you have rejected the easy yoke of repentance, you will have to bear the iron yoke of remorse! A man under remorse in this world is a dreadful sight. Horrified with the past and alarmed with the future, yet having knees so stubborn that they will not bend, and blood-shot eyes that will not weep because, alas, his heart is like adamant that cannot feel! Of all the pangs convinced and repentant sinners bear, there are none so dreadful as the gloomy torment of remorse! I could unfold scenes that I have witnessed with my own eyes, paint the visage, and repeat the expressions of men dying in fell despair, but I will spare you. God grant that you may never have to endure that foretaste of Hell upon earth, for such it is.

And what shall I say to the lover of pleasure? There are those who say, “I shall not bear the yoke of Christ. I shall live in pleasure.” Pleasure, in some instances, means lust, and gaiety means crime. Have you ever seen the young man who was respectably brought up in his youth, after leading a life of pleasure, shivering at your door in rags? One I knew whom I had often clothed. I supposed that he was dead. But I saw him return in his loathsome filthiness, squalid and tremulous—he came begging yet again, stranger still to virtue and to shame. The poor soul still lives—a life more like death than life—a prodigal whom none can help because he does not return unto himself, nor desire to return unto his Father.

London dens have in them many hapless profligates that are terrible warnings that men who seek their own pleasure put upon themselves a yoke of iron. Oh, what revelations the infirmaries of our hospitals, and the wards of our lunatic asylums might disclose of men who have played the wanton and rioted in sin—and have worse than a yoke of iron upon their necks now! Oh, if there should have come into this House some fallen woman, about whose neck there is that yoke of iron—because she rejected a mother’s precepts and disdained a father’s counsel—Sister, that yoke of iron from your neck may yet be taken off! But beware lest it grow heavier still!

There are those who would help you escape from your sin in the Christian Church. Arise, and flee from this evil that has made you captive, for there is still hope! The Christ of God is willing to receive the foulest of the foul. Persevere not in your criminal course, or that yoke of iron will grow heavier and heavier and heavier, and be riveted to you till at last you shall perish in it—perish, and that forever! All unholy persons who break the Law of God and break away from the Gospel’s holiness, in the long run get a yoke of iron about their necks. There are those in this place, perhaps, who once used to sit with us at the Lord’s Table, having made a profession of religion, but they gave way to drink. I know that if they could break away from that habit, now, they would.

If it could be done with a resolution they would do it at once, for somehow they love this House and slink into it still. And when they pass me in the streets, half-ashamed, they still remember him for whom they yet retain a love, and who retains a love for them, and would gladly see them back again. But ah, you drunkards, when you once fall into this sin, how seldom are you restored! May God help you! May the eternal God deliver you! For this, this iron yoke, is often hard to break. Resolve now, and pray also in God’s name that you may be free! Have done with the accursed thing! God can enable you to come clear of it. May He do so now!

Another form of the same evil not often spoken of, but quite as bad, is that of avarice. We have known those who professed to be Christians who succeeded in business and from that time they grew greedy. The gold they had stuck to their fingers, burned into their flesh, yes, into their very souls and turned their hearts to steel. They have no pity, now, for the poor and they little care for the Church of God. Ah, Sirs, what an iron yoke avarice puts upon a man’s neck! You see a man grown old still scraping, still yearning for more—afraid that he shall lose what he has—trembling in the night lest the burglars should make a forcible entrance, and fearing we know not what! His heart is in his iron safe, and is as hard as the iron of which it is made. O God, forgive them! For the covetous man can no more enter Heaven than the drunkard! The covetous have no place in the kingdom of God! There is a mark set upon the covetous man. Covetousness is idolatry. It is a heavy burden, the burden of avarice. Happy they who wear the yoke of Christ, for all their giving is a delight, and what they sacrifice is no loss to them but becomes true storing—the laying up of treasure in Heaven where neither moth nor rust does corrupt.

Enough of this! The general principle running through every case is that he who rejects the yoke of Christ bows his neck to something worse by far. Mark you, the day comes—I know not how soon—perhaps as I stand here and rudely talk of these mysterious things! Soon may this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps this faltering strain. Before this service is over the sight of the Son of Man may be seen in the clouds of Heaven and the trumpet may ring out loud as that of Sinai of old, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment! And you living sinners, come you also, for the Great White Throne is set.”

And in that day the yoke of Christ will be a chain of gold about each Believer’s neck! To have served Christ will be our honor and our delight! But ah, to you sinners, the sin that once was pleasure—how it will turn to misery! How the rod of your joy will become a serpent and seek to devour you! How you will flee away from yourselves, and that which you courted and you loved, to ask the hills to hide you and the rocks to engulf you that you may not see the face of the Redeemer! Come to Him now, before that last tremendous day dawns! I lift Him up to you now. Whoever looks to Christ shall live! Jesus, the Son of God has died, and he that trusts Him shall not die. There is life in a look at the Crucified One! Pardon and peace come at once to the soul that trusts the Savior!

May you now trust Him before you leave this House, and God shall have the Glory of it, both now and evermore. Amen.  
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GOD’S THOUGHTS OF PEACE AND OUR EXPECTED END  
NO. 1965

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jeremiah 29:11.**

I HAVE already explained to you, while expounding the 24th and 29th chapters of this Prophet, that these words were written by Jeremiah in a letter to the captives in Babylon. A considerable part of the people of Israel were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar into a far country. They were exhorted by the Prophet to build houses, form families and to abide peaceably there till the Lord should lead them back at the end of 70 years. But at that time there was a general uneasy feeling among the Jews and other subjected nations who did not rest quietly under the iron yoke of Babylon. They were plotting and planning continual rebellions and certain false prophets in Babylon worked with them, stirring up the spirit of revolt among the exiles. Jeremiah, on the other hand, assured them that they had been sent of God into the land of the Chaldeans for good, bade them seek the peace of the city wherein they now dwelt and promised them that, in due time, the Lord would again plant them in their own land.

A people in such a position as the Jews in Babylon were in danger in two ways—either to be buoyed up with false hopes and so to fall into foolish expectations, or to fall into despair and have no hope at all—and so become a sullen and degraded race who would be unfit for restoration and unable to play the part which God ordained for them in the history of mankind. The Prophet had the double duty of putting down their false hopes and sustaining their right expectations. He, therefore, plainly warned them against expecting more than God had promised and he awakened them to look for the fulfillment of what He had promised. Read the 10th verse, and note that pleasant expression, “and perform My good word unto you.”

At the present time, the Church has need of both admonitions! Expectations which are not warranted are being raised in many quarters and are leading to serious delusions. We hear men crying, “Lo here!” and, “Lo there!” This wonder and that marvel are cried up. It would seem that the age of miracles has returned to certain hot heads. Take no heed of all this! Go not beyond the record. On the other hand, we need to be urged to believe our Lord implicitly and to hold on to His Word with a strong, hearty, realizing faith—being assured that while God will not do what we propose to Him, yet He will do what He has promised. False prophets will be left in the lurch, but the Word of the Lord will stand.

This morning my desire shall be to comfort any of God’s people who are in a state of perplexity and thus are carried away captive. I would assure them of the Lord’s kindness to them and urge them to trust and not be afraid. God’s thoughts towards them are good, though their trials may be grievous.

The text puts me upon two tracks. First, let us consider the Lords thoughts towards His people. “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Secondly, let us consider the Believer’s proper attitude towards his Lord. What should we think of our gracious God who thus unveils His heart to us?

I. First, then, dear Friends, CONSIDER THE LORD’S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.  
It is noteworthy, first of all, that He does think of them and towards them. Observe that this Scripture says not, “I know the thoughts that I have thought toward you.” That would be a happy remembrance, for the thoughts of God concerning His people are more ancient than the everlasting hills! There never was a time when God did not think upon His people for good. He says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.” But the point here brought forward is that He still thinks of them. It would be possible for you to have thought out a plan of kindness towards a friend—and you might have so arranged it that it would henceforth be a natural fountain of good to him without your thinking any more about it. But that is not after the method of God! His eyes and His hands are continually towards His people. It is true He did so think of us that He has arranged everything about us and provided for every need and against every danger, but He has not ceased to think of us. His infinite mind, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth, continues to exercise itself about us. “I am poor and needy,” says David, “yet the Lord thinks upon me.” We love to be thought of by our friends. Indeed, thought enters into the essence of love. Delight yourselves this morning, O you who believe your God, in this heavenly fact, that the Lord thinks upon you at this moment! “The Lord has been mindful of us,” and He is still mindful of us.  
The Lord not only thinks of you, but towards you. His thoughts are all drifting your way. This is the way the south wind of His thoughts of peace is moving—it is towards you. The Lord never forgets His own, for He has engraved them upon the palms of His hands. Never at any moment does Jehovah turn His thoughts from His beloved, even though He has the whole universe to rule. He says of His Church, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”  
This Truth of God, although it is easily spoken, is not readily comprehended in the fullness of its joy. Nor is it always believed as it should be. These people in captivity were likely to fear that their God had forgotten them and, therefore, the Lord repeats His words in this place and speaks of thoughts and thinking three times. His words are so repeated as to seem almost redundant, out of a desire to make His people feel absolutely sure that not only did He act towards them, but that He still has thoughts towards them. To the banished, this would be a grand consolation. The Lord thought of them when they walked the strange streets of “the golden city” and heard a language which they understood not. He thought of them when they were buffeted as aliens by those who marched in the proudest pomp and danced in cruel derision to the sound of their viols. The Lord thought of His exiles when their sole solace was solitude by the brink of the Babylonian canals where, among the willows, they remembered Zion.  
All that the Lord was doing towards them was done thoughtfully. His thoughts of peace and not of evil towards them had suggested their captivity and the continuance of it for 70 years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow today, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. It is in this fixed intent and thoughtfulness that the real character of an action lies. A person may happen to do you a good turn, but if you are sure that he did it by accident, or with no more thought than that wherewith a passing stranger throws a penny to a beggar, you are not impressed with gratitude. But when the action of your friend is the result of earnest deliberation and you see that he acts in the most tender regard to your welfare, you are far more thankful! Traces of anxiety to do you good are very pleasant. Have I not heard persons say, “It was so kind and so thoughtful of him!”? Do you not notice that men value kindly thoughts and set great store by tender consideration?  
Remember, then, that there is never a thoughtless action on the part of God. His mind goes with His hands. His heart is in His acts. He thinks so much of His people that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered! He thinks not only of the great thing, but of the little things which are incidental to the great thing, as the hairs are to the head. Every affliction is timed and measured and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree. O Believer, the great thoughtfulness of the Divine mind is exercised towards you, the chosen of the Lord! Never has anything happened to you as the result of a remorseless fate, but all your circumstances have been ordered in wisdom by a living, thoughtful, loving Lord!  
Brothers and Sisters, if I said no more you might go on your way rejoicing! Remember that the infinite God has thoughts of peace towards you— and your own thoughts will be thoughts of peace all the day.  
To go a step further, let us next note that the thoughts of God are only perfectly known to Himself. It would be a mere truism for God to say, “I know the thoughts that I think toward you.” Even a man usually knows his own thoughts, but the meaning is this—when you do not know the thoughts that I have towards you, yet I know them! Brethren, when we cannot know the thoughts of the Lord because they are too high for our conception, or too deep for our understanding, yet the Lord knows them! Our heavenly Father knows what He is doing—when His ways towards us appear to be involved and complicated and we cannot disentangle the threads of the skein, yet the Lord sees all things clearly and knows the thoughts that He thinks towards us. He never misses His way, nor becomes embarrassed.  
We dare not profess to understand the ways of God to man—they are past finding out. Providence is a great deep. Its breadth exceeds the range of our vision and its depth baffles our most profound thought. “Your way, O Lord, is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known.” When we are overwhelmed with wonder at what we see, we are humbled by the reminder, “Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!” “Truly no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” God alone understands Himself and His thoughts! We stand by a powerful machine and we see the wheels moving this way and that, but we do not understand its working. What does it matter? He who made the engine and controls it, perfectly understands it—and this is practically the main concern, for it does not matter whether we understand the engine or not—it will work its purpose if he who has the control of it is at home with all its bands and wheels.  
Despite our ignorance, nothing can go wrong while the Lord, in infinite knowledge, rules over all. The child playing on the deck does not understand the tremendous engine whose beat is the throbbing heart of the stately Atlantic liner, but all is safe, for the engineer, the captain and the pilot are in their places and well know what is being done! Let not the child trouble itself about things too great for it. And you leave the discovery of doubtful causes to Him whose understanding is infinite—and be you still and know that Jehovah is God! Unbelief misinterprets the ways of God. Hasty judgment jumps at wrong conclusions about them. But the Lord knows His own thoughts. We are doubtful where we ought to be sure and we are sure where we have no ground for certainty—thus we are always in the wrong. How should it be otherwise with us, since vain man would be wise and yet he is born like a wild ass’s colt? We are hard to tame and to teach! But as for the Lord, “His way is perfect.”— *“His thoughts are high, His love is wise,  
His wounds a cure intend.  
And though He does not always smile,  
He loves unto the end.”*  
Let us go a step further—The Lord would have us know that His thoughts toward us are settled and definite. This is part of the intent of the words, “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord.” Sometimes a man may hardly know his own thoughts because he has scarcely made up his mind. There are several subjects now upon the public mind concerning which it is wise to say little or nothing because it is not easy to decide about them. Upon a certain matter, one asks you this question and another asks you another question. And it is possible that you have so carefully weighed and measured the arguments both pro and con that you cannot come to a conclusion either way! Your thoughts differ from day to day and, therefore, you do not yet know them.  
You need not be ashamed of this—it shows that you have a just sense of your own imperfect knowledge. A fool soon makes up his mind because there is so very little of it! But a wise man waits and considers. The case is far otherwise with the only wise God. The Lord is not a man that He should need to hesitate! His infinite mind is made up and He knows His thoughts. With the Lord there is neither question nor debate—“He is in one mind and none can turn Him.” His purpose is settled and He adheres to it. He is resolved to reward them that diligently seek Him and to honor those that trust in Him! He is resolved to remember His Covenant forever and to keep His promises to those who believe Him. His thought is that the people whom He has formed for Himself shall show forth His praise. The Lord knows them that are His. He knows whom He gave to His Son and He knows that these shall be His jewels forever and ever.  
Beloved, when you do not know your own mind, God knows His mind. Though you believe not, He abides faithful. When you are in the gloom, He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Your way may be closed, but His way is open. God knows all when you know nothing at all! When Moses came out of Egypt, he had no plan as to the march of Israel. He knew that he had to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, but that was all. He probably hoped to take them by the shortest route to Palestine. Their journey was far otherwise, but it was all prearranged by the Divine mind! It was by no error that the tribes were told to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would say, “They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in.” There was no going back, for the Egyptians were there—and no going forward, for the Red Sea was there—but the Lord had the way mapped out in His own mind. He was not taken by surprise when the enemy said, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,” since for this purpose had He raised Pharaoh up, that He might show forth His power in him!  
The passage of the Red Sea was no hurried expedient—Jehovah knew what He would do. When our blessed Lord was surrounded by the hungry crowd, He asked His disciples, “How many loaves have you?” But “Jesus knew what He would do.” He had His thoughts and He knew them! “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” “Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us.” You have said, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure”—and it is even so! Brothers and Sisters, you do not know what is to be done, but the Lord knows for you. O body of Christ, let your Head think for you! O servant of Christ, let your Master think for you. “I know,” says God “the thoughts that I think toward you.”  
Now we have advanced some distance into the meaning of our text and we are prepared to go a step further, namely, that God’s thoughts toward His people are always thoughts of peace. He is at peace with them through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He regards them in Christ with perfect complacency. The Spirit of God speaks peace to their troubled conscience and works in them the spirit of adoption and desires after holiness—thus the holy God is able to commune with them and have thoughts of peace toward them. The Lord delights in them! He seeks their peace, He creates their peace, He sustains their peace and thus all His thoughts toward them are peace! Note well the negative, which is expressly inserted. It is very sweet to my own heart. It might have appeared enough to say, “My thoughts are thoughts of peace.” Yes, it would be quite sufficient when all things are bright with us, but those words, “and not of evil,” are admirably adapted to keep off the goblins of the night, the vampires of suspicion which fly in the darkness! When under affliction we are sorely depressed— and when conscience perceives that there are reasons why the Lord should contend with us, then the enemy whispers, “The Lord has evil thoughts toward you and will cast you off forever.” No, Beloved, His thoughts are not of evil. Though the Lord hates your sin, He does not hate you. Though He is the enemy of your follies, He is your own firm Friend— yes, He is all the truer a friend because He fights against your faults.  
He would have you pure and holy, therefore does He bathe you in the rivers and baptize you in the fires. Not in anger does He afflict you, but in His dear Covenant Love. The hardest blow that He ever laid upon His child was inflicted by the hand of Love. You may rise from your bed in the morning to be chastised and before you fall asleep in the night you may smart under the rod—and yet be none the less, but all the more, the favorite of Heaven! Therefore, Beloved, lay hold upon the negative, “not of evil.” God has no evil thought towards His chosen! He has no desire to grieve us, but to save us!  
There shall not a hair of your head perish, but yet that head may ache with weariness. It is for good and only for good that God thinks of us and deals with us. Oh, that we could settle this in our hearts and have done with dark forebodings! Though your way may now lie through dark ravines where the crags rise so steep above you as to shut out the light of day, yet press onward, for the way is safe! Follow the Lord, for where the road is rough, you will be less likely to slip than in more smooth and slippery places. If the way is steep, you will the sooner ascend on high—or if your way inclines downward, you will the sooner feel the necessary humiliation and the more readily cease from yourself—and cast yourself upon your Lord. Though I am not yet so old and gray-headed as many here present, yet one thing I know—that God has done unto me good, and not evil, all the days of my life—and I bear my public witness at this hour, that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me and not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised me!  
No, His thoughts are “not of evil.” The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him that the Lord’s thoughts are “not of evil.” Drive him away with that! When he hisses his foul suggestions, say, “Not of evil.” God cannot have an evil thought towards His own elect! He that gave His own Son to die for us cannot think anything but good towards us!  
Once more and then we shall have fully compassed this text. The Lord’s thoughts are all working towards “an expected end,” or, as the Revised Version has it, “to give you hope in your latter end.” Some read it, “a future and a hope.” The renderings are instructive. God is working with a motive. All things are working together for one objective—the good of those who love God! We see only the beginning—God saw the end from the beginning. We spell the alphabet out, Alpha, Beta, Gamma—but God reads all, from Alpha to Omega, at once! He knows every letter of the Book of Providence! He sees not only what He is doing, but what will come of what He is doing! As to our present pain and grief, God saw not these things exclusively, but He saw the future joy and usefulness which will come of them. He regards not only the tearing up of the soil with the plow, but the clothing of that soil with the golden harvest. He sees the consequences of affliction and He accounts those painful incidents to be blessed which lead up to so much of happiness! Let us comfort ourselves with this.  
God meant in Babylon to prepare a people that should know Him, of whom He could say, “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” At the end of 70 years, He would bring these people back to Jerusalem like a new race, who, whatever their faults might be, would never again fall into idolatry! He knew what He was driving at in their captivity and in our case the Lord is equally clear as to His purpose. We do not, ourselves, know, for, “it does not yet appear what we shall be.” You have never seen the Great Artist’s masterpiece—you have only seen the rough marble. You have marked the chippings that fall on the ground. You have felt the edge of His chisel, you know the weight of His hammer and you are full of the memory of these things, but oh, could you see that glorious

image as it will be when He has put the finishing stroke to it, you would then understand the chisel, the hammer and the Worker better than you now do! O Brothers and Sisters, we would not know ourselves if we could see ourselves as we are to be when the Lord’s purpose is accomplished upon us! We know that we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is, but what is He like, “as He is”? What is that Glory of the Lord which is to be ours? We can picture Him in His humiliation, but what is He like in His Glory? He is the First-Born and we are to be conformed to Him! God is working, working, working always to that end, and so all His thoughts tend towards this expected end.  
Here I pause to make a practical application. I may be addressing some person here who is in great distress under conviction of sin. You despair because the Lord is bringing your sin to remembrance, but indeed, there is no cause—the Lord is sending you into captivity for a purpose. You are being shut up by the Law of God that you may be set at liberty by Christ! You are being stripped in order that you may be clothed! And you are being emptied that you may be filled! If you could see the end from the beginning, you would rejoice that you are made to know the burden of sin, for so shall you be driven to the Cross to find rest from your load! This sorrow shall be the death of your pride and self-righteousness. By this way the Lord is working out for you “a future and a hope.” When clean divorced from self, you shall be wedded to Jesus and dowried with His salvation!  
I am probably also addressing many a child of God who is vexed in daily conflict with his inward corruption. Alas, we find the old man yet alive within us! The old nature in the Christian is no better than the old man in the sinner—it is the same carnal mind which is enmity against God—and is not reconciled, neither, indeed, can be. The new nature has a hard struggle to hold its own against this embodied death. We are, as it were, chained to a rotting carcass and we cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Now, do not despair because of this experience! It is better to mourn over imperfection than to be puffed up with the idle notion that there is no sin in you to be watched and conquered. Certain of the children of Israel remained with Zedekiah at Jerusalem and boasted of their position, but they were none the better for their pretensions. You have been carried away into captivity and you are sighing and crying because of indwelling sin—but the Lord’s thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace and not of evil—and He will “give you an expected end.” You will come to true holiness by this painful process and so shall you glorify God!  
I may also be addressing some child of God in very deep trouble. Everything goes wrong with you at home, in business and, perhaps, in the Church, too. Very well, you will never have to raise that question, “How is it that I am not chastened?” That will never trouble you! Chastening for the present is not joyous, but, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby. Therefore gladly endure it. God’s thoughts are towards you, for He is refining you— believe, also, that His thoughts are peaceable and that He designs your highest good.  
So far have I tried to justify the ways of God to men. May His own Spirit make you feel that the thoughts of the Lord are peace!  
II. In the second part of my discourse I would ask you to CONSIDER THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF GOD’S PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR LORD. You will all agree with me when I say that our attitude should be that of submission. If God, in all that He does towards us, is acting with an objective and that objective a loving one, then let Him do what seems good to Him. Therefore let us have no quarrel with the God of Providence, but let us say, “Your will be done.” Who would not yield to that which works his health, his wealth, his boundless happiness? “My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”  
Next, let our position be one of great hopefulness, seeing the end of God, in all He does, is to give us “a future and a hope.” We are not driven into growing darkness, but led into increasing light. There is always something to be hoped for in the Christian’s life. Let us not look towards the future nor regard the present with any kind of dread. There is nothing for us to dread—  
*“If sin is pardoned, I’m secure;  
Death has no sting beside;  
The Law gave sin its damning power,  
But Christ, my ransom, died.”*  
The death of Christ is the death of evil to the child of God! Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us not be content with sullenly making up our minds to stoical endurance. We must not only bear the will of the Lord, but rejoice in it! It is a blessed thing when we come to rejoice in tribulations and to glory in infirmities. It is fine music when we can sing, “Sweet affliction.”  
“Hard work,” says one. Yes, but it is worth the pains, for it secures perfect peace. If your will is brought to your circumstances and if, better still, your will is brought to delight in God’s will, then the fangs of the serpent are extracted! The sorrow is sucked out of the sorrow by the lips of acquiescence. When you can say, “Not my will, but Yours be done,” you shall have your will. There is always something “better on before” for those who believe in Jesus. You can be sure of that—  
*“You fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
With blessings on your head.”*  
Welcome clouds, if showers of mercy are to come of them! God forbid we should always have sunshine, for that would mean drought. Let the clouds come if they bring a blessed rain.  
Our relation to God should, next, be one of continual expectancy, especially expectancy of the fulfillment of His promises. I call your attention again to the 10th verse—“I will perform My good word toward you.” I do so love that expression—we must have it for a text one of these days—“I will perform My good word toward you.” His promises are good words! Good, indeed, and sweetly refreshing. When your hearts are faint, then is the promise emphatically good. Expect the Lord to be as good as His good Word!  
Brothers and Sisters, do not heap up to yourselves sorrow, as some do in these days, by expecting that which the Lord has not promised. I earnestly warn you against those who have been led by a fevered imagination to expect, first, perfection in the flesh and then perfection of the flesh— and then an actual immortality for the flesh. God will fulfill His promise, but He will not fulfill your misreading of it! I should not wonder if there should arise a race of people who will believe that they can live without eating, because it is said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” If healed without medicine, why not fed without food? What absolute need of any visible means when God can work without them? Those who think it necessary to lay aside all outward means in order to a true faith in God are on the way to any absurdity!  
Truly, if God had bid me live without eating, I would fast at His command and expect to live! But as He has not done so, I shall not presume! Faith that is not warranted by the Word of God is not faith, but folly! And folly is not the faith of God’s elect! The Lord will perform His own Word, but He will not perform the delirious declarations of madmen. If it needs a million miracles to fulfill God’s promises, they shall be forthcoming, but we are not anxious for miracles because our larger faith believes that the Lord can overrule the ordinary ways of Providence to perform His good word and bring us the expected end.  
Again, Beloved, our position towards God should be one of happy hope as to blessed ends being answered even now. In the 24th chapter we observe one of the ends of the Lord’s sending His people into exile. I noticed in the fifth verse that the Lord said, “So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah.” Their sorrow would bring about the Lord’s acknowledgment of them. Thus do we, Brothers and Sisters, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Affliction is the seal of the Lord’s election!  
I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier and, calling on Robert Hall, when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him and procured his release from the army. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her, but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him, she cried, “Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when you are a man.”  
When Mack’s mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, “Mither, mither, dinna you ken that?” In a moment they were in each other’s arms! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord knows the spot of His children! He acknowledges them by the mark of correction! What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but His acknowledgment of us as true heirs and the marks of His rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons! He knows the wounds He made when He was exercising His sacred surgery upon us. By this, also, shall you, yourself, be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace! This will be one “expected end” of the Lord towards us— let us rejoice in it!  
God’s dealings with us work out our good in every way. The Lord said (Jer 24:5), “I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.” We know that, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Thus, from day to day the Lord gives us “an expected end.”  
In the 12th verse of the chapter from which we have taken our text, we see that prayer is quickened by the Lord’s work towards them. “Then shall you call upon Me.” Our troubles drive us to our knees! If it had not been for Esau, Jacob had never wrestled at Jabbok. I hope we usually go to our closets of our own accord, but often we are whipped there. Many of the most earnest prayers that ever rise to Heaven come from us when we are in bondage under grief. Yes, yes, we must thank God that His trying ways with us have produced in us a prayerful spirit and a full conviction that we do not pray in vain.  
The Lord’s end with us is also our sanctification. “And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart.” See the value of sanctified afflictions! God grant that from day to day we may feel the expected ends of His corrections! O that we may grow in Grace and may our Graces grow! May we increase in faith, hope, love, patience, courage and joy! Surely our knowledge ought to widen out, our consecration should be confirmed, our insight should be clearer, our outlook steadier! We ought, by all our experience, to become more Christ-like, better reflectors of the heavenly Light of God, more fit temples of the Holy Spirit! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and rejoice that from day to day we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls and thus the Lord’s end is being answered!  
But to close. We have kept the best wine until now. The thoughts of God towards us are that He will give us “an expected end.” An end—there is good cheer in that! We do not wish to remain here forever. We would be diligent in running the race, but we long for the end of it! I should be satisfied to preach here throughout all eternity if I might always bring glory to God, but yet I am glad that there is to be an end of preaching and a season of pure praise. You, my Brothers, love the Lord’s work, but still, you look forward to the time when you shall take your wages and have done. It is a comfort that there is an end.  
Blessed be God, it is an expected end. You ungodly people can only look forward to a dreaded end—an end of your foolish mirth, an end of your carelessness, an end of your boasting. You fear your end! But God will give His people an expected end. Suppose that end should be the coming of Christ! Oh, how we long for it! Oh that the Bridegroom would now appear! Oh that He would descend from Heaven with a shout and gather His chosen from the four winds of Heaven! “Even so, come quickly!” That is our expected end.  
If our Lord does not come and we must be taken home by death, we feel no alarm in looking forward to that expected end. One by one our dear friends go Home from this Church. As I have often told you, there is never a week without some of our number being taken up. Although I have visited a large number of dying Believers, I have never yet visited a member of this Church who has expressed the least fear in their dying moments, or the slightest dismay in the hour of departure. It makes me feel happy to see how the Brothers and Sisters die—they pass away as if they were going to a wedding rather than to a tomb—as if it were the most joyful thing that ever happened to them to have reached their expected end! Doubts are all driven away when you see how Believers die! Divine Grace is given them so that they surmount the weakness of the hour. The Lord Jesus in them triumphs over pain and death!  
Our venerable Brother and Elder, Mr. Court, who has just passed away at a great age, looked forward to his departure with peaceful hope. He used to speak of it as of a thing from which he had no shrinking. There was no discontent or murmuring about him—no feverish eagerness to quit the infirmities of this life—but, on the other hand, a happy foresight of his end and a joyful expectation of it. Some of the Lord’s saints have not yet received dying Grace, but then they are not going to die yet. Brethren, saints are prepared to go before they go! Our Lord does not pluck His fruit unwisely. Foolish people may tear the green apples from the tree with a pull and a wrench—and bruise them as they throw them into the basket— but our Lord values His fruit and so He waits until it is quite ripe and then He gathers it tenderly. When He puts forth His hand, the fruit bows down to it and parts from the bough without a strain. When the Believer comes to die, it will not be to an end which he feared, but to an end which he expected.  
Brothers and Sisters, when death is past, then comes that expected end which shall never end! What will the first five minutes in Heaven be? There is a bigger question—what will thousands of years in Heaven be? What will myriads of ages be? My disembodied spirit will, at the first, be perfectly happy in the embraces of my Lord. But in due time the Resurrection Day will dawn and this body will rise again in full glory! Then there will be a re-marriage of soul and body—and we shall be perfected, even as our risen Lord. Oh, the glory of that expected end!  
What will it be when our completed manhood shall be introduced to the society of angels, to the presence of cherubim and seraphim? What will it be to see Him whom we have loved so long? What to hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father”? What joy to sit at His right hand! Yesterday my heart was ravished with that text, “They cast their crowns before the Throne.” If ever I am privileged to have a crown at all, how gladly will I lay it down at the feet of my Lord! Is not this your mind? How sweetly will we sing, Non nobis, Domine! “Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name give glory.”  
Brothers and Sisters, what singing it will be when we shall be loosened from the deadening influence of the flesh! How will we praise when we have done with these tongues of clay which hamper us so much! I would speak greatly to my Lord’s praise, but I fail. Strip me of this house of clay and I will sing as sweetly as any of the birds of Paradise that carol forever in the Tree of Life above! Do you not feel a longing to be up and away? Indulge those longings, for thus you will be drawn nearer to the understanding of the text—“to give you an expected end.” All that you are suffering, all that you are enjoying, all that God sends you has this one design—to make you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!  
Ending this discourse, I would ask you to pledge that you will meet me where Glory dwells, in Emmanuel’s land! We shall soon be with the angels. The Lord is thinking of us and He is expecting us Home. Our Lord Jesus is waiting for His wedding day which is His expected end. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.”

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 24, 29.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—737, 731, 746. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #1313 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SECOND WORD TO SEEKERS  
NO. 1313

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1876, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:13.**

LAST Sabbath mornin g [See Sermon No. 1312, “Good News for Seekers.”] we gave forth words of good cheer to those who seek the Lord, dwelling upon those encouraging words of the Savior upon the Cross, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” We aimed only at the one point of encouraging seekers, for a single objective is always enough for one discourse and the impression made is more likely to be permanent. We had neither time nor desire to qualify our language with discriminating remarks which would help to show who are true seekers and who are not. One cannot reap and winnow with the same machine. I think it is right, therefore, that we should follow up that discourse by another in which we shall discern between those who truly seek and those who only nominally seek the Lord.

Such discrimination will be useful in many ways. Perhaps, dear Friend, after last Lord’s-Day you said, “I do not understand this promise that seekers shall praise God, for I have been seeking for many months but I have not been able to praise Him. Surely the promise cannot be true for me.” Rest assured, dear Friend, that the promise is true for you if you are true to it. The Word of the Lord is sure. There can be no question upon that point—the questions to be raised must deal with yourself and your searching—either you do not seek or else you seek amiss. Always conclude that if a general promise does not turn out to be true in your particular instance, there is something in you that hinders it. You must have fallen short of the character to which the promise is made—the promise, itself, cannot be suspect. “Let God be true and every man a liar.”

You may account for your not obtaining the blessing which you have asked upon any theory which humbles yourself, but you must never suppose that the Lord will break His promise, for that were to dishonor His holy name, deny His faithfulness and pour contempt upon His Truth! If His good Word appears to fail towards you, is there not a cause? Does not sin lie at the door? Is there not some idol in the inner chamber which must be searched for and taken away? “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” It is a general truth that proper food will build up the human frame, but if food is eaten and yet no nourishment whatever is obtained from it, we conclude that the system is thrown out of order by some inward disease. The meat is good—it must, therefore, be the stomach or some other organ that ails and turns that which is good into evil.  
If a fire is kindled and a person is placed close to it, and yet he declares that he is not warmed by the heat, we do not, because of this, entertain any doubt of the power of fire to warm the human body! We conclude that the man has a chill or some other malady which prevents his feeling the natural warmth of the fire. The failure of warmth cannot lie in the fire—it must be in the man—for fire must warm any healthy limbs which are held near to it. If a medicine which has been known to produce a cure in hundreds of cases is taken by an individual and it is found to have no result, or to work in a manner contrary to its natural and ordinary effect, we conclude that either the state of the case has been badly judged, or that there is present some other potent drug which neutralizes its effect.

The man, himself, may not be aware that he is eating or imbibing that which acts in an opposite direction to the prescription of his physician and yet it may be so and, therefore, the medicine is not to be distrusted, but the interposing substance must bear all the blame. For this reason we will try, this morning, to discriminate a little, with no wish whatever to grieve any seeking soul, but with a strong desire to indicate any weak point in the seeking, any counteracting habit which may be, at this time, preventing the soul from entering at once into the peace and joy for which it is seeking.

“He that seeks finds” is an indisputable fact. But, as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not seeking which bears the name! We come at once to our point by noticing the quality required in every true seeker. The verse tells us—“You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Whole-heartedness is the quality required. Secondly, we shall show the reasons why wholeheartedness is required. And, thirdly, indicate one or two of the main hindrances to it, which we pray the Lord to remove.

I. THE QUALITY REQUIRED IN THE SEEKER is whole-heartedness—he must search for the Lord with all his heart. This means, I take it, three things. First, in order to find the Lord there must be an undivided Object in the seeker’s mind. See how the text runs—“You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” The Object is one and only one. The sinner is at a distance from God and guilt divides him from his God. He longs to draw near to the heavenly Father and to be reconciled—he therefore seeks after God and God, alone. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” “O that I knew where I might find HIM!”

Now, the Lord is to be found by the guilty only in Christ Jesus, who is the Mercy Seat where God meets sinners and hears their prayers. It is there that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and there the fullness of Divine Grace and the Truth of God are stored up so that we may receive of them. We must turn our eyes, then, to God in Christ Jesus, and keep our eyes fixed there. “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” If the eyes are not only on Christ and in desire of salvation through Him, it will be no wonder if we seek for mercy but seek in vain! How can a man run in two ways at the same time? Brothers and Sisters, you must shake off from you all trust in self, for God will have none of it! You must not seek God by the works of the Law, or by any supposed merit that is or ever can be in yourself, for this He utterly refuses.

If you attempt to mix Law with Gospel, self with Christ and merit with mercy, you will certainly miss your aim—your whole soul must concentrate itself upon this—to find God as He is revealed in Christ, a God of Grace and love, the God who justifies the ungodly when He looks upon the merit of His Son and sees the sinner’s confidence in Him. You must so seek the Lord as to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. If it cost you the giving up of every pleasure that you have, yet in searching after the Lord you must seek Him so entirely that you would cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes sooner than you should miss Him and so miss eternal life! However sweet the sin may have been to your palate, you must cast it out of your mouth, for it is as poisonous as it is pleasant and, therefore, it is to be put away far from you.

“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof,” for if you do, you have not sought the Lord with all your heart. There must be one Object and that must be neither self nor sin, but you must feel and say, “in God is my salvation, and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Therefore with strong desire do I follow after the Lord, even the Lord, alone.” Moreover, there must be no reservations made in this search to gratify pride in any of its shapes. If you say within your heart, “I will only accept mercy if it come to me in a certain way”—you put yourself out of all hope of Grace, for God is a Sovereign, and will do as He wills with His own. Some will not have Christ without signs and wonders—they demand singular experiences, horrible depressions, or delirious excitements—and they will not believe unless some marvelous thing is worked in them or before them.

You must make no conditions with God, either of this or of any other kind. You shall find Him if you will seek Him without bargains and terms and demands—for what are you that you should demand anything of your Maker—and lay down rules and regulations for the dispensing of a mercy to which you have no claim? Come as you are, poor Sinner, and without any reservation submit yourself to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, only desiring this one thing—that you may find God and His love in Christ Jesus—

*“Lord, deny me what You will,  
Only ease me of my guilt.  
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,*

*Give me Christ, or else I die.”*  
You shall find the Lord to be your help and your salvation if you seek Him as the one sole Object of your desire. “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.”

The phrase, “with all your heart” means, next, with the entire faculties of our being. A man must seek after God in Christ Jesus with his entire nature. David said, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You.” If one part of the man refuses to seek the Lord and remains reserved for Satan, then the Evil One has a lien upon the whole man! Here is a little bird and it tries to fly into the open air, but it is not free. And why not? Its wings are loose, see how it flutters! Its head is not bound, hear how it sings! And this foot is free, too—why is it not at liberty? Do you not perceive that the other leg is bound by a thin twine? True, it is only held by that single thread, but it is not free. The whole bird is bound, because that one foot is held by that single thread!

And so long as a man of free choice gives up any part of himself to the power of sin and keeps back any part of his nature from seeking after God, he is not really seeking the Lord at all, but remains a slave of sin. O man, if you would find God, set your faculties upon the search! Marshal your powers, muster your forces and let your entire nature, body, soul and spirit search after Jesus Christ as the merchantman seeks goodly pearls! Set your thoughts at work and let them search the Scriptures! Awake your understanding and endeavor to comprehend your danger and to know your remedy. Set your wits to work—let your ingenuity and your research be brought to bear on heavenly things, for perhaps when you do understand the Gospel you will believe and have peace.

An enlightened judgment is a great help towards faith. Many a man remains without peace because his understanding has never been exercised upon the Gospel and Divine things. But if he would think them over, meditate upon them and ponder them in his heart, by the enlightening of the sacred Spirit, new light would flash into his soul and he would see and believe. “Do you understand what you read?” is an important question and suggests that in the search after salvation the understanding should be called into play. Do not expect to be saved as dumb driven cattle, but as a reasonable man and, therefore, use your reason and understanding upon Divine things, asking the Lord to teach your reason right reason—and to give your understanding a right understanding of His Word.

It will be well for a man, in seeking the Lord, to use his memory and his conscience. Let him go over the list of his past sins and recall the wanderings of his heart, the follies of his tongue, the iniquities of his hands. Perhaps memory will call up conscience and become the mother of repentance! The recollection of the sinful past will, by the Spirit’s Grace, create a penitent. Forget not, I pray you, to remember your former days, for God requires that which is past. Remember, too, what God has done by way of mercy to others. Think of friends and companions saved. Remember the grand old records of Inspiration—turn to the Bible and see how God has saved seeking souls—and your memory may thus beget faith in you by the work of the Spirit of God.

The text bids you search “with all your heart,” and your memory, as one of the faculties of your mind, should assist in the search. As for your will, how necessary that this, also, be captured and compelled to join heartily in the pursuit. It is a stubborn thing and will not readily bend, but how can you expect to find mercy if you are not willing to submit to God’s rebukes and accept His methods of salvation? Bring forth my Lord Will-Be-Will and let Grace cause him to submit himself! Though he was once Lord Mayor of Mansoul, he must bare his neck to the yoke of Christ and admit that the will of the Lord is higher than man’s will! Make him say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” As to every other faculty that you have, if you are, indeed, in earnest, let it be awakened! Leave not a single part of your nature behind you when you come to God, but seek Him with your whole heart, with intense eagerness and strong desire.

“My son, if you will receive My words, and hide My commandments with you; so that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” I have now given you two meanings for the phrase, to seek the Lord with all our heart—it indicates an undivided Object and the entireness of our faculties in the search.

But, thirdly, it signifies, mainly, awakened energy. “When you shall search for Me with all your heart you shall find Me.” It includes the getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which seems so common. Indifference to eternal realities seems to impregnate the very air we breathe in this sleepy world—sleepy I mean as to things spiritual and Divine. We are busy about a thousand things, but sluggish about our souls! Yet be not deceived, if men are to be saved, it will not be accomplished while they slumber, nor will mercy be found by listless, careless, lackadaisical searching after it.

When the Spirit of God sets a man searching, he becomes earnest, intense, fervent, vehement and strives to enter in at the strait gate, “for the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” He who would be saved must be resolved to escape from the wrath to come. It must come to this with you—that you will not rest till you find Christ and eternal life, for you can not endure to be damned and, therefore, you are determined that if there is on earth or in Heaven any remedy for your soul’s sickness, you will have it if seeking can obtain it! When the Lord has made you thus resolute, you will need to have perseverance to follow hard after Him till you have beheld His face in peace.

If you have once read the Scriptures to find Christ in them, you will read them again and again—and dig the field of the Word over 10 times till you find the hidden treasure! If you have once prayed for Grace and peace you will pray again and again, and again, and again till your knees are calloused rather than you will miss the blessing! If you have heard the Word preached many times and yet it has not brought peace to your soul, you will be early and late in your waiting at the posts of Jehovah’s doors to hear those glad tidings of which it is written, “Hear, and your soul shall live.” There will be in your spirit a determination that cannot be shaken, a desire which cannot be appeased!

We must be importunate, like the widow with the unjust judge, or the man at midnight with his friend, for importunity prevails. “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the Lord.” If you cannot rest till you receive the kiss of pardon, you shall soon obtain it! If you cannot be easy until you are taken into the Father’s house and acknowledged to be His child, you shall soon rejoice in the adoption! May the Lord be pleased to awake all seekers to passionate earnestness, for when they are filled with travail of soul they shall obtain mercy! If you are content to go without salvation you shall go without it,

but if your soul longs, yes, even faints for it, you shall have it.

There are some poor souls who will, perhaps, be distressed with these remarks upon energetic seeking. They are constitutionally weak and feeble in all that they feel and do and, therefore, they will say, “Alas, Sir, I am afraid I never was so earnest as you describe. I am a poor feeble soul and very low in spirit. I fear I have no such eagerness and energy.” No, dear Trembler, and I would not have you misunderstand me, for the force I am now commending is not physical, but spiritual and rather that of weakness than of strength! Have you not heard that once upon a time two knocks were given at Mercy’s door and he who kept the door, opened to one in an instant, but to the other there was no reply. The knock to which the door was opened was but a gentle one and scarcely could be heard by those outside the gate, yet it evidently struck some secret spring upon the door, for the sound thereof thundered along the palace halls!

The second knock was very loud and was heard by all who stood around the door, but it commanded no answer from within. Then he who thus had knocked marveled and enquired of him that kept the gate and said, “How is it that I have knocked so loudly and yet have not entered, while the trembling woman whose knock was very soft and low obtained immediate admittance?” Then he that kept the door answered, “She who knocked so feebly, yet knocked with all her might. Her strength was little, but it was all she had and, therefore, it sounded powerfully within these palace walls. As for you, you have put forth much energy, but it was not your all and, therefore, there is no response to you. Take you the hammer of the gate with both your hands and throw your whole soul into each blow, and see if the door does not yield you admittance.”

He did so, the gate flew open to him, and he entered into the place which his feeble Sister had already gained. If you seek God with all your heart, be your heart strong or feeble, you shall find Him!

II. Secondly, we have to consider THE REASON FOR THIS REQUIREMENT. The requirement is so natural that it needs no excusing—it must recommend itself to every thoughtful person. But since it may help us to be earnest if we are told why it is required of us, I would answer first, that in every other pursuit where the object is at all worthy of a man’s efforts, whole-heartedness is required. I knew a man who had a business, but if you called to see him upon any matter you seldom found him in—he was taking a holiday, or else he had not risen. He made an appointment with you, but he never kept it, or came in so late that you were weary with waiting. Commissions that he was entrusted with were often left unexecuted by the week together, or attended to in a slovenly manner. Do you wonder that when I passed by his shop one day I saw the shutters up and learned that he had failed?

Do you not know that success in life depends upon earnestness in it? Do you not teach your sons this important lesson? And if it is so in the lower things of this mortal life, how much more is it in the matters of the world to come? No man becomes learned by sleeping with a book for his pillow, or famous by slumbering at the foot of the ladder of honor. You find, everywhere, that the kingdom of this world suffers violence and never more so than in these days of increasing competition. Surely you cannot expect that if you must run for this world, you may creep and win the next! No, no, you shall find the Lord, Seeker, if you seek Him with all your heart, but no other way! Spiritual sluggards shall starve! Labor, therefore, for the meat which endures to eternal life.

The danger from which the need to escape is so great, that the utmost earnestness is none too much! Consider for a moment the imminence of our peril and the overwhelming nature of it. The unsaved man lies under the wrath of God and if any man did but know what the wrath of God is, he would think Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace to be cool compared with that burning oven! He is, in instant danger of death and of the Judgment, and of that Second Death which follows on the heels of condemnation and consists in banishment from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. Oh, if a man did but know, while he lived, what it is to die—if he could but guess what it is to stand before God’s bar and if he could have an inkling of what it must be to be cast where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched—this would surely make him seek the Lord with all his heart!

O Man, if you were in a burning house you would be eager to get out of it! If there seemed a probability that you would sink in a river, you would struggle desperately to get to shore! How is it, then, that you are so little moved by the peril of your soul? Man is awakened when his life is once known to be in peril—how much more earnest ought he to be when eternal life or eternal death are the solemn alternatives! “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon your God!” Look, moreover, at the greatness of the mercy which you are seeking. It is none other than pardon of all your sins, perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus, safety through His precious blood, adoption into the family of God and eternal enjoyment of the Presence of God in Heaven!

They that seek for pearls, gold and precious stones, use all their eyes and all their wits, but what are those gaudy toys compared with these immortal treasures? How ought a man to seek after Heaven and eternal life? Should it not be with all his heart? Remember that in this matter everybody else is in earnest. Poor Seeker, everyone that you have to do with in this matter is in earnest! Look down on Hell’s domain and see how earnest Satan is to hold you and to ruin you! How diligently the enemy baits his hooks and sets his traps to catch the souls of men! How does he compass sea and land to hold his captives lest they escape. See how earnest, on the other hand, Christ is! He proved His earnestness by a life of toil by day and of prayer by night—by hunger, thirst, faintness and bloody sweat.

The zeal of God’s House had eaten Him up. He was earnest even to the death for sinners. And God is in earnest—there is no mockery with Him, or carelessness or indifference about human souls. When He speaks of the sinner’s perishing, He cries out with a solemn oath that He has no pleasure in their death. But if they, to the last, refuse His love and defy His justice, He will not trifle with them, but will judge in earnest and punish in earnest. Has He not said, “Beware therefore, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” The majesty of His

power is revealed in flaming wrath against transgressors! Hell is no trifle and His wrath is no small matter.

Heaven and Hell, then, are in earnest, and so must you be if you would find salvation. Shall we, who have to tell you to escape from the wrath to come, pray to be in earnest and shall we never feel earnest enough, but always cry that we may be seized with a yet more intense passion for your welfare? And shall it seem to you to be a common-place affair—a thing that you may let alone and let happen as it may? Oh, Sirs, if you talk so, the madness of sin is very manifest in you! May the Lord make you sane! Where everything else is in earnest, you need to be in earnest, too.

You have been earnest enough and whole-hearted enough in the ways of sin. Think of yourself as engrossed with those things of which you ought to be ashamed. Have you not been earnest, indeed, there? Concerning this world you have risen up early and sat up late, and eaten the bread of carefulness. When you went into sin, did you not sin with both your hands? Perhaps I speak to some here who could never sin enough. When they were in company they were ahead of all others—ringleaders in every sort of wickedness. It was not enough for them to be as common sinners, but they were known by everybody to be the boldest and most daredevil of all the crew. They led the van in the march to Hell!

Ah, Sirs, are you going to manifest all that earnestness in reviling and rebelling against God and is there to be no warmth, no ardor, no strong excitement of your nature when you seek the Lord and His Grace? Think of this and chide your laggard steps! Besides, look, Sirs, how can there be anything true about your seeking if it is not whole-hearted? Here is a man who almost repents of his sin, or half repents of it. Does not that mean that he does not repent of it at all? How can there be repentance of a deed to which half the heart is still wedded? If only half the heart seems to be separated from sin, it is but a seeming—the man’s whole heart, in truth, still loves his sin.

And how can there be half-hearted faith? He that half believes, believes not at all. If you say, “I almost believe,” where is your faith? If you believe with all your heart you may be baptized and added to the Church. But if you believe half-heartedly, what sort of faith is this? For a man to turn half from sin and half to God, is that conversion? No, he has not turned to God who has turned but half to God. He abides where he was, only probably he has added hypocrisy to his other sins. He who leaves half his heart behind him when he comes to God comes not at all. “Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.”

And also, my Brethren, you that are seeking the Lord, there must be whole-heartedness in your seeking because that which you seek, if you obtain it, is a whole-hearted thing. Hear how true Christians pray. Do they pray with half their hearts? No, for one said, “with my whole heart have I sought You.” So say all the saints. They know that if they ask in a chilly style they are asking to be denied and, therefore, they besiege Heaven with all the power of prayer. They knock and knock again with fervor and importunity when they would obtain what they need. They say with wrestling Jacob, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian and if he cannot pray without whole-heartedness, then it is clear that to have spiritual life, you, O Seeker, must give all your heart to it.

Obedience to God in the Believer is whole-hearted. What did David say? “I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.” There is no doing the will of God with half a heart. That would be such an obedience as He could not, in any way, accept. It would be a sign of formality and hypocrisy, but not of sincerity. Genuine Christians love God with all their heart. What is the demand of the old Law, but, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul”? To love God with half your heart would be another name for not loving God at all! Love to God is the proof and test of a Believer, but how can you have it if even in your seeking your heart is divided?

When Believers praise God, they do it in the style of the Psalmist who said, “I will praise You, O God, with my whole heart.” What other songs can have music in them to the ears of the God of Truth? Vain must all ten-stringed instruments be if the heart praises not. “Unite my heart to fear Your name,” said the holy man, and we must pray the same, for the Christian life is impossible without wholeness of heart. Only imagine for a moment that I were permitted to come here and say to you sinners, “God is very easily entreated and if you seek Him, no matter in what cold and careless way, He will be found of you. You may be half asleep, but yet so long as there is a little desire in your soul, it will go well with you. You need not be very earnest or specially prayerful, or whole-hearted—you may take it very easy—it will all go well with you”?

What pretty preaching that would be! Some might like it, but what sort of Christians should we produce by it? Even when we preach earnestness, a great number of professors are drowsy enough! But what would they be if we had such a slumbering Gospel as this to preach? I have known persons go to sleep in the House of Prayer when the seats have been hard. But suppose we provided pillows for all armholes and downy cushions for drowsy heads? Who would wonder it you all went to sleep? What sort of a Church should we build up if we did not bid the enquirer seek with his whole heart, but urged him to be indifferent from the very first? Have I not reduced the whole thing to an absurdity? And do you not see, at once, that there must be a seeking of the Lord with all your heart if, indeed, you are ever to find Him? May the Divine Spirit, who comes as a rushing mighty wind and as a consuming fire, come upon all wavering hearts at this hour and cause them to be eager after the things which make for their peace!

III. I am going to mention, in the third place, one or two of THE HINDRANCES which stand in the way of a sincere, whole-hearted, persevering search after the Lord and His salvation. I verily believe that a principal hindrance is presumption. The ungodly say within themselves, “God is very merciful and ready to forgive. We like to hear the preacher set forth the abundant mercy of God. We are pleased to hear him show how willing the Father is to forgive and how He delights to receive returning prodigals.”

Yes, and after saying this you continue in sin—your mean, dastardly, worse than brutish heart resolves to sin because God is merciful! I know not how to find adjectives sufficiently strong to set forth the degradation of a nature which can multiply offenses because the offended One is of a forgiving spirit! How worse than brutish are they who say, “Because God is so merciful, therefore we will go on in sin!” Are you not ashamed of yourselves? I am sure I am ashamed of you, that such a thought should ever dwell in your mind! It is so ungrateful, so ungenerous—I was going to say, it is so devilish—but the devil himself has never been so guilty, for he has never had any hope of mercy!

To sin because of mercy is a step lower than even the devil has descended. Because God is merciful, therefore, you will not seek His mercy, but will continue in sin. Ah, be ashamed and be ashamed! You hear us continually say that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. And you say to yourself in the secret of your heart, “This is very easy. Only believe, and you shall be saved. Simply put your confidence in Christ,” and from this you take license to go on in sin! Let me put this to you again that you may see the meanness of such a course. Do you say, “Because the way of salvation is so simple, therefore I will not attend to it at present. Any day will do. I will put it off”?

Oh, Man, can it be that you have fallen so low as this? Oh, the deep depravity of your spirit, that if God is so ready to forgive, you are, therefore, all the more unready to be forgiven! And because He puts it on such easy terms, you, therefore, turn upon your heels and refuse His love! What is this but virtually to crucify Christ afresh by sinning because He is gracious? What is this but mocking Him and spitting in His face by refusing His salvation because it is so free? Oh, do not do this! Be not so unmanly, so cruel to yourself, and so ungenerous to the Christ of God.

“Ah,” says one, “a few words of prayer at the last will do.”— *“While the lamp holds out to burn,*

*The vilest sinner may return.”*  
Ah, I have often wondered how men can venture to speak thus within themselves! They seldom talk like that to others because they dare not! But they flatter themselves in secret. How do you know that you will have the few minutes in which to utter those pious words? “God be merciful to me a sinner,” may be more than you will be able to say! Beware, lest He take you away with a stroke, for then you will not be able to raise even the shortest prayer! Some have been smitten down in their sins and those have been the very men who said, “Any time will do. I can turn to God when I please and make my peace with Him.” Many men have fallen from

a height, or been killed on the railway, or drowned at sea, or seized with an epileptic fit and their souls have stood in all their naked shame before the bar of God to answer for their ungodly speeches! Presumption upon the mercy of God is the reason why so many wrap themselves up in the garments of carnal security and put far from them the evil day. God deliver you from this great evil!  
Secondly, many are hindered, I doubt not, by remains of selfconfidence. If they knew that they could not save themselves they would be in earnest to seek after God and His righteousness. But they still harbor some vain notion that there must be at least a little good thing about them, at least a spark—and a great fire may come from a spark. They never were as bad as some—they were not swearers or drunks—they have never plunged into actual lust and defiled themselves with uncleanness. Somewhere or other they have hoarded up a little store of native goodness and upon this they dote in a timorous, half suspicious way and, therefore, they do not cry out to God with the energy of those who must find mercy in Christ or be forever lost.

He who thinks that he can swim will never seize the life buoy with the clutch of a drowning man. How fierce is the grasp of a man who is drowning and knows that his fast hold is his only chance! How he clutches, as if his fingers were made to be welded to the buoy! When a man feels that nothing is left for him but God in Christ, then with earnestness he seizes upon the hope set before him! I am afraid that some are hindered by a very opposite evil, namely, despair. Ah, some of you do not believe that you can be forgiven! You fancy that you never can be God’s people. If you were quite sure that you could obtain perfect peace with God—if you knew that before the sun goes down today you might have the bright eye which looks up to Heaven and say, “There is a throne there for me,” and the placid heart that feels perfect rest in Christ—if you knew that these could be yours, would you not seek them?

Well now, I want to read you a verse which comes before my text. And as I read it, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply its comfortable assurance to your soul. Look at the 11th verse—“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.” Oh, if God’s thoughts towards you are good, come to Him now and kiss His feet! The prodigal, when he was returning home, did not doubt that his father would receive him somehow or other, even if it were as one of his hired servants. He knew that he would be received, somehow, and he was willing to be received!

Come, poor Soul, the Lord will receive you, whoever you may be! If with your whole heart you do consent at once to trust the Lord Jesus, He will receive you! Yes, He will show you how to trust! He will give you faith and give you the blessing which your faith seeks. Why should you not meet your Lord in these pews this morning? Why, before you descend the steps of the Tabernacle, should you not breathe the prayer of faith and lean your weight upon the Cross of Christ, and find the mercy which our text declares you shall find if you seek it with all your heart?

Lastly, I am afraid that some people have been kept from whole-hearted seeking by the conduct of Christian professors. Let me urge you never to take your pattern—you that are coming to Christ—from those who profess to be His followers, for some of them are a sorry sort! Yet let them be as bad as they may, what is that to you? You have your own soul to look after—and you have to seek Christ with all the more earnestness because some who think that they have found Him have been mistaken! It is a great pity when there are Christian people about, or those who say that

they are Christians, to whom a poor seeking soul is unable to appeal because he would get no sympathy from them.

I heard of one who, being ill, desired someone to visit him, occasionally, and pray with him. A young man, a professing Christian, was mentioned as one who would willingly do so. “No,” said the other, “I do not want him to pray with me, for his life does not pray.” There are people of that sort about, many of them. There are some such here. One would not have much faith in their prayers, or derive much comfort from their conversation, for, though you may hope, charitably, that there may be Grace in them, it is like coal in a pit—it is a long way down and hard to get at. Their hearts are lukewarm at the best and, therefore, they never boil with warm and loving expressions.

The genuine and healthy Christian is one who is so full of love that his heart boils over with a good matter and others are compelled to feel that the fire of God is burning in his soul, for they see and feel the effects. O Christian Brothers and Sisters, I do trust that you will see to this, because if you are half-hearted, the chill which surrounds you will freeze the hearts of many who are seeking the Savior! Father, mother, may you not fear that you are hindrances to your children? Sunday school teachers, if you go to your class like blocks of ice this afternoon, you will have cold attention when you come to talk of Christ! If the minister preaches with icicles hanging on his lips, how can he expect that men’s hearts will be thawed by his icy words? No, we must set the example of seeking God with our whole heart—we that are His people—and then God, by the Holy Spirit, will bless our example to others and they will come to seek Him with their whole hearts, too.

The Lord make us to be in downright earnest, so we may hope that toward us He will fulfill that ancient promise, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.”

Think of God thus blessing us with His whole heart and His whole soul. Amen, Lord, so let it be!  
**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 11:1-28.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 594, 605. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #145A Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SEEKERS DIRECTED AND ENCOURAGED  
NO. 1457A

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

**“And you shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.”  
Jeremiah 29:13.**

THIS was a part of the direction which God gave by His servant to the captives in Babylon. They were to remain quiet in Babylon until the set time came for their deliverance and then there would be granted to them a gracious visitation from God which would move them to repentance and incite them to prayer. Then might they be quite sure that the time had come for their deliverance, when they sought the Lord with their whole heart. It is a general principle that a blessing is about to come from the All-Merciful One when we are moved to pray for it with all our heart. The Lord of Grace may send us blessings before we search for them, for He is a Sovereign and often far outstrips what we might have expected, but His promise runs, “Seek and you shall find it,” and it is with the promise that we have most to do. A cheering assurance is given to those who seek in hearty earnest and to this requirement of heartiness we must give earnest need.

At this time I shall not attempt instruction, but strive to drive home the Truth of God into the heart and conscience. I pray the Holy Spirit to help me and I ask the prayers of those who have power with God, that the Word may be as a goad to waken, bestir and urge onward those upon whom it is used. Our address will be, first, to the unconverted. Secondly, to backsliders. And thirdly, to this Church, or any other Christian people.

I. And first TO THE UNCONVERTED. Our text has a word for you. “You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart” You have lost your God—you are at a distance from Him. Your sins have separated you from your Maker and nothing will ever be right with you—really right—till you get back to your God. You are a sheep away from its shepherd; you are a prodigal son away from his father and you will never be right, I say, till, as a sheep, you get back to the fold, and as a son that has rebelled, you are reconciled to your Father.

You need your God and you will never be right till you find Him. You are therefore stirred up by the text to “search for” Him. You are not to sit still with folded arms and say, “He will come if He will.” The prodigal said, “I will arise and go to my father,” and some such spirit must be in you, or we cannot hope well of you. You must search for the Lord. In this search it will be of no use for you to look within your heart, for it is empty and void of anything godlike and altogether estranged from God. Expect not to find the remedy in the disease! No one turns to his empty purse in the hope that it will supply his necessities, for poverty is not the source of riches! It were vain to look for the living among the dead, therefore look not for Grace and salvation in yourself!

Neither will it be the path of wisdom to endeavor to perform good works of your own, hoping to set yourself right by your own exertions in gaining merit. Man, the whole mischief is that you are separated from God and you must get back to Him! The best works done while you are at enmity with your Lord and King are only part and parcel of the proud, presumptuous sin which rejects the Savior and sets up itself in His place. It would have been quite right for the prodigal to wash himself and cease from feeding the swine! It was most desirable that he should leave the harlots and the riotous living in which he had indulged, but if he had done all that and nothing more, the great mischief would not have been cured, for the radical evil lay in his being away from his father’s house.

That is the essential wrong in your case, O unconverted man, unconverted woman! You will never be perfectly happy and right till you are reconciled to God! You are allowed to search for Him and what a privilege that is! When Adam sinned, he could not go back to Paradise, for with a flaming sword in his hand there stood the cherub to keep the way that he might not touch the Tree of Life. But God, as far as the garden of His mercy is concerned, has moved that fiery sentinel and Jesus Christ has set angels of love to welcome you at Mercy’s gate! You may come to God, for God has come to you! He has taken upon Himself your nature and His name is Emmanuel, God With Us!

Yes, the Infinite became a man and He that built yonder arch of Heaven and hung it with those starry lamps, came down below to be subject to lowly parents, to work in a carpenter’s shop and to die upon a felon’s gallows, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Search for Him and you must find Him, for so stands His own Word, “You shall seek Me and find Me.” The text, however, demands that our searching after God should be done with all our heart. There are several ways of seeking God which must prove failures. One is to seek Him with no heart at all. This is done by those who take their book and read prayers, never thinking what they say, or who attend a dissenting place of worship and hear another person pray, but never join in it.

This is done by those who bend the knees at eventide and mutter pious words, but never think—who rise in the morning and repeat sacred sentences and never consider—who with regard to Divine things are as little thoughtful as if the Gospel were all a legend or an old wives’ fable, not worth an hour’s meditation. I have seen young women, sometimes, when I have been traveling, reading those trashy novels which they purchase at the railway stall. And I have seen them waste their tears on some imaginary heroine or hero and yet they and others hear about the majesty and the love of God without emotion and read of Heaven and Hell—and Christ and God—with scarcely a tear or a thought! Dear Friend, you will never find the Lord if you seek Him in a heartless, unthinking manner. God is not mocked! If any of you have fallen into a formal religion and seek the Lord without your heart, you are seeking in vain!

Some seek God with a false heart. They flame with zeal and would have their friends know it, for they say as Jehu did to Jehonadab, “Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord!” But their heart is not true towards God. Their piety is an affectation of feeling and not deep soul-work. It is sentimentality and not the engraving of God’s Spirit upon the heart. Beware of a false religious excitement—of being borne up with religious gas as some are, inflated like balloons by a revival, only to burst, by-andby, when they need something to support them. God grant us to be saved from a lie in the heart, for it is a deadly canker, fatal to all hope of finding the Lord.

Some seek Him, too, with a double heart—a heart and a heart, as the Hebrew puts it. They have a heart towards God and they have a heart towards sin—they have a heart towards the pardon, but they have, also, a heart towards the transgression. They would gladly serve God and Mammon. They would build an altar for Jehovah and still keep Dagon in his place. If your heart is divided, you will be found lacking. Those prayers will never get to Heaven which only fly upward with one wing. If one oar pulls towards earth and the other towards Heaven, the boat of the soul will revolve in a circle of folly and never reach the happy shore. Beware of a double heart! And some seek God with half a heart. They have a little concern and are not altogether indifferent. They think when they pray, or read, or sing, but the thought is not very intense. Superficial in all things, the Seed is sown in stony ground and soon it is withered away, because there is no depth of earth. The Lord save us from this!

Now, you that are seeking Christ, remember that if you would find Him you must neither seek Him without heart, nor with a false heart, nor with a double heart, nor with a half heart, but “You shall find Me,” says the Lord, “when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Nobody gets on in the world who is half-hearted. If a man needs money, he must hunt for it morning, noon and night. If a man longs for knowledge, he cannot take a book and ladle it into his brain with a spoon—he must read and study if he is to be a scholar. If a man desires to rise in such an age as this, he cannot do it without stern labor. Great discoverers, eminent artists and powerful orators have all been men of hard work. Handel, who composed such majestic music, practiced so often on his harpsichord that he hollowed out the keys like spoons through his constant use of them!

Nothing is to be done without earnestness and you may not expect that God is to be found, pardon is to be received and Grace to be had while you have only one eye open and are not half awakened out of sleep. What did Jesus say?—“The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Heaven’s celestial bastions must be stormed by downright importunity! You must take the knocker of Heaven’s gate and not drop it from your fingers with a dainty tap, but hammer at Mercy’s door again and again till you make the infernal deeps of despair resound with your desperate knocks and cause Heaven, itself, to echo with your hopeful determination that you will enter in, or know the reason why! Oh, knock and knock and knock and knock again, for the door shall be opened when you knock with all your hearts!

Surely, dear Friends, if any men have reasons to bring their whole hearts into action, you unconverted people are the people! I am sure that if I were to intimate to you that a hundred pounds of gunpowder were stowed away in yonder center seat and the probability was that it would soon explode, you would not remain very long in this Tabernacle, but would hurry out with all your heart! But any destruction that could be

caused by gunpowder, as far as its effects on earth are concerned, could be nothing at all as compared with the overwhelming destruction which will come upon body and soul to men who are under the wrath of God! That wrath of God abides on every one of you who are not converted!

God is angry with the sinner every day and if it is so, your position is the most perilous one conceivable! You will soon die! Do not be vexed with my reminding you of it. We are compelled to see it, some of us, who watch large congregations. Never does the same assembly meet in this place twice and I suppose between Sabbath and Sabbath it happens almost invariably that some hearer goes to his account. Certainly in this Church we lose all the year round more than one per week of our friends. It is true, then, that you will soon have to die—how will you bear to close your eyes on all mortal things without a hope of immortal joy?

To go before the dread tribunal of your Maker and your Redeemer unwashed in the precious blood—with all your sins from the first day of your life till now about your neck like millstones—to sink forever—how can you bear it? Think of this and if you do, you will have good reason for seeking your God with all your heart! Remember, also, that after death comes judgment. We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ! And after the Judgment comes the final award, which to those who have rejected Christ will be eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power. Do not, I pray you, defy the wrath of God or dare His infinite displeasure! He, Himself, has said it, “Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.”

Surely every man in his senses who knows that he is exposed to such an imminent risk as this will, with his whole heart, seek the Lord! But why is it that when men search with all their heart they find God? I will tell you. The only way in which we can find God is in Jesus Christ. There He meets with men, but nowhere else, and to get to Jesus Christ there is nothing on earth to be done but simply to believe in Him. It is a matter which does not take a moment. Believe God’s testimony about Jesus Christ—trust yourself with Jesus Christ and salvation is yours! The saving Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, and that is why when men seek the Lord with their whole hearts they find Him, for before they called, the Lord was ready to answer!

Jesus was always ready, but other wishes and other thoughts made the seeker unready. Sins were there and lusts of the flesh and all manner of obstacles to hinder the man. When a man comes to seek God with all his heart, he lets those things go and soon sees Jesus. Then, too, a man becomes teachable, for when a man is in earnest to escape from danger he is glad enough to be told by anybody. If I had lost my way and feared I might fall over a precipice, I should be glad for the tiniest child to tell me the right road and a man is likely to learn who is willing to be taught! This seeking God with all his heart makes a man quick in understanding. Before, he was a dolt, because his heart was not in it, like a boy at school who does not want to learn.

When a man seeks God with all his heart, you do not need to preach fine sermons to him—he does not crave elegance or eloquence—no, tell Him Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that “there is life for a look at the Crucified One,” and he jumps at it! “That is what I want,” he says. The Spirit of God has made him eager to learn and so he catches, at once, at the blessed message and believes in Jesus. Half a heart, or no heart, or a double heart will not see what is as plain as a pikestaff and will not accept a Gospel which is as glorious to God as it is simple to man! I charge you, then, you that seek the Lord, to be wholehearted in it, for you cannot expect peace and joy in the Holy Spirit till all those straggling affections and wandering desires are tied up into one bundle and your entire being is eager in the search for God in Christ Jesus.

II. I cannot spare the seeker any more time, for I need to have five minutes with THE BACKSLIDER. Backsliders, you have left your Lord. Perhaps you have left the Church, or the Church has left you by putting you outside its pale and deservedly so, because you were a dishonor to it. I am glad you come among us to worship. You have had to be cut off from our fellowship because of your sad conduct, but you still stick to us and I am glad to see you. I always feel hope for you as long as you love the old house. I am glad that though you are not recognized as a child in it, and do not feel that you ought to be, yet you still wait under the window to hear the family sing.

When the children of God are feasting together at the Table I have marked you looking on and wishing you were again in the happy household. I do not know whether you are God’s children or not. I cannot judge your hearts. I call you backsliders, not because I am sure you are really so, for it is very possible that you made a false profession and you afterwards did what was natural you should do—you broke down in trying to carry out a practical lie. I will not try to judge that, but I will say this to you—surely, if there are any people in the world who ought to be wholehearted in seeking after God, you are the people!

If I am to be lost, I pray God I may not perish as an apostate or a backslider! O you who once made a profession of religion, I cannot understand how you can dare to think of the Judgment Day, for you will not be able to plead ignorance, for you knew the Truth of God and professed to believe it! You will not be able to say, “I never heard of these things.” No, but you came to the Communion Table and you joined the Church! You even preached to others, or you taught in the Sunday school! You ran over at the mouth about Divine things though you were empty at the heart. How speechless you will stand at the last dreadful day with your old regimentals hanging about you to prove that you were deserters! You will not be able to lift a finger or utter a word in defense of yourself!

And what will you do when you go down to Hell? The Prophet represents the king of Babylon as going there and as he descended the little petty princes whom he put to death, who were lying there in their dungeons in the prison of Hell, rose and, leaning on their elbows, looked at him and said,” Have you become like one of us?” I think I hear the drunk rising up and saying to you, “What? And are you here after all? You used to preach sobriety to me and warn me of the drunk’s doom.” Ah, my Hearers, hypocrites are damned as well as drunks! Then will speak the woman whom you talked about reclaiming and what a sneer she will

meet you with and say, “You needed a refuge yourself, you hypocrite!” Then, too, will speak your neighbors who never went to a place of worship, whom you thought were so very bad because you went there and forgot what you heard.

They will say, “This is what came of your going to the Tabernacle and hearing Spurgeon! Is this the result of your joining the Church and going to the Communion Table?” What answer can you give when those eyes shall leer on you and those lips shall hiss in derision at you? Others shall say, “I never had the opportunities you had. I was never warned as you were. I never rejected Christ as you have done—I never stained the robes of His Church and wounded Him anew in the house of His friends as you have done.” Then they will insult and triumph over you! If a prince of the blood were sent to a common jail, what a misery it would be to him.

I pity every man who has to work upon the treadmill, so far as he can deserve pity, but most of all the man who has been delicately brought up and scarcely knows what labor means, for it must be hard, indeed, for him. Ah, you delicate sons and daughters of Zion—you whose mouths were never stained with a curse and whose hands have never been defiled with outward sin—if your hearts are not right with God, you must take your place with the profane and share with them. What do you say to all this? Do you say, “I would gladly return and find acceptance in Christ”? To you the text expressly speaks! Then shall you “find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart.”

III. My last word is to you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially to you, the members of this Church. Thus says the Lord, “You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Brethren, we need the Lord to be always among us. We have had His Presence very graciously, but I am always troubled lest any sin of ours should cause Him to depart. I dread anything like a decline in zeal and ardor, generosity, prayerfulness and holy living among any of us, lest the Glory should depart and Ichabod be written on our walls. We hunger for our God, for I trust we can say we love Him.

Can you say that? I heard this last week a story about that mighty preacher, Robert Hall, which touched me as I heard it. A friend related that Robert Hall was riding, one day, through a little hamlet on his way to preach at a country town. It snowed very heavily and Mr. Hall was passing through the village, unaware of the state of the road beyond. A Christian man who knew him well, cried out, “Mr. Hall, you must not go farther! The snow is very deep! You cannot get through it, you must come in.” Mr. Hall stopped at the house and rested awhile. He looked out of the window and saw that it kept on snowing. He looked out again and it snowed more heavily than before and his friend said to him, “You cannot go, Mr. Hall, you cannot get there.”

“But,” he said, “Sir, I must go.” “Sir,” said the good man, “you cannot. It is impossible. You cannot get to the place; the roads are blocked up.” So the great preacher agreed to remain if he could deliver his sermon. “I must preach, Sir; I must preach, Sir. I cannot remain unless I preach.” His host went round the hamlet, knocked at the doors of the cottages and got a few people together into his home. Mr. Hall preached a wonderful sermon. The good man seemed to mount to Heaven in preaching from the words, “I saw no temple therein.” When the people had gone home he said to his friend, “My dear Sir, I am afraid I am not a child of God.” “Why, Mr. Hall, how can you say such a thing as that?” “But I am afraid I am a hypocrite, Sir.”

“Well, nobody else is afraid of that about you, Mr. Hall. And I cannot think how you can give way to such a notion.” “Ah, but I want to ask you a question, Sir. What do you think is a sure sign that a man is a child of God?” “Mr. Hall,” said the good man, “you ought to know better than I do. I cannot undertake to instruct you.” “I need to know, Sir, and shall be obliged by your judgment,” said Mr. Hall. “Well,” said the man, “this is what I think is a sure sign—if a man really loves God, he must be a child of God and there must have been a change in Him.” “Thank you, Sir. Thank you, Sir, for that word,” said Mr. Hall, “that is just what I needed. Love God, Sir? I love Him with my whole soul.”

“And,” said the good host, in talking to my friend, “you should have heard how Mr. Hall went on about God! It was wonderful to hear him, Sir. He praised Him above all things. He said all that was good about Him and he kept saying, ‘I cannot help loving such a Being as God is, and if that proves that I am saved, then I am sure of it, for I must love Him.’”

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we love God with all our hearts and, therefore, we desire to have Him glorified in our midst. Do you not, my Brethren, vehemently desire this? I know you do! How, then, shall the Lord be honored? He may be glorified by holier living. How is that to be done? The text says we shall find Him if we seek Him with all our hearts and in finding Him we shall find holiness. I have given up the idea that I shall ever get a Church in which all hearts will seek God earnestly. I know you will not all be alive and full of fervor, for some of you are a dishonor to the Church! You will never help us, but you will remain among us as dead weights. How I wish I could hope otherwise, but I dare not deceive myself or you.

I do expect, however, that all who have the life of God really in their souls will give their whole hearts to the Glory of God and will do it intensely. I look to them to seek the Lord by prayer, praying much for God to be glorified and to back up their prayer by effort, cheerfully seeking to take their full share in the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom. Brethren, did Christ die for you? Yes or no? If He did, then, in the name of common honesty, live unto Him, for you cannot be your own—He has bought you with a price! When you were baptized in the name of The Sacred Three, did you mean it? If you did, in the name of the Truth of God, live unto God, for you confessed that you were dead to the world and buried with Christ and that you should always live unto Him!

When the last time you came to the Communion Table, did you really believe that Jesus gave Himself for you and did you know that you feasted upon His flesh and drank His blood by faith? Then, I say, in the name of both honesty and the Truth of God, live as souls should live who have eaten better than angels’ meat and have Christ within them! I try to speak as earnestly as I can, but usually when I reach my home I say to myself, “What are you doing? You did not awaken those people, or yourself

either! You are getting dull and old—you are not half so zealous as you used to be in your younger days.”

I try to stick big pins into myself in a spiritual fashion, to wake myself up, again, for fear I should fall into the same drowsy state as some I know of, whose preaching is little better than articulate snoring. They are sound asleep and as a natural consequence their people are asleep, too. If this Book is true, the most of us are not living as we ought to live! If there is a Heaven, we are not living in the joy which the hope of it ought to inspire! If there is a Hell and some of our own children are going down to it, we do not act towards them as if we believed in their danger! We are acting like monsters and not like men if we suffer our fellow creatures to be lost without lifting a finger for their salvation! Awake! Arise, my Brothers and Sisters!

Oh, Church of God in this place and Church of God everywhere, shake yourself from the bonds of your neck! Arise and sit down on your throne of power, O daughter of Zion! Put on your strength as in the ancient days, for strength shall be yours if you search after the Lord with all your heart! God grant that as a Church we may be thoroughly earnest in seeking for a display of His saving power and He shall have the glory! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEORFE SERMON—Matthew 11.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—429, 503, 549.

TO MY CHURCH AND PEOPLE:  
DEAR FRIENDS—I am hoping and praying that the special services at the Tabernacle may excel all that have gone before. To urge you to the utmost earnestness about them, I have written the short sermon of this week. It would give me great joy to hear, as I feel sure I shall, that in this as in all the other works of the Church, you are abundantly filled with zeal and constancy.

My one concern is lest the Lord’s work should suffer by my absence. I entreat you, do not permit it to be so in any point or degree. The damp and dull weather, which has reached us even here, has somewhat retarded my progress to health and strength, so that I remain a very feeble traveler, but yet I am greatly improved and feel that my mind and spirits are the better for the rest.

To all of you, from the bottom of my heart, I send my sincere love in Christ Jesus. Yours to serve while there remains any life in me, *C.H. SPURGEON,*  
Mentone, February 6, 1879. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2645 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“THE TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE”  
NO. 2645

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DRY, OCTOBER 22, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1882.

**“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Jeremiah 30:7.**

GOD here calls the Jews by the name of Jacob. These were His people in a very special sense, for He had chosen them from among all the nations of the earth and had brought them near Him that they might be His own portion, His inheritance. Yet upon these people He laid many stripes and visited them with sore chastisements. It is true that they were a sinful people, though they were, in many respects, better than other nations who were, for a long while, allowed to go unpunished. Year after year, the heathen prospered in war and had success in other ways—but as for God’s own people, waters of a full cup were wrung out to them. As soon as the Lord had a people, they began to suffer. We learn this very early in their history, for, after Isaac, the child of promise, was born, it was not very long before Ishmael—“he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.”

And, as that persecution began early, it has continued late, for the Apostle adds, “Even so it is now.” There is still an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—and the seed of the woman is made to feel the serpent’s malice so that, what with a chastising God and a biting serpent, the children of God are pretty sure to be often in trouble! And when, by Grace, you see them in their glittering ranks above, and ask, “Who are these which are arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come?” This will be the summary of the answer concerning them all, “These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “The sacramental host of God’s elect,” in its march through the world, may be tracked by its own blood! Read both ancient and modern history and what will you find but an account of the suffering and the triumphs of the people of God? Even to this day we have to cut a lane through the enemy and fight our way to Heaven in a stern hand-to-hand conflict. God has not yet prepared “flowery beds of ease” for any of us, nor shall we be “carried to the skies” in ambulances of luxury. We shall have to fight if we are to reign and we shall have to suffer if we are to ultimately reach the land of perfect blessedness!

This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” even this day, this present life! Thank God it is but a day and will come to an end. But this is not the time of Jacob’s joy. He does have some delights, even here, but his great joy is reserved for the hereafter. This is rather the time in which the sinner rejoices and fattens himself as for the slaughter. But God’s people must expect to find that this is “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

But, dear Friends, the other Truth in our text is equally attested by history—“he shall be saved out of it.” How gloriously God’s people have been saved all along their line of march! Their campfires still show their trail and those campfires have been the burnings of the furnace that God has set up for the trying and purifying of His chosen people. But nowhere have they been destroyed, though everywhere they have been in affliction! They had a very narrow escape from destruction in Haman’s day— the enemy then thought that he would utterly cut off the people of God from the face of the earth. Haman thought that he had managed everything so well that his wicked scheme had to succeed. The king’s mandates had already gone out and on a certain day all the Jews would be put to death. But you know how Esther, at the peril of her life, went into the king’s presence to plead for her nation and, soon, new edicts were sent out and the chosen people put their enemies to death! And they, themselves, were not destroyed.

Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had fixed for Mordecai, for the hated Jew belonged to the seed which cannot be crushed, to the immortal race which can never die out! God’s people may be often trodden down, like the grass of the field, but, as the grass springs up again and even outlive the men who tread upon it, so will it be with God’s people even to the end! This is “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” Christ’s Church shall live and flourish when her persecutors lie in ignominious graves! Herod thought that he could crush the chosen seed, but he was eaten by worms—while the Church of God still lived on. The tyrant was soon swept away and so shall all be who lift their puny hands against the people of the Most High!

It would be a very profitable subject, if one had the time to work it out, to see how true this verse is in relation to the Jewish people and to God’s own elect ones. “It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” But I want at this time, to get at individuals. You know that God’s Truth, in Scripture, is like a crystal. You may take a great mass of it and if you break that crystal into fragments, every little piece will be of the same form, for every division of the crystal is crystallized after the same fashion! In like manner, you can split God’s Truth up so as to apply it to individuals, and then you can further divide it and apply it to each separate incident in the life of every man—and it will still hold good—for the Truth of God is always true and the faithful promise of God is applicable to every part of the Christian’s life.

I am going to speak to persons who are in trouble and I thought I would take up a series of trials as illustrated by the life of Jacob—not so much referring to his descendants, who are here called, Jacob, but speaking concerning Jacob, himself. He was a much-tried man and one reason for that was that he had a great deal in him that had to be driven out. And much of it could not be gotten out of him except with a severe shaking. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was a far grander man in every way. Isaac was of a calm and quiet spirit, but Jacob was naturally a worldly man. He is the father of the Jews, a business man, a scheming man, a man who is determined not to be overreached, but who is, perhaps, more likely to overreach others. Jacob was too much of a man until God broke him down—he certainly was a man of a very distinct type— and he has perpetuated that type in the whole Jewish nation to this day. I sometimes think that the Jews seem rather to have descended from Jacob than from Abraham, though, of course, they have really come from Abraham, through Jacob. I have already reminded you that Jacob was a man who had great trouble. There was a great deal of husk to that corn and, therefore, it needed a good deal of threshing.

I. Now, looking at Jacob’s career in detail, I note that he began his life as an individual apart from the family by a trial which must have been a very heavy one—HE HAD TO LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER. It must have been especially painful to him to go away from his mother, Rebekah, who had had so much of the handling of him, so much of the making of him and, I must add, so much of the spoiling of him. And now, because he has treated his brother Esau unfairly and has robbed him of his blessing, coming before his father with a lie in his right hand, he must leave his home and go among strangers. Possibly I am addressing some who are now undergoing that experience. To leave home for the first time, whatever your age may be, is usually very painful. Some of us have known what it was to lie awake at night, when we had said goodbye to father and mother and were far away from them. Some of you have, perhaps, crossed the sea and left dear ones behind—that first night on board ship, away from all you loved—you sobbed yourself to sleep. These changes must come. We cannot always live in the family nest—we must go out of it and make nests of our own. But when the parting comes, it is often a hard task—not to coarse, rough natures—but then I do not suppose such people are here. Gentle, kind, delicate souls—these are they who most feel the separation from those who are dear to them!

In Jacob’s case there was a bitter ingredient which I hope is absent from yours. The separation came very much as the result of his own fault and his mother’s fault. They must have felt it very keenly when they were caused to part from one another. Their scheming had won the blessing away from Esau, but now they had the shady side of the blessing—and the shady side of a blessing is, for a while, not materially different from a curse. Yet, by-and-by, that very shady side becomes a marvelous blessing to the soul! When Jacob started off alone upon his weary way, he journeyed on till, at night, he lighted upon a certain place and took of the stones of that place for his pillow, for that was “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” But, ah, dear Friends, how sweet was the second part of our text to him! May it be equally precious to you—”but he shall be saved out of it.”

He lies down to sleep and he is saved out of his troubles as soon as he has fallen asleep, for, in his dream, he sees a mystic ladder, the foot of which is on earth, but the top reaches to Heaven—a marvelous vision of that way by which we shall ascend to God—the Lord, Himself, having first come down to us in the Person of His dear Son. It was worth while being away from home and having such lodgings as that—to have such a dream! Jacob did not mind the cold and heavy night dews, for there was a dew from the Lord that refreshed his spirit! It mattered little to him that the beasts of prey might be round about him, for the angels of God were ascending and descending between him and the Throne of the Infinite One! Let it be the same with you, also, dear Friend. If it is with you, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” because you are separated from those you love, now get into all the closer union with your God! Now begin to use that ladder, that wondrous means of communication between your immortal spirit and the immortal God! Through Christ Jesus, look up to your Father who is in Heaven—carry on a sacred commerce between your soul and the heavenly world and seek to be spiritually enriched thereby!

It would be a blessed thing if you were no longer able to rely upon an arm of flesh, that you might be obliged to come and rest upon the unseen arm of God. It shall be a gainful loss to you to have lost your mother’s care, but to have come nearer to the Most High! I grieve, sometimes, when I see how God’s people manage to live a great way off from Him and yet appear to be quite comfortable, and to have all that they could wish. But I am glad when any one of them is thrust right out of all harmful associations and so is drawn nearer to God, for when God says, “Come you out from among them, and be you separate,” if we do not at once obey His command, He has many ways of making us come out and it may be that we have to come out in a fashion that is exceedingly painful. Yet, however trying it is, it matters little if we but get nearer to Him! We may even sing—

*“Nearer, my God, to Thee—  
Nearer to Thee!  
Even though it be a cross  
That raises me,  
Still all my song shall be,  
‘Nearer, my God, to Thee —  
Nearer to Thee!’”*

Dear young Friend, you who are just now all alone, in trouble and have come in here in the hope of receiving some comforting message, I trust that God has meant this part of the sermon to be a word especially for you.

II. Jacob’s next trouble was that HE GOT TO HIS UNCLE LABAN. “Laban”—read his name backwards and it is “Nabal.” There was not a great deal of difference between the two men, for they were both of a churlish disposition. Laban was a hard, grinding taskmaster to Jacob. He cheated him whenever he could, robbed him in all manner of ways, changed his wages when he thought his remuneration was too large, while, by night, the cold devoured the poor shepherd—and by day, the heat was most trying. Yet Laban never had such a faithful servant as his nephew Jacob— and God blessed Laban for Jacob’s sake. I really think that I may say of that period in the Patriarch’s life, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble,” for it is a very hard thing to work for an unthankful master and, after all your trouble and pains, to get no word of gratitude or love. Laban ought to have loved Jacob, for he was both his nephew and his son-in-law. Jacob’s wives were the daughters of Laban and their father ought to have been kindly disposed towards him. But both the father and the sons seem to have treated him rather as an enemy than as a friend and so he had hard times all the while he was with them. Perhaps some of you are saying, “Ah, Sir, you do not know my circumstances! Mine is hard and grinding labor. I am bowed down by it and I seem to have no sympathy whatever, even from those who ought to be kind to me.” Well, dear Friend, Jacob, you see, went that way, and you may be content to endure, for a while, the same lot as that eminent Patriarch. But, truly, it is a bitter grief and I can understand your saying, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” “Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest.”

Now listen to the second half of our text and believe that as it came true to Jacob, it shall also come true to you—“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And he was saved out of it! He might have never left Padanaram if he had not been forced out of it—and it was his duty to get back, as soon as he could, into the promised land—and there live the separated life. The very hardness of the burdens that were put upon him weaned him from the house of Laban and made him willing to bear the hardships of a wandering life—which must have seemed little compared with those which he endured with churlish Laban. My dear tried Friend, God is working out some great end for you through your troubles! It is good for young people to bear a certain amount of burden—not that this excuses those who oppress them and exact more than is right from them, but, “it is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.” I believe that the drinking out of the bitter cup early in life is often followed by a long stretch of peaceful rest, besides teaching us many a useful lesson which, otherwise, we might never have learned!

You would like to have all things arranged according to your own wishes, would you not? And then you would grow up and be like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke! But that is not God’s method. You have to be tamed and trained while you are young—you have to bear the yoke and, oftentimes, you may cry to God because it seems to gall your unwilling shoulders. But then, in later years, you will be of a tender spirit, yourself, and so you will be the more ready and able to sympathize with those who are down-trodden and persecuted. And you will often have to bless God for those early afflictions which taught you wisdom and fitted you to be the helper of others. Be always more earnest to do your duty than to be at ease. Be more concerned to be right than to be happy! Be more determined to act uprightly than to secure the rewards of your work. God will lay them up in store for you and you shall have them in due season. Bear, and forbear, and still bear—remember how the saints of God have often had to endure harsh usage from those who ought to have loved them—and be content to bear the cross which they carried before you.

III. Now I must pass on to notice Jacob’s next trouble. He has got away from Laban and he starts off with his family and his flocks and herds. Now HE REMEMBERS HIS BROTHER ESAU whom he had treated so badly and, behold, Esau is coming to meet him with 400 armed men! Now, if it were “the time of Jacob’s trouble” when he was under Laban’s power, surely this is even worse than any trial that went before, for will not Esau come with his armed men and smite Jacob and destroy the mothers and the children? Is he not full of wrath against him for what he did long ago? And has he not just cause for that wrath?

This is, indeed, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” He sends all that belong to him across the brook and he spends the night in prayer—not sweet and tranquil prayer such as is our privilege to often enjoy, but we read, “There wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.” We generally lay the stress upon the thought that Jacob wrestled with the Angel. No doubt he did, but the Bible does not say so—it says, “There wrestled a Man with him.” There was a great deal in Jacob that needed to come out and this Angel came and wrestled with him in order to get it out! And Jacob’s victory was not won until the Angel had touched the hollow of his thigh so that he should always need to lean upon a staff even till he died. His weakness had been proven and he had been overcome—and then it was that he overcame and became a prevailing prince, having power with God and with men!

But, oh, that was a dark night for Jacob! Try to put yourselves into his position, when, even in his prayers, he was disturbed, “and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day.” His heart, surely, must have been ready to break within him, yet the whole of our text is true of that memorable night, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And was he not? Ah, yes, and the joys of Peniel shall always exceed the sorrow with which the wrestling of Peniel is commenced! When he went, limping upon his thigh, to join his family, his grief was gone and his fear was removed. God had appeared to him, so all would be well, all was safe, all must be right, for God had heard his cry and he had obtained the blessing!

He was delivered out of his trouble, but how strangely it came about! When Esau came, he was full of love. Instead of war being in his heart, sweet words were upon his lips! If he had not altogether forgiven Jacob, yet, at any rate, he was willing to say nothing about the past and he spoke like a true and noble brother! This is a Truth of God which we often forget—that God has absolute power over men’s hearts. You say that somebody is going to betray you—that is more than he can do unless God lets him. Somebody threatens to do a very dreadful thing to you and you feel that you are quite in his power. Yes, but so is that man quite in God’s power—and God can turn him whichever way He likes! You are afraid to meet him, you say. Well, just pluck up your courage and go to him—and you shall, perhaps, find that he is now your friend—the very person that you have looked upon as your worst enemy! This has frequently happened. God, who struck down Saul of Tarsus when he was about to destroy the saints at Damascus, is quite as able to strike down the most violent person when he is about to do mischief to any of His children. Never mind about Esau—be more concerned to give up what the Angel intends to wrestle out of you and to hold Him fast, and say, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” God will speak to Esau and He will take care of you and you shall yet go on your way rejoicing!

IV. Jacob goes on till he gets to Succoth and he is so pleased to be quiet, and at rest, that HE SEEMS TO FORGET HIS GOD, for he builds a house for himself and booths for his cattle, and does not continue to live the wandering life that he should! Therefore God soon sends him a trouble. His sons, in the most brutal manner, destroy the men of Shechem, taking them at unawares and murdering them, so that Jacob’s name was made to stink, as he said, among all the tribes. And any one of those tribes was quite able to come and destroy him—but if they had banded together, they would have swept him and his family off the face of the earth! Jacob is very much afraid concerning this and now, I think, when he is going into the midst of the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land are justly indignant against his sons, we may again say, “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble.’” It is a trouble and no mistake about it. There might be some sentimentalism about his sorrowing on leaving home. There might be some compensation for his hard treatment by Laban. We may suppose that there was too much suspicion of Esau in his third trouble—but now this is a real trial—“I shall be destroyed, I and my house.”

“It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” And, oh, how wonderfully was he saved out of it, for the Lord put a fear on all the people round about! He seemed to say to them, “Touch not My anointed” and, though willing enough to fall upon Jacob, and to slay his wives and children, and take his property, they left them all alone! It is truly marvelous how God can make our enemies to be at peace with us! There are more people than Daniel who have slept in the lions’ den—yes, and found soft pillows on the lions’ manes and slept soundly among them! “My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me,” said Daniel, and often have others of God’s servants felt that they have been delivered in the same way! I remember a poor man who used to preach and who, in a sermon, once gave a description of Daniel in the lions’ den. He said, “I do not think the painters make the lions look as fierce as they really were. In most of the pictures, they look as if they could not possibly have eaten Daniel, they are so meek and mild, as if they had padlocks on their jaws. But they were real lions and hungry lions, too, as was proved by the way in which they ate up Daniel’s enemies.” He said he believed that when Daniel was thrown into the den, they all came rushing towards him to devour him, but an angel flew down from Heaven and said to them, “Hush!” And they all lay as still as possible at the Prophet’s feet.

No doubt it was something like that and, sometimes, when the enemies of God’s people are most infuriated, He seems to say to them, “Hush!” and they cannot touch them. Why did the Romanists not burn Luther? I never could make that out. If I had been the Pope, I think I would have got rid of him someway or other. Yet nobody could touch Luther! They made short work of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, but, even when the princes and prelates had Luther before them at the Diet of Worms, they did not destroy him! It could not be, for God meant that Luther should die in his bed, notwithstanding all the rage of the enemy! Therefore, if it is a time of trouble with us, let us rest and be quiet, for surely we shall be saved out of it.

V. Was this the end of Jacob’s troubles? Oh, dear, no! All his life he must have troubles of one sort or another. HE HAS A DEAR SON WHOM HE FAVORS and he has made a coat of many colors for him, such as young princes wear. This young man is different from all his brothers. He has a gentle spiritual nature. God has spoken to him and worked upon him most graciously. The Lord is evidently with him and his father’s heart goes out to the young dreamer and he dotes upon him. You know the story of how his brothers, after a while, bring Joseph’s coat dipped in sheep blood and hold it up before the poor old father. And they say, “This we have found: know now whether it is your son’s coat or not.” Oh, this— this is “the time of Jacob’s trouble”!

All those other troubles are nothing at all compared with this one which will surely break the old man’s heart! Joseph! Dear Joseph, worth more than all the others, is taken away, “an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces.” Jacob will go to his grave sorrowing because his beloved Joseph is taken away from him. Now shout it to the ends of the earth—“This is the time of Jacob’s trouble!” If any of you have had a favorite child and you have allowed all the tendrils of your heart to entwine themselves about it. And if that child is suddenly taken away, it leaves a mark upon the heart that will never be erased in time. I have known the father, if he has been an ungodly man, become rebellious against God from that time forth—there is a bitterness infused into his unbelief that was never there before. But even a gracious man has gone sorrowfully and sadly all his days after some dear child has been taken away—a child of so much promise—a child who was so gracious and who seemed to be such a help to the father, and likely to lift the family up to a better condition of things. Yet, Joseph is gone, and this is “the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”

And was he not? It took a long time for him to see it, but when he wept on Joseph’s neck and when he saw him as the second ruler over all the land of Egypt—and when Joseph came down to him and brought his two sons, and Jacob said, “I had not thought to see your face: and, lo, God has showed me, also, your seed”—then did he know that God had delivered him out of his trouble and multiplied the blessing exceedingly abundantly above what he asked or even thought!

Now, dear Friends, if this is your case, be satisfied about the dear child whom the Lord has called Home to Himself. “Ah,” you say, “there is no mistake about it. I know that my child is dead.” Yes, but I also know that your child is alive! Come, shall we quarrel over it? You say that he is dead—I say that he lives. God knows that that dear one, taken away in infancy, or taken away as a gracious child, lives! Did you ever notice that passage which says that God gave Job twice as much as he had before? “Yes,” you say, “but He did not give him twice as many children, did He? He gave him exactly the same number again, did He not? Then how did He give him twice as much as he had before?” Why, because those first ones that were dead were still his! You know how Wordsworth puts it, “We are seven.” Though some were gone, yet they were still seven—and Job counted all those that were gone as his—and then, with the others, he did have twice the number in his family than he had before!

So, Beloved, count your dear ones as though they were still with you, and wait patiently till you meet them again. Refrain from undue weeping, for they shall come again from the land of their captivity. Your dead ones shall live again! Mother of mortals, you did well to weep, but your children live, so you are the mother of immortals! Then why do you sorrow? Dry your eyes and bless God that you have another link with Heaven and that you have helped to fill the choirs that, day without night, circle the Throne of God with hallelujahs!

VI. Is Jacob through with his troubles yet? No, no, no! He has got out of one trouble, but he has got into another—  
*“A Christian man is never long at ease—  
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize,”*

which, if it is not good poetry, was written by John Bunyan, and is good sound truth! JACOB’S NEXT TIME OF TROUBLE AROSE THROUGH A FAMINE IN THE LAND. The death of Joseph, as his father thought, seemed a dreadful thing, but a famine of bread that will kill the whole family is a great deal worse trouble! There is nothing to eat, so what will become of them? There is corn in Egypt, however, and the good old man sends his sons down there to buy food. And on the back of that comes another trouble, for when they return home, they say that the lord of the land will not let them have any more corn unless they take Benjamin back with them. But Jacob cannot spare Benjamin and, depend upon it, this is the last ounce that will break the camel’s back! Says the old man, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away? All these things are against me.” This, this has to be “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Surely, he is now in the very depths of it! But Benjamin must go, notwithstanding all that his father may say. Jacob must part with his last idol and God will make us part with our last idols, too. Therefore mind what you set up in your house as idols, for it is written, “The idols He shall utterly abolish.”

That was “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” but the Lord delivered him out of it! You need not that I should stay to tell you how sweetly the Lord was working on Jacob’s behalf all the while. Joseph was in Egypt to keep the whole family alive in the time of famine. Benjamin came back all right and they all went down into Egypt and sojourned there. And just as surely as Jacob was delivered, so shall you be. When the worst comes to the worst, then the best of the best will come. When the whole store of bread seems gone, then shall you find this promise true, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”

VII. Well, that is the end of Jacob’s trouble unless I add what I hardly think I dare call a trouble. JACOB HAD TO GATHER UP HIS FEET IN BED AND DIE. I do not think that it was a trouble to him. The few and evil days of his pilgrimage were now over and he was to meet his fathers, and his fathers’ God. Yet still, it matters not who we are, if we look only at the earthly side of death, it is a trouble to die. No one can go down into the disembodied state without having some sort of fear. The immortal tenant, however badly lodged, still seems to love the house of clay. But whether it was a trouble to Jacob, or not, certainly he was saved out of it. He dies with benedictions on his lips and he falls asleep to awake in Glory and there to sit down with Abraham and Isaac at the feast of everlasting blessedness! It was well with Jacob and it shall be well with you who believe in Jesus! You, also, shall say, “I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord.” And that salvation will come at exactly the right time! You have tarried till the fourscore years are ended. You are getting somewhat weary amidst the toil and infirmities of a body that is inclining to the tomb. Be of good courage! To such as you are—

*“It is not death to die.”*  
If you are in Christ, you shall fall asleep in Him and then you shall be “forever with the Lord.”

But perhaps there is some poor soul here saying, “I have not got any comfort out of the sermon because all my trouble is about my sin. I have not lost a child. I am not suffering through a famine. My great sorrow is concerning my sin, my sin, my sin! It haunts me. It eats like a canker into my spirit. It withers all my joys. It turns my life almost into a Hell.” I know where you are, dear Friend, for I have been that way myself. “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble.” There is no trouble like genuine conviction of sin! Racks, scorpions, death—these are troubles to be laughed at compared with the weight of guilt pressing on the conscience, the sight of an angry God and the fear of the wrath to come! “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” The Lord Jesus Christ has come to save just such as you are! To you He extends His pierced hand. He waits to receive you just as you are. Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him, you lost and ruined! Look and live, for in a look at Him there is life for you! Your trouble is great, but you shall be saved out of it though your sins were more numerous than the stars and each one more weighty than the world! Do but look to Him—take your eyes off yourself and fully gaze on Him who bore your sins in His own body on the Cross!

Do you trust Him? Then you are saved! Your sin is gone—it is buried in His sepulcher. God has forgiven you all your transgressions for Jesus’ sake! Go on your way rejoicing! “This is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 31.  
To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.**

This Psalm was meant to be sung, therefore it was dedicated to the chief musician. Yet it is a Psalm of which at least half is very sorrowful. All our hymns were not meant to be joyous ones. God permits us to take a wide range in our Psalmody and to express the feelings of our heart whatever they may be. You will see here and there the Light of Christ shining on this Psalm. If it does not shine on Him, at any rate He shines on it.

Verse 1 *.*In You, O LORD, do I put my trust. Is that true of you, dear Friends? Never take your trust upon trust, but be quite sure that you trust in God. If it is so, acknowledge it and never be ashamed to say, “In You, O Lord, do I put my trust.”

1-3. Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily: be You my strong rock for an house of defense to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name’s sake lead me, and guide me. See how logical David is with his, “for,” and, “therefore”? It is the very essence of prayer to be able to urge pleas with God and to say to Him, “Do it for this reason,” or, “Therefore, do it for such another reason.” I would that we, all of us, studied more fully this blessed art of pleading with God—bringing forth sound arguments as we approach Him.

4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me: for You are my strength. How sweetly and blessedly he pleads! “‘You are my strength.’ I cannot get out of this net, I am entangled in it, but You can pull me out, for, ‘You are my strength.’”

5. Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth. This is a blessed prayer—a holy resolution which we may use every day in the week all through our lives.

6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. “In Jehovah.” David had no patience with those who trusted in gods of wood and stone. He knew very little, indeed, of that spurious charity which leads some men to speak respectfully even of idolatry! David was “a good hater” and there is something gracious about that when the thing hated is really hateful and something which ought to be hated!

7. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy. David makes the cymbals clash together—“I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy.”  
7. For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities. It is said to be the highest wisdom to know yourself, but, to my mind, it is a much better thing for God to know you! You may know yourself and fall into despair—but if God knows you and you know God, there is abundant room for you to hope in His mercy.  
8. And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room. “You have given me a broad place to live and You have given me abundance to eat there.” So David praises and blesses his God. But now see how the note falls. From the highest point of the scale, he suddenly descends to the very lowest. “We spend our years as a tale that is told”—and such a tale is sometimes very joyful—but sometimes it is full of woe.  
9, 10. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: my eyes are consumed with grief, yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief and my years with sighing. Sighing is better than sinning, any day. Though we may deplore that our life melts away in sighs, it is better that it should go so than that it should be wasted in sins.  
10, 11. My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside fled from me. He was in such a sorry plight that men would not acknowledge him! They were afraid that they should be disgraced by being found in his company! It is a sad condition for a man of God, like David, to be found in—for others to be afraid to be seen speaking to him.  
12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. An old pot, flung on the dunghill, as of no further use.  
13, 14. For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: awhile they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD. Now the strain will mount again! It is faith that tunes the royal singer so that he rises to heights of joy though just now he had sunk so low!  
14, 15. I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hands. He had put his spirit there—“Into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And now he says, “My times are in Your hands.”  
15-19. Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies’ sake. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You. If he was not tasting of it, just then, he blessed God that it was laid up for him, put by in store. 19, 20. Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men! You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. What a blessing that is—to be separated from the noise and strife and the malignant calumny of wicked men! God has a blessed way of keeping His servants away from all such evils.  
21, 22. Blessed be the LORD: for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” The Psalmist was full of doubts and he said, “I am cut off,” but, nevertheless, God heard the prayer of His poor mistrusting servant and brought him out of his distresses!  
23, 24. O love the LORD, all you His saints: for the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1753 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

BLESSED PROMISES FOR DYING OUTCASTS  
NO. 1753

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 2, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.”  
Jeremiah 30:17.**

THE promises of this verse will be exceedingly sweet to those who feel their personal need of them. But those who boast that they are neither sick nor wounded will take no interest in this comfortable promise. Those who are charmed with themselves will see no charm in the beloved Physician. I have heard of certain hungry travelers, lost in the wilderness, who came upon a bag which they longingly hoped might yield them a seasonable supply of food. They were near to death’s door by starvation and eagerly opened the bag, but, alas, it contained nothing but pearls—which they poured out contemptuously upon the desert sand as things of no use to them! Even so, when a man is hungry and thirsting after the things of this life and all his thoughts are taken up with carnal appetites, carnal sorrows and carnal joys, he will reject as worthless the priceless promises of God, for he considers that they are of no immediate use to him.

Let his hunger be of another sort; let his heart hanker after unsearchable riches; let his soul pine for eternal love and then his are views of things entirely changed—and to buy the pearl of great price he would gladly sell all that he has! Oh, you that are sick at heart, here is a word for you from the God of all Grace! Jehovah Rophi, Himself, says, “I will restore health unto you.” Oh, you that have felt the shafts of God pierce your inmost souls, here is a word from Him who heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds—“I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord.” Here is music for your ears, honey for your mouth, comfort for your heart!

But if you feel you have no sickness and no wound, no weakness and no spiritual need, then the Words of sacred consolation will pass over your ears as a meaningless sound, having no voice for you. Neither shall we wonder at this, for the whole have no need of a physician! Only they that are sick! Healthy men care not to hear of medicines and remedies, for they feel no need of them. This thins my audience, but improves it, for while it drives away the conceited, it draws the needy to a more careful listening!

Our text describes a serious plight, mentions a special interference and records a singular reason for that interference. When we have spoken upon each of these, we shall close by giving you suitable advice. May the Spirit of God bless the discourse.

I. First, then, taken in connection with the verses which precede it, our text describes a class of men and women who are in A SERIOUS PLIGHT. These people suffer under two evils. First, they are sick through sin, for they need to have their health restored. And, secondly, they are wounded for their sin by the chastisements of the Lord, so that there is necessity for their wounds to be healed. They are afflicted with the distemper of evil and, also, by dismal disquietude of conscience. They have broken God’s Commandments and now their own bones are broken. They have grieved their God and their God is grieving them.

Let us carefully look at the first part of their sad condition—they are sick with sin and that disease is one which, according to the 5th and 6th verses, brings great pain and trouble into men’s minds when they come to their senses and know their condition before God. At first, iniquity numbs the conscience, and its tendency is to sear it as with a hot iron. It may be compared to a stroke of paralysis, which, when it falls upon a man’s body, takes away from him all pain and makes him as one dead in the parts which it affects. Sin paralyzes the consciences of the ungodly. At first they do not know it to be an exceedingly great evil. They trifle with it—it is a serpent whose very look is poisonous and yet they sport with it as though it were a bird! It is a deadly disease, causing the soul to be full of leprosy and yet men will exhibit the marks of it as though they were the spots of God’s children.

But after a while, when the conscience is awakened by judgments, or awakened by God’s Word, then this disease ceases to stupefy and becomes the source of intolerable pain. Read these Words—“For thus says the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask you, now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?” The fiercest form of bodily pain is here selected as the type of the anguish caused by strong conviction of sin. Believe me, there can be nothing in the world so terrible as to feel sin without feeling pardon—to know yourself to be guilty and not to know how to get the guilt removed!

Conviction without faith is an earthly Hell! Brothers and Sisters, you have, many of you, felt it, and you know that death itself, if there were no hereafter, would be preferable to life under the pressure of guilt. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Sin is a disease of the spirit which embitters the central fountain and wellspring of our life till gall and wormwood flavor all things. Sin felt and known is a terrible killjoy—as the hot wind of the desert smites the caravan with death and as the sirocco withers every herb of the field, so does a sense of sin dry up peace, blast hope and utterly kill delight! If those who hear me are oppressed with the disorder of sin, they will rejoice greatly as they dwell upon the Words of our text, “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”  
This disease, moreover, is not only exceedingly painful when the conscience is smarting, but it is altogether incurable, so far as any human ill is concerned. We are told in the 12th verse, “Thus says the Lord, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous.” It would be much easier to heal a man’s body of leprosy than to heal a man’s soul of sin. It is a disease which takes such fast hold upon the nature and so entirely impregnates the mind with a deadly virus, that it abides in the very essence of manhood and can only be removed by a miracle. It is far more possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than for a man who is accustomed to do evil, to learn to do well—especially to love to do well and find pleasure in it. If this were a matter of custom, or practice, it might be fought with and overcome, but inasmuch as it is a matter of nature and the whole head is sick—and the whole heart faint with it—no human power can possibly effect a cure.

Some have wept over sin, but tears are a poor lotion for a disease which penetrates to the core of the heart. Others have shut themselves up alone and retired as hermits to escape from evil by solitude—but they have found no secret place which evil could not enter! Where shall we flee from the presence of sin? When it has once laid hold upon our nature, if we take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, our depravity will still be with us. If we cover ourselves with multiplied midnights, sin will only be the more completely in its element. Where can we fly and what can we do to escape from this terrible force, this everpresent mischief? This poison has penetrated all our nature, so that we must confess—

*“It lies not in a single part,  
But throughout my frame is spread!  
A burning fever in my heart,  
A palsy in my head.”*

Neither body, soul, nor spirit is free from its taint. At all hours it is our curse and plague. Over all places it casts its defiling influence. In all duties it injures and hinders us. To those who know this, there is a music sweeter than wedding bells in these words—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” The incurable shall be cured! The insatiable malady shall be stopped!

Further on we are told that this disease is one for which there is neither surgeon nor medicine—“There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you.” What a disease this must be for which there is no physician! The most dire forms of human disease have found, each one, its specialist who has at least attempted to perform a cure—but here is a sickness for which there is no physician! Bad men do not pretend to heal the disease of sin. They do not consider it to be a disease and they care not to make men holy. Good men are very far from thinking that they can conquer sin in others, for they cannot even overcome it in themselves and, therefore, they never set up to be physicians in such a case as this. No human hand can bind up this wound! No earthly skill can touch this deeply seated complaint! It is past all mortal surgery. Yes, and the Prophet adds, “There is no healing medicine”—none has ever been known!

The question is often asked, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” The answer to that question is, No, there is no balm in Gilead; there never was! Balms for soul-mischiefs do not grow in the fields of Gilead, no, nor on Carmel and Sharon. Physicians of sin-sick souls are not to be found beneath the skies! The other question proves it—“Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?” If there were balms and physicians for her disease, she would have been healed long ago! But neither salve nor surgeon can be found among the sons of men. Search through all the lore of the ancients and you shall discover no remedy for sin! Examine all the inventions of the moderns and you shall light upon no medicine for the love of evil!

Nothing can touch it but one thing, and that is not of earth. The Lord from Heaven, upon the Cross, bled a balm that can cure this wound and by His death He was the death of this disease! But apart from Him no one can bind up our wounds, or mollify them with ointment. He is the one and only Good Samaritan for the spiritually bruised! He, alone, has wine and oil suitable for our wounds! Are my Hearers brought to feel this? Are there any here who have not yet discovered God’s way of salvation and still are well aware that they have none of their own? I am thankful you are brought so far! May it not be long before you go much further and find the Lord Jesus able to heal you of every disease. You are forever lost unless you go to Him, for your sickness is unto death! Your wound is breeding corruption! No one can give you health for your sickness, or healing for your wound but the Lord Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost—

*“When wounded sore the stricken soul  
Lies bleeding and unbound.  
One only hand, a pierced hand,  
Can salve the sinner’s wound.”*

This disease is exceedingly dangerous because it impregnates itself into the heart and takes up its abode there. If apparently it is, for a time, driven out, it returns when we least expect it. Like the tree which is cut down, it will sprout and bud, again, at the scent of water. It annoys us in every way—it hinders our aspirations—for how to perform that which we would, we find not. It robs us of comfort and makes us groan, being burdened. It enters into our holiest things, chills our prayers, freezes our praise and hampers our usefulness. It is evil, only evil, and that continually! How gracious is it on God’s part to pity a creature infected with this vile distemper! How good of Him to regard our iniquity rather as a sickness to be healed than as a crime to be punished!

I told you of a double mischief in this plight and the second mischief is that this person has been wounded for his sin. His wounds are of no common sort, for we are told in the 14th verse that God Himself has wounded him. The Lord says, “I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased.” God, in infinite mercy, determines to make the sinner see and feel the evil consequences of his sin. And in doing this He makes deep wounds, such as an enemy would give who felt no pity, but only wished to cause pain. The Lord knows that in this work, pity is of no avail and, therefore, He strikes home and cuts deep. He does not play with consciences, but His chastisement is so severe that men think Him cruel.

There is such a thing as cruel kindness and the opposite to it is a loving cruelty, a gracious severity! When the Lord brings sin to remembrance and makes the soul see what an evil it has committed in transgressing against God, then the wound bleeds and the heart breaks. You could not tell the blows of our greatest Friend from those of our worst enemy if you only judged by present feeling. Under the Lord’s hands, the soul is well near driven to despair. Vain hopes are dashed in pieces like potsherds! False lights are quenched in gloom and joys are ground to powder! It is in love that the Lord thus judges us and chastens us that we should not be condemned with the world. The smart is sharp, but salutary. The Lord wounds that He may heal—He kills that He may make alive. His storms wreck us upon the Rock of Salvation and His tempests drive us into the fair havens of lowly faith.

Happy are the men who are thus made unhappy! But for the present they know this not and, therefore, they need the promise, “I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord.” The blows are not only on the conscience, for when God is in earnest to make men flee from their sins, He will smite them anywhere and everywhere. He takes away the delight of their eyes with a stroke—the child, the husband, the wife, or the friend is laid low— for the Lord will fill our houses with mourning sooner than leave us in carnal security! He takes away the silver and the gold, for He will make us beggars sooner than leave us to worship the idols of the world. The oil vat is burst and the barn is burned, for He will not permit us to bury our souls in earthly things. He brings the body into sickness and the mind into distress. Health departs and the robust worker is stretched upon a sick bed—he groans and moans under the hand of God.

God is, in all this, smiting most cruelly according to the shortsighted judgment of men—but in very truth He is tender and gracious—and is working out the eternal good of the sufferers. Like the surgeon uses a sharp knife and cuts far down into the flesh when he would eradicate some deadly ulcer, even so does the Lord, in true severity, wound the heart until He gets at the root of our self-love. Surely, a man is in a wretched plight when he is diseased with sin and then bruised by Divine chastisement! But, it may be he adds to this, wounds inflicted by himself, for falls into sin are falls that break bones. Many a man will have to go limping to his grave because of his transgressions. Doubtless David did— he never recovered what he lost when he sinned with Bathsheba.

Much pain comes of broken bones, especially when you have broken them, yourself, through your own folly. When you cannot trace an affliction to second causes, nor look upon it as an affliction from God—when you hear Conscience whisper, “You have procured this unto yourself”— then the wormwood is mixed with gall and the suffering knows no solace. If you are poor because you have squandered your substance—if you are sick because you have indulged your appetites or passions—who can give you a word of cheer? If you have lost godly friends whom you did once despise. If you are by sickness, prevented from going up to the house of the Lord which was formerly a weariness to you, is there not a special sharpness in your grief?

Now, put these three things together—bones broken through your own sin; God dealing with you in the way of chastisement—and sin felt in the conscience like a grievous disease—and I think I did not say too much when I described the soul as in a serious plight! God help the man who is in such a case, for none else can. The comfort is that the Lord Jesus does help such, for so His gracious promise runs, “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” May the Holy Spirit bless this first head to many of you!

II. Our second consideration fitly falls under the title of A SPECIAL INTERFERENCE. The poor creature is in desperate straits, but the God of pitying Love comes in and I beg you to notice the result. This interference is, first of all, Divine. “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” Only the Infinite Jehovah can speak with that grand Ego and say, “I will,” and again, “I will.” No human physician who was worthy of the name would speak thus. He would humbly say, “I will attempt to give you health; I will endeavor to heal your wounds.” But the Lord speaks with the positiveness of Omnipotence, for He has the power to make good His Words.

All others fail, but the Lord will do it. You can not heal yourself, but the Lord will heal you. And who is this great “I” that speaks so exceedingly bold? It is none other than He that made the heavens and the earth and sustains all things by the power of His hands! It is the “I AM,” the everlasting Jehovah whose Word has boundless power in it. He appears in the moment of man’s extremity and when there is no helper—His own arm brings salvation. Blessed be the Lord who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases! Note that because this interference is Divine, it is effectual! The Lord effectually heals all those on whom He lays His hands. How could it be otherwise? What can baffle the Lord? Can anything perplex Infinite Wisdom? Is anything difficult for Almighty Power?

“If it is marvelous in your eyes, should it also be marvelous in My eyes? says the Lord of Hosts.” He speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast! Therefore, when God says, “I will restore health unto you,” health will visit the wretch who lies at Death’s door! When He says, “I will heal you of your wounds,” the deep cuts and gashes are closed up at once! Glory be to the name of the Beloved Physician! Poor, troubled Heart, where are you this morning? Do you say, “Nobody can cure me”? You say truly but you can make one exception and that exception is your God! I tell you He can heal you now, so that the bones which He has broken shall rejoice! He can take away this disease of yours and give you back wholeness as though your flesh were the flesh of a little child! And you shall be clean—only have faith in Him. He that made you can make you anew!

Do you believe this? Observe that this interposition performs a work which is most complete, for it meets the two-fold mischief. “I will restore health unto you”—that is a great matter. When a man grows healthy, he can bear a wound or two without being too much overburdened. But God does nothing by halves, for having restored health, He then adds, “I will heal you of your wounds.” He will heal both disease and wounds! There is no condition into which the heart can sink but what the Lord is equal to the raising of it from the depths. If you are on the borders of Hades, yet as long as you have not passed the iron gates of Death, your salvation is possible with God! Yes, simple and sure with God if you will but trust in His well-beloved Son! What a mercy it is that the Redeemer does not half save us and leave us to finish the work!

He does not commence and do a part of the cure and then say, “I must leave Nature to work out the rest.” No, the cure is absolutely complete—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” Oh, sick and wounded one, go just as you are and throw yourself at Jesus’ feet and say to Him, “Keep Your promise, Lord! I have come with Your Word in my mouth and in my heart. Be as good as Your own declaration and restore health to me! And heal me of my wounds.” Notice, too, how sovereignly free this promise is. It does not say, “I will restore health unto you if—.” No, there is no, “if,” and there is no mention of a fee! Here is healing for nothing! Jesus comes to give us health without money and without price, without pence or penance, without labor or merit!

I admire, for my part, the splendid, unconditional character of this promise made by Jehovah to His Covenant people. Its tenor is, “I will.” There is no sort of condition or demand. “Perhaps” is banished—it is not so much as hinted at! Come, poor guilty Soul, you who have no claim on God, come and plead the Divine, “I will”! You can not have a better handhold of the Covenant Angel in wrestling with Him! God’s promise is an unconquerable plea—to use it well will put you among the invincibles. Come then, I pray you, and just say, “Lord, it is so written in Your Word. Therefore, write it, I pray You, on the page of my experience.” Notice that although it is thus free and unconditional, yet it is now a matter of Covenant certainty, for God has made the promise and He cannot turn from it.

To every guilty sinner conscious of his guilt, who will come and confess it before God, this promise is made today, “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.” To you, dear fellow sinners, as much as unto Judah and Israel of old, is this promise sent—if you will bring your sorrow and your sin before the eyes of the all-merciful Father—and plead the precious blood of Christ. No sick one shall be shut out from this hospital of love. If, like Job, the sinner is covered with sores from head to foot and if he only feels at home when he sits on a dunghill and begins to scrape himself with a potsherd, yet the Lord says, “I will heal you”!

If your sins have made you loathsome to yourself till you cry out with one of old, “My wounds stink and are corrupt,” still the Lord Jesus is able to save you—no, He promises to save you! Grasp the promise by the hand of faith and you shall be made whole! All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men—yes, and all tendencies to sin and all taint of iniquity shall be removed from men if they will trust the power and promise of the faithful Lord! Sinner, His touch can make you clean at once! Trust that touch, I say, and the miracle shall be worked!

III. But now I come to a third point which is this—A SINGULAR REASON. “I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.” God never finds a reason for mercy in the sinner’s supposed goodness. He looked upon this sick one and He could not find a redeeming feature of beauty by which the blessing might be won. Therefore He did not look at the sinner at all, except to pity him. Is it not a singular thing that the Lord will sooner find a reason for mercy in the lying mouths of the wicked than He will attempt to find it in the supposed righteousness of those who count themselves righteous? He says not, “Because you were holy,” or, “Because you had good desires,” but, “Because they called you an outcast”!

Who were they? Why, the jeerers, mockers and blasphemers! The Lord actually transforms the venom of asps which was under the tongues of the malicious into a reason for His mercy! This clearly shows how God hates the very notion of man’s merit—but it also shows that He will find a reason for mercy somewhere! They called poor Zion, when God seemed to have given up on her, “an outcast.” They said, “Nobody goes to Jerusalem—there was a temple there once, but it is a wretched heap! Princes once dwelt there, but now the inhabitants of Jerusalem are a set of beggars—no man cares to mix with them—they are the world’s castaways.”

This awakened the Lord’s pity. “Oh,” He said, “has it come to this? Have they dared to call My Beloved, ‘an outcast,’ and say that no man seeks after her? Then I will seek her, and heal her, and restore her, for I cannot endure such taunts.” Now, if there is a poor sinner in the world upon whom other sinners, who are just as bad in their heart, begin to vent their scorn and say, “She is an outcast,” then the God of Mercy seems to say, “Who are you that you should talk like this? You are as vile, yourselves, and yet you dare to look down upon this poor, selected one, as if she were so much worse than you? Therefore I will save that despised one and will have mercy upon the rejected.” God’s tastes and man’s differ very much. Whom man despises, God delights in—and whom man delights in, God despises.

It often happens that when a transgressor has been put out of the synagogue, Jesus finds him directly. When certain offenders happen to transgress in a particular way, which particular way is observed and denounced by the bulk of ungodly people and when. like so many hounds. they unite to hunt the wretched being to death, the Lord Jehovah interposes to save, as if He would say, “Why do you do this, you hypocrites? Why do you denounce those whose sins are no viler than your own?” I believe the Lord Jesus often stands as He did with the woman taken in adultery, and cries, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” Still, He convicts men in their consciences and in sweetness of mercy turns to the poor, condemned one, and says, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

Where are you, poor hunted Sinner? You are somewhere or other in the crowd, I know. They told you yesterday that they would never associate with you again. You do not deny your wickedness—still, it is not for your fellow sinners to be hard with you, for they are not your judges. By faith take this promise to yourself—“I will restore health unto you because they called you an outcast.” You may get a good deal out of it if you have but faith to do so! Now that the world has cast you out, the Church shall take you in! Now that the devil seems tired of you, Christ shall begin with you! Now that the door is shut against you by those who once delighted in you, Christ’s door is open to receive you! “Because they called you an outcast,” He calls you to approach Him!

But this is not the full meaning of the text. I think it means that God’s jealousy is awakened against those who despise His people and speak ill of them. Whatever Zion might be, it was still the palace of God. However guilty Jerusalem might have become, it was still the Holy City, the dwelling place of the great King. The Lord, for a while, when He was very angry with Jerusalem on account of its great iniquity, gave it over to the destroyer and it was laid waste and burned with fire. But when He heard the heathen everywhere saying, “As for those people, they are outcasts, and as for that city, no man seeks after it”—then the Lord said to Himself, “But they are My people and I will not have them called outcasts. And this is My city and I will not have it said that no man seeks after it. Her name shall be called Hephzibah and her land Beulah, for the Lord delights in her.”

His love burned like fire and kindled into a flame of jealousy. And He said, “I will restore health to her, and shut the mouths of her adversaries.” It is one thing for a father to chasten his boy, but if, when he is out in the streets, a stranger begins to kick him, his father declares that it shall not be. He awakens himself to defend his child, the same child that just now he smote so heavily! A man might complain of his wife if she has vexed him, but I suppose the quickest way to put him in good temper with her would be for somebody else to find fault with her! “What business is that of yours?” he asks. “I will not have my wife abused—no man shall speak against her in my presence.” That is a fair parallel to the case of our God. He will chasten His people in measure, but the moment that their enemies call them outcasts, He turns His anger another way and releases His people!

Oh, how blessedly does good come out of evil! How graciously He causes the wrath of man to praise Him! He restores health to Zion and heals her wounds because she is called an outcast. I always have great hope for the entire Church of Christ when the ungodly begin to rail and revile. They say, “Christianity has lost its power! The Church is an old effete institution! No people of culture and intelligence keep to the old Book and the old faith. The religion of Jesus is a by-word and a proverb among learned men.” And then I am confident that God will return to His Church and magnify His truth! As surely as He lives, He will give us bright days and glorious days because they call His true Church an outcast, whom no man seeks after. I like to read in man’s black book, for man’s reviling will lead to the speedier fulfillment of God’s glorious promises—

*“Let Zion’s foes be filled with shame—  
Her sons are blessed of God!  
Though scoffers now despise their name,  
The Lord shall break their rod.  
Oh, would our God to Zion turn,  
God with salvation clad,  
Then Judah’s harps should music learn,  
And Israel be glad.”*

Appropriate the text personally, any of you who have been made to feel that you are outcasts. One said to me the other day, talking of her sin and of her repentance, “Yet, Sir, I am an outcast.” That word pierced my heart like a dagger. I said, “Yes, but the Church of Christ was made on purpose to be a home for outcasts—here is a new household for you, new Brothers and Sisters for you, a new future for you—for now you are one of the solitary ones whom the Lord will set in families.” Some of us were never called outcasts by other people, but we thought ourselves such. I once felt like Cain, as if God had set a mark upon me, never to bless me. I felt like an outlaw, condemned and cast away. But when I reached that point, the Lord’s mercy revealed itself to me! He seemed to say, “Because you have called yourself an outcast, therefore will I restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”

I should like to say a word that would be comforting to poor hearts that are greatly downtrodden. I do not feel able to preach at all, for I am weak and weary. But I always find, when I am weak, the Lord says something by me which is just the thing needed by some poor devil-hunted soul that cannot find rest. I think the Lord puts the trumpet out of order on purpose to draw from it a different note from what it gives when it is in proper condition—a note that may precisely suit some weary ears that could not listen to any other sound. May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so now!

IV. I am going to finish, in the fourth place, by giving A LITTLE SUITABLE ADVICE. I will suppose that I have those before me who have felt their disease and their wound and have been healed by the God of Mercy. I would recommend them to attend to certain matters. The first thing is take care that you live very near your Physician. I notice that patients come up from the country, when they are suffering with serious complaints, and they take lodgings near a medical man who is in high esteem for such cases as theirs. They leave the comforts of home and let their business go because life is precious—and they need a helper close at hand. No one blames them for this. In fact, we count them wise. Let us learn wisdom from their example.

Now, the Lord has healed your wound and restored health to you, therefore abide in Him. Never leave Him, nor live far away from Him, for this old disease of yours may break out, all of a sudden, and it will be well to have the Healer close at hand. It will be best to constantly entertain Him beneath your roof and within your heart, for His Presence is the wellspring of health to the soul. Abide perpetually with Christ and then the sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night! Dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, there shall be no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. This disease of sin may cause eruptions when we least expect then—when we suppose that the evil leaven will work no more, it may suddenly gather force and the whole body of our nature will be in a ferment with iniquity. The danger is near. Abide, therefore, near your Security. Live with Him who renews your youth like the eagle’s and restores your soul!

I recommend you often put yourself under His searching examination. Go to this great Physician and ask Him to look into your hidden parts—to search you and try you—and see what wicked way may be in you, that He may lead you in the way everlasting. A man may have a deadly disease upon him and scarcely be aware of it because no skilled person has looked upon him and observed his symptoms! And in spiritual things this is a common mischief to which multitudes fall prey! Invite, therefore, the eyes of the Lord Jesus, for in our most honest searches we miss much and we are naturally prejudiced in our own favor, so that we are pretty sure to give a verdict on our own side—and this may lead to final and fatal self-delusion! If we entrust the search to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, we shall not be deceived! I recommend to you, from personal experience, to consult with this Doctor every day.

It is a wise thing, before you go downstairs into the world’s tainted atmosphere, to take a drink of His Elexir Vitae in the form of renewed faith in Him. I am sure, at night, it is an admirable thing to purge the soul of all the perilous stuff which has accumulated through the day by full confession and renewed confidence. Lay bare your case before Him! Conceal nothing. Beg Him to deal with you according to His knowledge of your case. Make a clean breast that Christ may make a sure cure. Conceal no symptom, however threatening, but tell Him the truth. He cannot be deceived—do not attempt it—but tell every secret thing before His allsurveying gaze. Entreat Him to search both thoughts and affections, designs and motives. The evil may gather in secret places unless His discerning eyes shall detect the growing danger and prevent it by immediate action.

Then I very strongly recommend you always to obey the prescriptions of the great Healer. “Whatever He says unto you, do it.” Do not follow a part of His orders and neglect the rest. The Lord Jesus must be received as a whole, or not at all. Say not, “This is non-essential,” for such a speech is flat rebellion! I do not believe in any Words of our Lord being nonessential. They may not be essential to our salvation, but every Word of Christ is essential to our spiritual health! Neither can we disregard the least of His precepts without suffering loss through our disobedience. Be very careful that you follow the Lamb wherever He goes—no other kind of walking is safe in such a world as this. Do what He bids you, as He bids you and it shall be well with you.

Take care, also, to exercise great confidence in this Physician. Rely upon Him without stint or question. Your cure is working wondrously when you trust in Jesus heartily. Never doubt the Savior’s power to make you perfectly whole. Our Lord can never be baffled—though all diseases should meet in one person, He would overcome them all! Stick to this with unyielding assurance. Let not the devil force you to doubt the boundless power of your Lord. When our Lord Jesus set up to be Savior, He understood the work upon which He entered. His is no apprenticed hand. He has never had a failure! Never did a soul trust Him for salvation and remain unsaved—and you shall not be the first to defeat His skill! Trust Him with all your heart. There is no cause to doubt. Distrust is what you have to fear—faith is your strength.

When you are healed, as I trust you are, already, speak well of your Benefactor. Make a point of going round to your neighbors, if you find them sick, and telling them how you have been healed! Thus will you make to your Lord a name of honor and renown. Tell all men what the Lord has done for you. I know you can tell them that story though you are no orator. When you were restored from sickness the other day, you were quite able to inform your friends as to that new medicine which acted like a charm—and you found a tongue to speak well of your doctor—and I am sure you have ability enough to declare the wonderful works of the Lord in your case.

“Oh, but I could not embellish the tale!” Do not attempt to embellish it, for that would only spoil it! Tell the story as simply as possible. I think it is of Mr. Cecil that I have read the following incident. A friend came from some distance to inform him of a medicine which was to relieve him of his disorder. This friend told him all about it and, having done so, entered into conversation upon the current matters of the day. The result was that Mr. Cecil was greatly interested in the talk and when his friend was gone, he quite forgot every ingredient of the wonderful medicine. Beware of allowing the many things to drive the one thing necessary out of your friend’s mind! When we preach fine sermons our hearers say, “That was prettily put.” They do not so much notice what we taught as how we taught it—and this is a great evil! Even so, if you go and talk about your salvation to your neighbor and narrate it eloquently, she will say, “Mrs. So-and-So has been here and told me about her conversion in such beautiful language! I do not know that I ever heard such elegant sentences. It was most delightful to hear her.” What did she say? “I do not know what she said, but it was very beautiful.”

Thus many a sermon or Sunday school address is overlaid and buried under its own robes! Pity that those we seek to bless should be more taken up with our pretty words than with our adorable Master! I hope I have not, this morning, fallen into the evil which I lament. Lest I should have done so in any measure I would make my text, my banner, and display it again. The Lord has said, “I will restore health unto you, and heal you of your wounds.” I believed that Word of God when I was sick and wounded and, “the Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.”

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WHO IS THIS?  
NO. 1673

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For who is this that engaged His heart to  
approach unto Me? says the Lord.”  
Jeremiah 30:21.**

I MENTIONED in the reading that there is a very remarkable change of tone in the Book of Jeremiah, at the 30th chapter. You read on through the 29 chapters and you hear nothing but “a weeping and wailing,” while the Prophet stands before you, girt with sackcloth, bidding Israel, “lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.” When you come to the middle of the 30th chapter, all is changed— you have left the dungeon for the pleasant meads and you hear “thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry.” Here flowers of promise glorify the fields and birds of praise sweeten the air with music. The people are first made to tremble and fear on account of sin and all faces are turned into paleness—and then the Lord declares His immeasurable Grace, saying, “I am with you to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you.”

The condition of the sinful people is brought home to them and the nation is solemnly told—“Your bruise is incurable and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up: you have no healing medicines. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable, for the multitude of your iniquity—because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you.” And then man’s extremity of misery becomes God’s opportunity of mercy! When and where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound, and the Lord displays His wonders of love. He graciously declares—“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”

The reason for the change is not difficult to find. The Prophet is led to speak of Covenant promises, such as that in the 22nd verse, “You shall be My people, and I will be your God.” No wonder that Jeremiah’s strain grew more cheerful and jubilant! Was there ever such a box of perfume as the Covenant? Was there ever such a harp of golden strings, all tuned to the music of consolation, as the Covenant? Inspired by this subject, he exclaims in the next chapter—“For thus says the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel.”

Moreover, he introduces to us that glorious Messenger of the Covenant whom we delight in. He speaks of the Messiah, who is the Glorious One, who has engaged His heart to approach unto God and, as when the sun rises, darkness flees, so when the Savior appears, his sorrows vanish and Jeremiah becomes as eloquent with joy as Isaiah himself! Think no more of Jeremiah as exclusively the weeping Prophet, for the flashes of his delight make the night of his sorrow brilliant with an aurora of heavenly brilliance! The answer to the question of our text is the reason why Jeremiah put away his dust and ashes and girt himself with beauteous array.

God had, for a while, on account of their great sin, put away His people and wounded them with the chastisement of a cruel one for the multitude of their iniquities. They could not walk with Him, for they were not agreed with Him. He could not accept their sacrifices, for they were polluted. He could not listen to their prayers, for they were hypocritical. He could not dwell with them, for they were proud-hearted and rebellious. So Zion came to be called an outcast whom no man seeks after. God, Himself, seemed to have given her a bill of divorce and to have put her away—but it only seemed that way.

In Jehovah’s heart of hearts He was still bound to His people whom He loved with an everlasting love. He could not cast away the seed of Abraham, His friend, and His heart yearned towards the people whom He had loved of old and borne with in great long-suffering. He had put them under a cloud because of their sin, yet He did earnestly remember them, still, for He bears witness, saying, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.” The Lord loathed the distance which separated His people from Him and He longed to see them approach Him that He might comfort them and satiate their souls with His goodness. How was this to be done? This was the problem of that age, as it is the problem of all ages!

How can guilty man return unto the Holy God? How can there be peace and amity, love and concord between the Judge of all the earth and His revolting and polluted creature, man? It was necessary that one should arise who would approach God on the behalf of the people, so that God might be well pleased with them for his righteousness’ sake. But where was he to be found? Someone must come to God and, by his coming, make a way through which those whom he represented might have access. But where was this representative to be found? Paradise was lost—who was he by whom it could be regained? The question was asked and in man’s ears it seemed to be asked in vain, for it is written, “There is none to plead your cause; all your lovers have forsaken you.” “Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord.”

One was needed to bridge the chasm which divided man from God. Who could do it? God, Himself, asked the question because He had, Himself, found the Person and would have us see Him and understand His glorious Character. My text comes from Jehovah’s own lip—“Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord.” He sets the Mediator before us and asks, “Who is this?” We are sure that the Lord does not need to ask questions of us that He may gain information from us. “Known unto God are all His works,” and much more must He be known by whom His most grand work is accomplished! Speaking in the name of Wisdom, our glorious Mediator says of the Lord, “I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.”  
So that the Lord only asks the question for our good, to set us thinking. This enquiry is fitly the sinner’s question, when, trembling and convinced of sin and led to seek his God, he needs an Interposer, One of a thousand, who can put His hand upon the offender and the Offended and reconcile the rebel to his Lord. Therefore, in love the Lord takes up the sinner’s question and answers it by Another. Behold a Daysman of Jehovah’s own providing, who can lay His hands upon both—look at Him and answer, “Who is He?” The enquiry is made, I think, with three great designs—upon which I shall speak as I am enabled of the Spirit of God.

First, to direct attention to this glorious Person—“Who is this?” Secondly, to excite admiration of His wondrous work “that engaged His heart to approach unto Me, says the Lord.” And then, thirdly, to awaken our interest in the result of this marvelous approach unto God—for by it we are permitted and enabled to approach unto the Lord, ourselves, and we become His people and He confesses Himself to be our God. O for the Holy Spirit’s own teaching, that I may speak aright to you upon this transcendent subject!

I. The question of our text is asked TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO THIS GLORIOUS PERSON. “Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord.” We read the chapter and if you have read it attentively, or will do so, you will learn that the Person who must draw near to God must be one of ourselves. “Their nobles,” or their Glorious One, “shall be of themselves, and their Governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me.” It is clear that a fit representative for men must be, himself, a man. It would not have been seemly that Adam, the representative of our race, should have been an angel—it was natural that he should be a man. In the same way, as man blocked up the road of communion with God, it was fitting that a man should make a new road and reestablish Divine communion.

In Adam we transgressed and died to God—in another Adam must we be restored. If an angel were capable in all other respects of drawing near to God, yet it is clear that he could not do it on man’s behalf, for an angel can only represent angels. Each order of beings must be represented by its own kind. Our Lord, as Man, took not up angels, for He was not made in their nature, but He took up the seed of Abraham because He had assumed their nature. It needed a man, perfect in his manhood, to head us up and stand as our federal head and representative, or otherwise we could not be restored by him.

Now, then, Brothers and Sisters, where is this man to be found? “Who is this?” If he is to come of ourselves, where is he? Not among this assemblage—nor if all the myriads that dwell on the face of the earth could be gathered together would there be found one who could undertake this enterprise—“For all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God.” We have, none of us, that perfection which is required for such a work! How shall a sinner atone for sinners? He cannot make atonement for his own sin! He cannot render unto God for himself and on his own account the righteousness which Justice demands of him! How, then, can he have anything to spare for his fellow men? The best of men are, each one, in the condition of the wise virgins who, when the foolish virgins said, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out,” replied, “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go you rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.”

If the whole roll of history is searched, from Adam’s fall to this moment, there is not one mere man to be found who could represent the race and make an approach for them to God on the ground of personal perfection! This is God’s own verdict—“All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God.” The Lord looked from Heaven to see if there were any among the children of men that had not transgressed, but He found none, for, “they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one.” Nor is it merit, alone, that is needed, for he that would approach unto the Lord as mediator must be prepared with strength to suffer. Who can sustain the load of human sin? Who can endure the indignation of the Lord against iniquity?

Assuredly none of us could do it—the fire would consume us as stubble! O for an Interposer! But where can he be found? Who is this who can, as man, appear for men, and by his personal righteousness and sacrifice render man acceptable with God? There was a Man of matchless birth, at whose coming, angels sang, for they were told that He would bring Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace. Find Him in Bethlehem’s manger—there He lies, the son of Mary, truly Man, one of ourselves, partaker of our flesh and blood, subject to human needs, weaknesses, woes and able, therefore, to sympathize with us and have compassion upon us! That Man grew up in this world without taint or spot, free from sin whether natural or acquired, and yet He was, in the truest sense, one of ourselves, so that He is not ashamed to call us brethren!

When the malicious eyes of Satan searched Him through and through, he found nothing of evil in Him. He was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and He it is—glory be to His name—He it is that has engaged His heart to approach unto God on our behalf! He is the Son of Man, most truly, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but still truly fellow with men! Though He counted it no robbery to be equal with God, yet He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of men that He might redeem us from our sin! Now look at the context and you will see that the Person who must approach God for us must be a Prince-Priest, for He is called “their Glorious One” and “their Governor,” and yet it is said of Him, “I will cause Him to draw near,” which work of drawing near is in other places ascribed to priests, for these God had set apart for the service of His sanctuary!

The Hebrew word, “to draw near,” signifies that peculiar action of a priest when he stands dealing with God on the behalf of men. The person, then, must be a priest and yet a prince. Who is he and where is he? It is not David, for if David would approach unto God in the office of a priest, he must not—he must resort to the priest who has the Urim and the Thummim—and the priest of the house of Aaron must inquire of God for David. This was one distinction between David and Saul, that David knew the limits of his office and never thought to over step it. David and Solomon never attempted to intrude into the holy office—they knew that they were not priests, but only kings—and when Uzzah stood to sacrifice like a priest, you know how the leprosy fell upon him. And they drove him out of the house of God which he was desecrating by intruding himself into the priestly office. He had to be shut up in a separate house all the rest of his life!

Where shall we find one that even as a priest can really draw near to God for mankind? For remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the priests of old only drew near to God in figure and in metaphor—they could not actually and in very deed do so—for God is a consuming fire! Even when Moses went up unto the mount with God and did draw near in a certain sense, yet he never saw the face of God, for the Lord said, “You cannot see My face and live.” The brightest vision that Moses ever had was that he saw the skirts of Jehovah’s robe, or what Scripture styles, His back parts, for the face of God could not be seen. Mercy draws us near to God in Christ Jesus, but apart from the Mediator, an approach to absolute Deity means destruction!

Neither among kings nor priests could the one man be found who could open the way to the Father! And certainly no king-priest could be found—the combination of the two offices falls not to the house of Aaron. A reverend personage had passed before the camera of history and left a shadowy trace of himself. But where now is he who was named Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all? He was raised up for a special purpose and no one has inherited his peculiar call. That vision taught us what to look for, but it did not supply the Object of our search! It has prophesied the coming of the true Melchisedec, the Man without beginning of days or end of years, the Man without predecessor or successor, who is greater than Abraham and abides as both Priest and King forever, having once and for all drawn near to God on our behalf. You know Him—the true Priest of God, not of the order of Aaron—and the King eternal, immortal, invisible, King of kings, and Lord of lords! It is He that engaged His heart to draw near to God on our behalf!

The question, however, may be answered in another way, so as to bring out more clearly the matchless Person whom our hearts adore at this moment. It was necessary that he who should draw near to God should be chosen to that office by God, Himself, and should be qualified for it by Divine power. “I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach to me.” Now, is there anyone among us all that God has ever chosen to represent our fellow men as their mediator, acting as the head of the race and, as such, entering into the immediate Presence of God on his own merits? We have not, I hope, the presumption to imagine such a thing! “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus.” He it is that takes upon Himself our nature and our sin, and then goes in onto God and stands there, amidst the blaze of the ineffable Light, to represent manhood—and there is none else!

On Him rested the Spirit of God without measure. The Dove descended on Him in the waters of His baptism and the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the great One elect of Heaven, ordained of the Father before the foundation of the world—and the Spirit of Glory and of might did rest upon Him—that He might be equipped for His mighty service and might engage His heart to approach unto God. This is He who said, “I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me.”

Moreover, to close this description, He was not only appointed of God and qualified, but He was one who was willing to undertake the task and ready to pledge Himself to it. He voluntarily covenanted to do it, as it is written, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Your will, O God: yes, Your Law is My delight.” He engaged His heart to this gracious office, resolving to carry out to a happy issue the work of reconciliation. Moved by inconceivable, immeasurable love and counting all the cost, He devoted Himself to the supreme effort. “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Of His own free will He placed Himself before offended Justice to meet its claims and so He removed every barrier which stood between us and the Throne of God! He is that Breaker who has gone up before us, that King who is at the head of all His chosen ones.

Now, where is such an One to be found unless it is the Lord Jesus? I trust many of us have given ourselves up to God and to His fear, drawn by almighty love. But it was never in our hearts to imagine that by giving up ourselves to holy service we could stand before God and open a way to Him for our fellow men! We are well aware of our incompetence for so grand a task. None of us have struck hands and covenanted with God to mediate, for we could not do it! I dread the thought of seeming to intrude into so Divine a work! We are priests unto God, but not mediators for men! When I hear of men pretending to hear the confessions of their fellow men and absolving them of their sins, I wonder that they sleep nights after professing so tremendous an act!

I am amazed at what the power of Satan over them must be that they can rest after having assumed to act as vicars of Jehovah, He having given them no warrant and no authority for such a mediatorial position! Brothers and Sisters, this blasphemy of blasphemies may well become the Mother of Harlots, but the Bride of Christ abhors it! But oh, when my eyes rest upon Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, in human flesh, then I cry, “This is He! Glory be to His name!” And, lost in wonder, my soul exclaims, “Who is this? Who is this? What manner of Man is this? Who is a God like unto You?” All this in wonder, but not in doubt, for the Lord Jesus can do this great work and He wills to do it! He has resolved and He will not fail nor be discouraged!

Glory be to His name, He has done it! He has approached with engaged heart unto God on our behalf and, by His Sacrifice, He has made a way by which each one of us who is willing to do so may now approach unto God, even the Father, without fear. “Who is this?” Our soul is filled with amazement, but not with ignorance, for we answer this question in a word—He is God, Himself, Light of Lights, very God of very God, veiled in human flesh who has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. “Who is this?” I answer, it is the Lawgiver, Himself, who has put Himself under the Law and who has borne the penalties of the Law that the Law may be glorified, while sin is pardoned and Law-breakers are justified! “Who is this?” It is infinite Holiness which has burdened itself with human sin, “For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Oh, if I had but words to speak with, I would try to extol Him who, being infinitely pure, nevertheless was numbered with the transgressors! Who, being incapable of spot, yet did bear upon Himself the enormous and horrible load of human guilt! In His own body on the tree, in flesh and soul, He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Mark those words, for they show His end and objective—“to bring us to God.” This is the way by which He brought us near, even by His own most precious blood! Yes, it is the heavenly One, who is blessed forevermore, who was made a curse for us! On whom, being everlastingly the object of Jehovah’s love, there fell Jehovah’s wrath on our account! Mystery of mystery! Miracle of miracles! This has astonished Heaven and earth and Hell!

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews and Son of the Highest, engaged His heart that He might wait upon the Judge of all the earth and answer for rebellious man with His own life—and so complete a way of access by which we may rise from our abyss of woes to the bosom of the Eternal! Though I have thus spoken to the best of my knowledge, I know that I cannot set out before you the full Glory of the Person of our Covenant Head. I shall go home saying to myself, “Who is this? Who is this?” and I shall have succeeded in my endeavor if you will, each one, say, “He could not tell us who He was. He could not reach the height of that great argument, but we shall, all through time and in eternity, go on wondering and saying, Who is this?”

The more we wonder, the more shall we love and praise the Lord Jesus with our heart of hearts and say, “He has done all things well. We are made near by Him, never more to be separated from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Thus much upon the Person. How freely could I weep because I speak in words so poor and ill-chosen! I do but hold a candle to show the sun!

II. I come now TO EXCITE ADMIRATION OF HIS MATCHLESS WORK. If Jesus Christ is to approach God for us, it is clear that He must come down into our condition, for He must, first, descend or He cannot ascend. Naturally there is such a Oneness between the blessed Persons of the Trinity that there can be no approaching, in their case, to one another, but Jesus, though He was forever in the highest sense, with God, left His place of Glory and took the position of our shame. “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” There He stands, even where we stood by nature! Where we lay in our blood, there He came and engaged His heart to deliver us!

He stood at the Judgment bar because we had brought ourselves there. He was rejected of the people because we were rejected as reprobate silver. He was condemned because we were condemned and He was put to death because such was the sentence upon us! He descended into our depths to engineer a way from the lowest to the highest, to come back from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea, leading the van of the armies of His chosen as they return unto God with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads!

This lowly place being taken, behold our Lord actually approaching unto the offended Majesty on high! Though found in fashion as a Man, by reason of His becoming a curse for us, He was denied the Presence of the Father, so that He cried in anguish, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Yet He did approach unto God! He did come near! No, He remains near—able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him! He has passed under the cloud and the darkness and through the consuming fire—and now He is the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God! He has gone into the Holy of Holies and revealed the Mercy Seat. He has bridged the great gulf which sin had made! “It is finished,” He said, before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

As a result, the pathway is open! Every gulf is filled! Every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill laid low! It is finished—the way from man to God has been already trod by myriads of cleansed feet, for our Glorious One has cast up the king’s highway and made straight paths for our feet! Come, let us tread the road. With holy confidence let us draw near unto God! Our Lord, with all His heart, desired to do this. He “engaged His heart” to perform it. Before all worlds, His master purpose was to approach unto God as man’s Representative. He is styled, “the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world,” because this was the firm resolve and bent of His entire Being, before ever the earth was!

He had vowed in His soul that He would restore the banishment of the Fall and bridge the distance between man and God. When God would not have sacrifice and offering at man’s hands, then Jesus said, “Lo, I come.” He says of Himself, “The Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” His heart was determined and resolved, for so the expression means, when the text says, “He engaged His heart.” But why this readiness, this eagerness? Love is the one reply! His heart was occupied with love to God and love to man and He could not rest till He had restored the broken concord between these divided ones. With all the forcefulness of His Divine Nature and with all the energy of His perfect Humanity, He was resolved to bring men back to God.

While He was yet a boy He felt bound to be about His Father’s business. When He first appeared among the multitude it was by submission to the Father’s ordinance to fulfill all righteousness. He could not hold His peace or take rest because His mission was urgent and His heart was in it. Many a time He set aside a crown to bear a cross. All the kingdoms of this world could not bribe Him from His sacred purpose, though displayed before Him by the arch-tempter in a sudden blaze of brightness. If any endeavored to dissuade Him from His purpose, even though they did it out of love, He saw the evil spirit who was using them as his instruments and, with indignation, He broke the snare! Even though it were the beloved Peter, He looked on him as the devil’s advocate, and said, “Get you behind Me, Satan.”

How full of meaning is that sigh, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” He was shut up like a man in a narrow prison and His only enlargement was to be by anguish and death. He was straitened till He could give Himself up as a Sacrifice and so open a door for us to our God! The insatiable desire of our Lord’s vehement spirit was the finishing of the work which the Father had given Him to do. It was His meat and His drink to accomplish the purpose of love. “Who is this?” “Who is this?” The more I turn it over and think of it, the more I am astonished that so condescending, gracious and glorious a work should engage the heart of the Lord of All!

We had not loved Him, but He loved us! We were His enemies, but what a Friend was He! Our hearts were set on wandering, but His heart was engaged to bring us near to God! Let us each pause, here, and admire as we say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” Who is this that thus has spent His love upon so poor a being? Having thus determined that He would approach unto God on our behalf, He took all the consequences. A correct reading of the passage would be, “Who is this that has pledged His heart or His life to approach unto Me, says the Lord?” If you take the meaning of the word, “heart,” to be “life,” since the heart is the source of life, then we read that our Lord pledged His life, put His life in surety that He would approach unto God, the Judge of All, and bring us near to Him.

When He came as the Representative of sinful men—then vengeance with its sword must smite Him—and He was willing to be smitten. Voluntarily He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He did not hide His face from shame and spitting. He must die if He draws near to God for sinful men, for such is the penalty due. But He willingly laid down His life and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. He must be deserted of God and He even submits to that, till He cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” He might have drawn back from His undertaking if He would, but He never thought of drawing back. With desire He desired to eat that Passover!

In order to die, He broke off in the middle of a discourse, saying, “Arise, let us go therefore.” His slogan was, “The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” He saved others, but Himself He could not save because Love held Him bound in her chains. How intensely ought we to love Jesus since He thus reckoned nothing too hard or heavy, that He might appear in the Presence of God for us and make a way to God for poor sinners such as we are! He even delighted in suffering and dishonor for this end. “For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.” He made pledge, not merely of hands or eyes, but of His heart and life! He came with His life in His hands before Jehovah’s face and gave up that life that He might remove from us the death penalty due to justice—and so reconcile us to the Lord of All!

Tune your harps, you angels! Make this Sabbath on which we think of this sublime mystery a special festival of song! Oh, sing unto the Lord, you redeemed ones who see His face! You are before the Throne of Glory because He stood before the throne of vengeance and made it possible for your robes to be washed white as snow! As for you, you redeemed with blood who are still below, bring forth your loudest notes and praise Him who has once and for all cleared the way and opened an avenue of Grace for you! Who is this wonderful Savior? Who shall declare the generation of Him who pledged His life that He might draw near to God for us and endured all the consequences to the bitter end?

And now, today, Beloved, Jesus Christ rejoices to think that He has approached unto God on our behalf and made eternal amity between God and man! Let us rejoice with Him! Let us become happy in fellowship with our God—

*“‘Tis finished all; the veil is rent,  
The welcome sure, the access free;  
Now then, we leave our banishment,  
O Father, to return to Thee!”*

This is the joy of Christ’s heart forever! He welcomes our return to God! He is glad when our communion is hearty and continuous! By His Holy Spirit He draws us near! Blessed be His name!

III. Let me try, and may the Spirit of God help me, TO AWAKEN YOUR INTEREST IN THE SWEET RESULTS OF JESUS CHRIST’S HAVING APPROACHED GOD FOR US. The first result is found in the chapter. Read that 22nd verse. Read it with your own eyes and wonder that it should be put there. “Who is this that engaged His heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” That is, because our royal High Priest approached unto God for us, therefore we who were called outcasts; we whose wound was incurable and grievous; we that were utterly ruined and undone—we, believing in this Jesus—shall, in Him, become the people of God!

Let me speak plainly with you, beloved Brothers and Sisters—how many of you have realized this? It is all idle for me to talk about Christ making the way unless you run in the way. Are you the Lord’s people? Many of you humbly rejoice in this high honor, but there may be a few here who are of another mind—you care nothing for having the Lord to be your God. Possibly you sneer and call it cant. Yes, but if you knew the Truth of God you would not do so. When we hear you speaking contemptuously of being God’s people, all we can say is, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Will you mind thinking just for half a minute? Will you try to think justly and rightly? Must it not be good and right that the creature should love the Creator? Must it not be a wise thing that the children whom God has formed should love their heavenly Father and be on good terms with Him? Is it not likely that it would be a happy thing for you if you were one of God’s people? You can never rest till you are!

But you ask, “How can I be?” Why, it all follows upon what I have been talking of! Jesus Christ went to the Father for us, that we might approach unto the Father in Him and through Him, that we might become the Lord’s own people and that the Lord might become our God! I tell you I would sooner say, “This God is my God,” than anything else that I can imagine! To say, “This kingdom is my kingdom,” or, “This whole world is mine,” were a miserable business compared with saying, “My Beloved is mine and I am His!” You would not think I exaggerated if you tried it! I invite you to an honest, practical test.

See if there is not joy in the salvation of God. Religion is, with some people, a sort of dreamy thing on Sundays—you sit in your pews and bear with us long-winded talkers about things which you do not care for. Oh, if only you did value and enjoy them! If you could but taste and handle them you would say, “Go on, Preacher! Go on! You are a poor hand at it, for your themes are so great and wondrous that you cannot reach to them, but, still, go on! Ring that bell again! Open more doors and let us peep in upon the secret treasures. Bring us more clusters of the grapes of Eshcol and let us, at least, pluck a berry here and there if we cannot carry away a whole cluster—and so fill our mouths with the inexpressible delight of being God’s people and having Jehovah to be our God!”

This bliss comes to those of us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh because Jesus said, “I will wait upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob.” The face of the Lord is no longer hidden from us! We have access with confidence into this Grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. I seem to see in my spirit that old legend of Rome worked out in very deed. So says the story—in the Roman Forum there gaped a vast chasm which threatened the destruction of the Forum, if not of Rome. The wise men declared that the gulf would never close unless the most precious thing in Rome was cast into it. See how it yawns and cracks, every moment, more horribly! Hasten to bring this noblest thing! For love of Rome sacrifice your best!

But what, or who is this? Where is a treasure meet for sacrifice? Then Curtins, a belted knight, mounted his charger and, rightly judging that valor and love of country were the noblest treasures of Rome, he leaped into the gulf! The yawning earth closed upon a great-hearted Roman, for her hunger was appeased. Perhaps it is but an idle tale, but what I have declared is the Truth of God! There gaped between God and man a dread abyss, deep as Hell, wide as eternity and only the best thing that Heaven contained could fill it! That best thing was He, the peerless Son of God, the matchless, perfect Man and He came, laying aside His Glory, making Himself of no reputation. And He sprang into the gulf which then and there closed, once and for all!—

*“Down from the shining seats above  
With joyful haste He fled,  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.  
Oh, for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Savior’s praises speak.”*

One great result of Christ’s having died is to leave us a way of access which is freely opened to every poor, penitent sinner. Come! Are you using that way of access? Do you use it every day? Having used it and thus having drawn near to God, do you dwell near to God? Do you abide in God? Is God the main thought of your life, the chief delight and object of your being? If it is not so, I earnestly invite you, by the Spirit’s help, to make it so. You must engage your heart to come to God in Christ. There is no coming to God without sincere resolve and eager desire. Are you engaged to such an end? Alas, it may be you are drawn elsewhere. Are you engaged? Alas, some are engaged to Madame Bubble! Some are engaged to Belial! Some are engaged to self! Some are engaged to Mammon! Some seem engaged to the very devil of Hell!

Be wise and break these unlawful engagements! Let your covenant with death be broken and your league with Hell be annulled. Though you are weary of my words, yet would I stir you up to interest in this allimportant matter. Break these deadly bands asunder! God help you, by a sudden energy which He shall give you, to snap your fetters once and for all and then, at once, firmly engage your hearts to Christ! Never such loveliness, never such love will you find elsewhere! Come, say now— Whatever else I do or do not do, I will do this—I will approach to God by the way that Christ has opened for me—I will arise and go to my Father! I will throw myself at my Father’s feet—I must be reconciled! I cannot live an enemy to Him! I must be made a friend—

*“I will approach You—  
I will force  
My way through obstacles to You.”*

Jesus goes before me and I gladly follow. I will not leave the throne till You, O Lord, have said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” I shall be greatly happy, I shall be exceedingly glad if I may induce one spirit to come to God by Jesus Christ! But if the whole of you will come at once; if God’s spirit shall now prompt all Believers to come and all unbelievers to become Believers, and so to come, what a splendid company of us will enter into the golden gates! And what joy there will be in Heaven over all of us as we approach unto the Most High! I think I note a seraph, as he takes down his harp, stand in the center of the heavenly choir and suggest to his fellow choristers that their theme should be, “Who is this that has engaged His heart to approach unto the living God?”

Hark how ten thousands of voices say—“Who is this?” Let us, in humble notes, lift up our praises. Here is a verse which may serve our turn— *“Who is this that enters Glory,  
Clearing for His saints a way?  
Who shall tell the wondrous story  
Who His glorious work display?  
Jesus makes our access clear,  
To the Father brings us near.”*

Thus the question, “Who is this?” admits of a second answer, for now, in Christ Jesus, all Believers with engaged hearts are approaching unto God! Who is this? At first it is Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. And next it is His Church with all her heart engaged, approaching unto God by Jesus Christ! My Hearers, can you join in the song of praise which is now rising from Heaven and earth? Angels are waiting till you approach their God! Come, hurry up! Hasten to be blest! At once approach your God by Christ Jesus and as angels see you coming, their song shall grow yet louder till it shall excel the noise of many waters and out-voice the last great thundering! They come! They come! Sinners are coming to God! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

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Sermon #1914 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED

NO. 1914

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Jeremiah 31:3.**

THE dread of Divine Justice has often driven men to seek mercy. Many have been caught in the whirlwind of wrath and, in their dismay, they have fled for refuge to that Man who is a covert from the tempest. Hence the Lord does not decline to work upon the minds of the guilty by motives drawn from fear. Notice the 23rd and 24th verses of the previous chapter— “Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart.” This is by no means a solitary passage. Holy Scripture is strewn with solemn admonitions to flee from the wrath to come. Our dear Redeemer, whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, in great tenderness of heart warned men of the sure result of their sins and none used stronger or more alarming language than He did concerning the future of ungodly men.

He knew nothing of that pretended sympathy which will rather let men perish than warn them against perishing. Such tenderness is merely selfishness excusing itself from a distasteful duty. Our Savior spoke as the true and earnest lover of men and, therefore, uttered words which, having first wounded His own heart and brought the tears to His own eyes, went home with tremendous force to the minds of others. He spoke of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of a worm which dies not and of a fire which is not quenched. Weeping, He reminded them how often He would have gathered them together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but they would not—and, therefore, He warned them that nothing could come of it but desolation and destruction!

Brothers and Sisters, like our Lord, we do not hesitate to warn men of judgment to come. “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” We dare not quit this solemn duty lest it cost us our own souls! We dare not cease to sound the trumpet of alarm lest the enemy destroy our people and their blood be required at our hands!

Still, the master magnet of the Gospel is not fear, but love. Penitents are drawn to Christ rather than driven. The most frequent impulse which leads men to Jesus is hope that in Him they may find salvation. Truly, even then, they are moved by fear of the evil which they would escape, but their feet are led to fly towards Him by hope in His gentleness, His goodness, His readiness to receive sinners. Hope in that mercy of God which endures forever is the great cord which draws men to repentance. Consequently, after the Lord had sounded the clarion note of warning which we have just heard, He touched the harp strings of Grace and brought forth from them notes both soft and sweet, cheering the sad and encouraging the despondent—these notes He knew would be heard where even the trumpet sounded not. Love wins the day!

One hair from the head of Love will draw more than the cable of fear! Let but Love speak a single word out of her heart—and let it reach the hearts of men—and it will accomplish greater marvels than all the prolonged discourses and threats of wrath. I am glad, therefore, that I have to speak to God’s people, this morning, and set forth God’s Love as the reason why they should love Him in return! “We love Him because He first loved us” is the great Law of the Christian life. In proportion as we recognize the love of God and know somewhat of its height, depth, length and breadth, our heart will be graciously affected by it. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to us, then we love our Lord with all our might!

I want you, this morning, to pray that you may realize the things which I speak to you, so that when we discourse upon the love of God you may feel it glowing in your own souls. Oh, that His love, like coals of juniper, may burn in our hearts! With its vehement flame may it consume our hearts with a heavenly passion till all our nature ascends to Heaven like clouds of incense from the golden altar! May our God and Father speak within each one of us and say, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you!”

I. Our first observation will run on this wise—GOD’S DEALINGS WITH US ARE NEVER UNDERSTOOD TILL HE, HIMSELF, APPEARS TO US. He must speak, or we cannot interpret His acts. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” The Lord had been drawing these people, but they did not know it. God had been loving them with an everlasting love, but they did not recognize it. Nor could they know or recognize His loving kindness till the Lord, Himself, visited them in Person and removed the scales from their eyes! God is His own Interpreter. His Providence and Grace reveal Him, but still more does He, Himself, explain and reveal His Providence and Grace. Though all things in the field and the garden show what the sun does, yet none of these “fruits put forth by the sun” can be perceived till the sun, itself, reveals them.

For first, man is not in a condition to perceive God till God reveals Himself to him. By nature, Brothers and Sisters, we are blind Godward—yes, deaf and in all ways insensible towards the great Spirit. By nature we are dead to the Presence of the Lord. Naturally, man is an atheist. When the “Essays and Reviews” made a great deal of stir, an experienced preacher said, concerning them, “‘Essays and Reviews’ do not trouble me, nor any of the nostrums of modern doubt, for my heart is a deviser of worse things than ‘Essays and Reviews’—my evil heart is a fountain of atheism.” Brethren, worse difficulties have occurred to us than any that have ever been penned by the most notorious infidels! By nature we are as the fool who said in his heart, “There is no God.” Our carnal mind is enmity against God and, consequently, it would be rid of Him if it could. We have need to pray and we do pray, “Save me from an atheistic heart, which hates the Trinity.” Man, therefore, living in alienation from God, does not trace the inward drawings of Divine Love up to their source—he regards them as common things—and treads them out as sparks from an earthly fire. Though God may be sweetly influencing the man to something better, higher, nobler than sin, self and the world, yet he does not perceive the Divine working. The Lord said of Cyrus, “I girded you, though you have not known Me.” And even so may He say of many an unconverted man, “I warned you and awakened you, and drew you when you were not aware of Me.”

Besides this, my Brothers and Sisters, we are so selfish that when God is drawing us to Himself, we are too much absorbed in our own things to notice the hand which is at work upon us! We crave the world; we sigh for human approbation; we seek ease and comfort; we desire, above all things, to indulge our pride with the vain notion of self-righteousness and, therefore, we look not for God. Rather do we cry with Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” God may draw a long time before we will budge an inch away from those gods which our own selfishness has set up. Young Samuel answered to the call of Jehovah at midnight—but with us there is neither hearing nor answering. How can we see God while our eyes are blinded with self?

While we are carnal, sold under sin, our heart is dead to the movements of God’s Grace. Only a spiritual mind can discern spiritual things and, as we are not spiritual, we remain insensible to the Divine drawing. I know this was the case with me and I speak, therefore, with a humbling experience clear in my memory. For many a day the Lord drew me, but I did not know Him. The Lord worked upon my heart, but I did not perceive Him. Alas for the insensibility which even Gospel influences cannot remove! The Lord must appear to each one of us or we shall remain ignorant of His ways!

Moreover, dear Friends, God must explain His dealings to us by revealing Himself to us because those ways are, in themselves, frequently mysterious. Take Israel, for instance. The Lord moved Pharaoh to treat Israel with great severity and to make them serve with rigor. They made bricks without straw and the production of bricks was doubled till they cried by reason of their taskmasters! How was Israel to perceive that Jehovah was at the back of all this? Yet the Lord was thus accomplishing His design of bringing His chosen out of Egypt. The most difficult thing was not for Pharaoh to be compelled to let Israel go, but to bring the people into such a state that they would be willing to quit the fertile land! They lived in plenty in the land of Goshen and ate of the leeks, garlic and onions of Egypt—and had they been left alone, they would have had no wish to go forth to Canaan.

They would have been satisfied to become Egyptians had they always been treated as they were treated at the first. How were the Israelites to understand, till God explained it, that this rough usage on the part of Pharaoh was to wean them from Egypt and make them willing to go out, even, into a desert that they might escape from the tyrant? When Pharaoh began to kill their first-born; when he refused to let them go, for a few days, to offer sacrifice and oppressed them more and more, how were they to know that this was a part of the plan of Jehovah who had loved them with an everlasting love? Even after He had smitten Pharaoh with plagues and Egypt was glad when they departed, how could they comprehend why God led them down to the brink of the Red Sea? Between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon, the host was made to encamp, even in a place from which there was no escape from their cruel foes whose chariots they heard rattling behind them!

How were they to know that the Lord had His way in the sea and His path in the mighty waters? How could they guess that He meant to bring Egypt down into the depth of the sea and there to crush the dragon with so heavy a blow that, through the 40 years of Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness upon the Egyptian border, the nation should never be troubled by its old taskmaster? With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth His people, but they understood not His wonders in Egypt till He appeared to them and said, “I am the Lord your God, which has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” God’s dealings with His chosen are often so mysterious that they cannot know them till they know Him!

So it is when the Lord works eternal life in the soul. He does not usually begin by giving the man light, peace and comfort. No, but He sorely plagues him with “darkness that might be felt.” He makes sweet sin to become bitter. He pours gall into the fountains of his carnal life till the man begins to be weary of the things which once contented him. Full often the Lord fits the arrows of conviction to the string and shoots again and again, and again till the soul is wounded in a thousand places—and is ready to bleed to death! The Lord kills before He makes alive! Is this the Lord’s way of dealing with men? It is even so—it is the way of His loving kindness and tender mercy. But I say again, how could we expect unspiritual men to see the hand of the Lord in all this? The awakened man sees more of anger than of loving kindness in his griefs and the idea of everlasting love never enters his imagination! That God is drawing him with bands of love and cords of a man is a Truth of God of which he has no inkling. God must reveal Himself to the man or else he will not discover the hand of the Lord in the anguish of his spirit.

This appearance of the Lord must be personal . “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” I do not think any man knows the Lord by merely reading Scripture, nor by being convinced in his judgment of the truth of the Gospel. There is a special manifestation of the Lord unto the conscience, heart and soul of every man who is, indeed, taught of God. A personal revelation by the Holy Spirit is needed to bring home to us the Revelation of the Book. The result of it is conversion, or the new birth—and this is always effected by the Spirit of God. True knowledge of God is always a Divine operation—not worked second-hand by instrumentality—but worked by the right hand of the Lord, Himself. “No man can come to Me,” says Christ, “except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” And no man understands those drawings unless the same Father shall come to him and manifest Himself to him!

I do not ask the children of God whether they understand this, for I know they do. You can, many of you, say, “The Lord has appeared unto me.” Not that you have heard a voice, nor seen a great light as Saul did on the way to Damascus. But as vividly to your inward eyes has God appeared as the great light appeared to Saul’s outward eyes—and as potently to your secret ears has God spoken as that voice spoke to Saul’s outward ears. God has drawn near to us and His visitations have newcreated us! Till we know the Lord by personal revelation, we cannot read His handwriting upon our hearts, or discern His dealings with us.

This appearance needs to be repeated . The text may be read as a complaint on the part of Israel. Israel says, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me”—as much as to say, “He has not appeared to me lately.” Of old he was seen by brook, bush, sea and rock—when Jacob met Him at Jabbok and Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush—but now His visits are few and far between. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Oh, that He would appear now! I pray at this time that those of you who are mourning after that fashion may be able to rise out of it. It is not the Lord’s desire that He should be as a stranger in the land, or as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night. He is willing to abide with us! His delights are with the sons of men! Let us not forget the time when He did, of old, appear to us—I mean the first time.

It must be more than 36 years since the Lord first appeared to me and I beheld Him by the eyes of faith. How vile was I in my own sight and how glorious was He in my eyes! How my heart melted when I saw Him bleeding on the tree for me! How all my passions burned and glowed with heavenly ardor as I understood that He loved me and gave Himself for me! Then His name, His word, His day, His people were all precious in my sight! That was of old, but I do earnestly remember it! It is very sweet to look back upon the time of our espousals, but it will become a bitter retrospect if we do not again and again behold our Lord. It is woe to have seen the sun if one is now shut up in a dark dungeon! O Brothers and Sisters, do not let us be satisfied with old appearances—let us cry to our Beloved, “O Lord, manifest Yourself anew to me! O You that hides Yourself, appear to me! Look through the lattices and let Your face be seen again!”

He that condescended to show Himself to you of old will again reveal His love. What Jesus has done, He will still do. Once you walked by the way and your heart burned within you because Jesus spoke with you. He has said, “I will come again.” Do you not remember how, in the very pew in which you are now sitting, you felt as if you could hardly keep your seat? You wanted to cry, “Hallelujah!” for joy of heart. Recall those happy periods, but only recall them with this resolve—“I will behold my Lord again. I will again delight myself in Him.” Do not let the text be the epitaph of a long-ago appearance, but let it be the dawning of a new day whose sun shall no more go down!

This appearance is always an act of mighty Grace . The text might be read, “The Lord appeared from afar to me.” So He did at first. What a great way off we were from God, but behold, the Beloved came like a roe or a young hart, leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills! He came to us in boundless love when we lay at death’s dark door, the fast-bound slaves of Hell! Brethren, He can and will come again. If He came to us from far, He will surely come again, now that He has made us near. Expect Him to come to you all of a sudden. While I am yet speaking, pray that, before you are aware, your soul may be like the chariots of Amminadib! Pray for the immediate revelation of God, Himself, to your spirit in a way of joy and transport that shall set your soul in rapid motion towards the Lord! Should the Lord return to you in gracious manifestation, take care that you do not lose Him again. If the bridegroom deigns to visit you, hold Him fast. If you once see the splendor of His love, do not close your eyes to it, but gaze on till you behold Him face to face in Glory! Be this your prayer, “Abide with me.” Be not satisfied till, like Enoch, you always walk with God! But to this end God must appear to His people.

II. Secondly, when the Lord does so appear, WE THEN PERCEIVE THAT HE HAS BEEN DEALING WITH US. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” What exceeding love the Lord showed to us before we knew Him! Let us now look back and remember the love of long-suffering which spared us when we delighted in sin. The Lord did not cut us off in our unbelief—there in is love. Some read this text, “therefore in loving kindness have I respited you,” or, “therefore have I drawn out My loving kindness unto you,” as if God stretched His loving kindness while we were stretching out our sinfulness and continued, year after year, to bear with us though we continued in wanton rebellion against Him!—

*“Determined to save, He watched over my path*

*When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”*Think of sparing mercy now that you are able to see it because the Lord has appeared unto you.

The next admirable discovery is the Lord’s restraining Grace. We now see that the Lord held us back from plunging into the deepest abysses of sin. He would not let us commit crimes by which we might have ended our lives before conversion. He kept us back from sins which might have linked us in sad connections and led us into such circumstances that we never might have been brought to hear His Word or seek His face at all. Since the Lord has appeared to me, He has made me see His restraining hand where once I saw nothing but the cruel disappointment of my hopes. Blessed be God for those crooks in my lot which kept me from poisonous pleasures!

So, too, we now see the preparations of Grace, the plowing of our hearts by sorrow, the sowing of them by discipline, the harrowing of them by pain, the watering of them by the rain of favor, the breaking up of them by the frosts of adversity. These were not actually grace, but they opened the door for Grace. We now see how, in a thousand ways, the Lord was drawing us when we knew Him not!  
The text chiefly dwells upon drawings. I beg you to refresh your memories by recollecting the drawings of the Lord towards you while you were yet ungodly. They began very early with some of us—even as little children we had great tenderness of conscience and many movements of the Spirit which would not let us sin as others did. Often when we had done wrong, we went to our little beds and cried ourselves to sleep under a sense of sin, a fear of punishment and a longing for mercy! Those drawings were continuous with some of us—we can hardly remember when we were without holy impulses, though we did not yield to them. When we left the parental roof, those drawings followed us to our first employment. Do you remember them? Before you knew the Lord Jesus, His Holy Spirit strove with you. You went into great sin, some of you, but the Lord continued to follow you. Even in your dreams He did not leave you. They were a way which the Lord had of getting at you—you hardened yourself against Him when you were awake—but when you fell asleep, He scared you with visions and made you think of judgment to come!

Often these were very gentle drawings—they were not such forces as would move an ox or an horse, but such as were meant for tender spirits. Yet sometimes they tugged at you very hard and almost overcame you. Drawing supposes a kind of resistance, or, at any rate, an inertness and, truly, we did not stir of ourselves, but needed to be persuaded and entreated. Some of you will remember how the Holy Spirit drew you many times before you came to Him. Remember those thundering sermons which sent you home to your knees? Those deep impressions which you could not shake off for a week or two? Those depressions of spirit and horrors of darkness out of which you could not readily rise? The Lord surrounded you as a fish is surrounded with a net and though you labored to escape, you could not, but were drawn more and more within the meshes of Mercy.

There are times with men, before conversion, when a sort of softness steals over them, when they feel as if they could not hold out much longer against appeals so reasonable and so gracious. A mother’s prayers come up—perhaps her dying words are heard again—or the death of a little child touches the parent’s heart as nothing else has done. The man is under holy influences, he knows not how! There are angels in the air around him, though there are devils in the heart within him. The man cannot be at peace in sin! He is restless till he finds rest in Jesus! It is the Lord drawing all the while and after the Lord has appeared to us we see it to be so.

Do you remember when, at last, the Holy Spirit drew you over the line? When, at last, without violating your free will, He conquered it by forces proper to the mind? Blessed day! You were made a willing captive to your Lord, led in silken fetters at His chariot wheels, a glad prisoner to Almighty Love, set free from sin and Satan, made to be unto your Lord a life long servant. He drew you! You did not know much about it, then, but you see it now.

After I had found Grace and salvation, a little time elapsed before I had surveyed the work of the Lord upon me. But when I did so, I learned much. Sitting down, one day, I meditated upon where I was and what I was. I said to myself, “I have believed in Jesus Christ and I have passed from death unto life. To God be praise!” Then my train of thought ran thus—“How have I come to be in this condition? Did I make this change in myself? No. Must I praise my own free will? No. Was there originally in me some betterness which led me to Christ, while my companions have not come?” I dared not say so and, therefore, I perceived that the difference was made by the Sovereign Grace of God. I do not know whereabouts in theology I might have wandered, but those reflections made me a Calvinist—that is to say, one who traces salvation to the Lord, alone. I saw that my salvation was of the Lord from first to last and I have never had a doubt about the matter since!

It is no wish of mine to preach salvation by the will of man, or by the will of the flesh, but salvation all of Grace, from beginning to end according to the eternal purpose which the Lord purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was! It did not need any intricate reasoning to land me on the rock of Free Grace doctrine! If the Lord saved me, then He intended to save me—He did not do so by accident or inadvertence. Then if He once intended to save me, there could be no reason why that intention should begin at any one moment—He must have purposed to save me from all eternity! God has His plan and purpose, and what He actually does must have been known to Him and purposed by Him from of old. Then I saw, as in a glass, the ways of God towards me—but it was not till the Lord, Himself, had appeared unto me that I had this conception of His ways. He, Himself, by His Spirit, expounded to me the whole system after this fashion, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” We understand the drawings of the Lord after we have seen the Lord, Himself, but not till then.

III. W e proceed a step further and WE PERCEIVE THAT LOVING KINDNESS WAS THE DRAWING FORCE—“therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” At first we think God has dealt sternly with us, but in His Light we see light and we perceive that the drawing power which has brought us to receive mercy is the Divine Loving Kindness. Love is the attractive force!

What multitudes of persons have been drawn to the Lord, first, by His loving kindness in the gift of His dear Son! Perhaps there is no greater soul-saving text in the Bible than this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I must have conversed with more than a hundred persons who have found the Lord through this blessed verse! I am speaking very moderately, for I think I might say that I have known several hundreds who have been guided into liberty by this polestar text. What a drawing there is in the fact that God gave His Son to redeem the guilty! Jesus died for the lost world and men, believing in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life. This is the master magnet—“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” The loving kindness of God as seen in the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus draws men from sin, from self, from Satan, from despair and from the world!

Next, the hope of pardon, free and full, attracts sinners to God. “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you,” makes a man run after Christ! Oh, what a draw there is in those Words, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon!” How one is drawn by the declaration, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men!” The blotting out of sin is a glorious phase of the Divine Loving Kindness and many are allured by it to confess their sins. Is not the promise of remission the cord with which the Lord draws men to Himself? “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Yes, there is such a thing as the entire blotting out of a life spent in iniquity! Jesus can wipe out the record of sin as a boy wipes the writing from his slate with a sponge. Sin is carried away by Jesus, even as the scapegoat bore away the sin of Israel. “They shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Thus does loving kindness draw us.

I have known others drawn to the Lord by another view of His loving kindness, namely, His willingness to make new creatures of us. The prayer of many has been, “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” and they have been charmed by hearing that whoever believes in Jesus is born again, to start a new life, ruled by a new principle and endowed with a new nature, sustained by the Holy Spirit! Many who desire purity of life and nature— and wish to be right with God—are won by the blessed prospect of being created anew in Christ Jesus.

It may seem somewhat strange to you, but that form of loving kindness which mainly drew me to the Lord was this—I saw a good deal of the instability of character in young men who began life with bright prospects and fair promises—and I trembled for my own future. I read in the New Testament that he that believes in Jesus has everlasting life. I saw in the language of Christ, Himself, these Words—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands.” Oh, how I longed to be one of those sheep in the hands of Jesus! I had known school fellows who were held up as patterns to me who acted very disappointingly after they left home—and I thought within myself—“Oh, for a spiritual life insurance! Oh, for a way of putting my soul into secure keeping so that I shall not become the prey of sin, but shall be kept by the Grace of God even to the end!”

The belief that I should find this permanence of Grace in Christ Jesus drew me more than anything else to Jesus! What a blessing to obtain “eternal salvation and good hope through Grace!” What a favor to receive within the heart a well of Living Water, springing up into everlasting life! Let me live till my hair is all white with age, He will not suffer me to turn, again, unto folly, for it is written, “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” I clutched at that promise from the beginning and thus, with loving kindness, the Lord drew me to Himself. I see it now and bless His name for using such a magnet!

Brothers and Sisters, since we have known the Lord, has it not been His loving kindness that has always drawn us? Can you tell me how much loving kindness you have enjoyed? Begin the calculation! Yes, you may take out a paper and pencil, if you like, and write away during the rest of my sermon! And when I have finished, I will ask you whether you have finished and you will answer, “Sir, I have not quite begun yet.” Oh, the loving kindness of the Lord! You may measure Heaven! You may fathom the sea! You may plunge into the abyss and calculate its depth, but the loving kindness of the Lord is beyond you! Here is an infinite expanse. It is immeasurable, even as God, Himself, is beyond conception! It is everywhere about us—behind, before, beneath, above, within, without! Every day the Lord loads us with benefits. He binds us with so many loving kindnesses that He draws us, now, not with one cord, but with many—and each one draws Omnipotently!

His mercies are more than the hairs of our head—by day and by night He is drawing, drawing, drawing with those bands of love—and one of these days our whole body, soul and spirit will so yield to the sweet compulsion of Almighty Love that the whole man will remove to be with Him where He is! And we will still feel His loving kindness as we behold His Glory! All this was always true, but we could not see it till the Lord appeared to us and declared the gracious fact that with loving kindness He had drawn us! The fact is precious and the knowledge of it is exceedingly joyful!

IV. Lastly, I believe the appearing of the Lord to a man is the great means of teaching him Divine Truth. THEN WE LEARN THAT THE GREAT MOTIVE OF THE DIVINE DRAWINGS IS EVERLASTING LOVE. I do not want to preach any longer, but I want you to think. Description is not needed so much as meditation and realization. Imagine you hear the Voice which with a word made Heaven and earth! Imagine you hear it as a still small Voice, whispering in your ear, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Perhaps the less I talk about this, the better, for words cannot express the inexpressible! Let your spirit lie soaking in this Divine Assurance—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Take it up into yourself as Gideon’s fleece absorbed the dew!

Notice, the Lord has done it. It is an actual fact, the Lord is loving you. Put those two pronouns together, “I” and “you.” “I,” the Infinite, the inconceivably Glorious—“you,” a poor, lost, undeserving, ill-deserving, Helldeserving sinner! See the link between the two! See the diamond rivet which joins the two together for eternity— “I have loved you.” It is not, “I have pitied you,” nor, “I have thought about you,” but, “I have loved you!” God is in love with you! I think Aristotle said that it was impossible for one to be assured of another’s love without feeling some love in return. I am not sure about that, but I think it is quite impossible to enjoy a sense of God’s Love without returning it in a measure. Soul, do you return it?

“I have loved you.” Not, “I will do so,” but, “I have loved you.” Poor “you!” Do you not reply, “Lord, if I might say it, You know all things, You know that I love You. I cannot say that I love You as You love me, for I am such a feeble, finite creature. Still, I assuredly love You, and I dare say no other”? O Beloved, what more can I add? The bare fact that the Lord loves us is Heaven below if it is once thoroughly grasped by the soul!

See the antiquity of this love—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” I loved you when I died for you upon the Cross, yes, I loved you long before and, therefore did I die! I loved you when I made the heavens and the earth, with a view to your abode in it—yes, I loved you before I had made sea or shore. When this great world—the sun, the moon and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup—He loved His people. He saw them in the glass of the future with prescient eyes ages before ages had begun—and then He loved them with an everlasting love! There is a beginning for the world, but there is no beginning for the love of God to His people!

Nor does that exhaust the meaning of “everlasting love.” There has never been a moment when the Lord has not loved His people. There has been no pause, nor ebb, nor break in the love of God to His own. That love knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning. When we were babes and could not know Him, He loved us. When we were foolish youths, running riot in iniquity, He loved us. When we became men, hard and callous, resisting Divine Grace, He drew us though we did not run after Him—for He loved us then. He loves us this day as much as ever, even though He may be chastening us. His love is a river, always flowing and overflowing—it will never diminish and it cannot increase, for it is already Infinite—

*“Mine is an unchanging love,  
Higher than the heights above!  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death.”*

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” You may take a leap into the future and find that love still with you. Everlasting evidently lasts forever. Certain divines have tried to cut the heart out of that word, “everlasting,” and to make it out that it means a terminable period—but it is idle to argue with men to whom words are mere shuttlecocks to play with. Most plainly that which is everlasting, lasts forever! You and I may live till we grow old and decrepit, but the Lord will not leave us, for it is written, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” We shall come to die and this shall be a downy pillow for our deathbed, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” When we wake up in that dread world to which we are surely hastening, we shall find infinite happiness in “everlasting love.” When the judgment is proclaimed and the sight of the Great White Throne makes all hearts tremble and the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long—and our poor dust wakes up from its silent grave, we shall rejoice in this Divine Assurance—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Roll on, you ages, but everlasting love abides! Die out, sun and moon and you, O time, be buried in eternity—we need no other Heaven than this, “I have loved you with an everlasting love!” Brothers and Sisters, the Lord’s appearing to us has taught us great things in teaching us everlasting love!

I want the child of God to receive this assurance thoroughly into his soul, that God loves him with an everlasting love. Why, it makes my pulses beat more quickly! It makes me so full of delight that I can scarcely contain myself! A Divine delight thrills me. I, a poor sinner, even I, am the object of everlasting love! What then? Why, I must love my Lord—how can I help it? Do you not feel that you must wake up, from this time forth, to serve your loving Lord at a sevenfold pace? Will you not consecrate yourselves to Him, to spend and to be spent for Him? What is there too precious to lay at His feet? Out with your alabaster boxes right now, if ever in your lives! What is there too heavy for you to bear? What is there too difficult for you to undertake for One who has loved you so faithfully, without beginning, without change, without measure, without end?

Alas for you, poor Heart, to whom this text does not belong! There stands the golden chalice. Oh, that you were thirsty, for then you might drink of it! You have not seen the Lord, for you have not sought Him. You know not that you are drawn, for you have never come to Christ, nor have you believed in His great Sacrifice. If there were no Hell hereafter, it would be Hell enough to me not to enjoy everlasting love! I count that man a wretch undone who has never heard the sweet, full music of this text. What? Do you live without God? Do you despise His love? If there were no hereafter, it is unhappiness, enough, to be lost to the infinite delight of knowing the love of God! Oh, that you would now believe in Jesus and find peace through His blood!

But O you that have this cup of blessing, drink of it to the fullest! Live upon this assurance! Go away singing because of it! Let not trouble disturb you—why should it? Let nothing vex you—why should it? Let no evil deed done to you by another provoke you—be ready to forgive because you see that the Lord has loved you and, therefore, you can love the most unlovable! None are too vile to share in our love since God has loved us! My heart sings, “He loved me and gave Himself for me,” and I am now prepared to love my enemies if I have any!

O Lord, appear to each one of us now! Appear to us and say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Grant it, Lord! Grant it for Your sweet love’s sake! Amen.

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EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED  
NO. 2149

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Jeremiah 31:3.**

THUS speaks the Israel of God. She seems to wake up as if she had long been asleep and had forgotten a grand fact—a fact which she ought to have treasured up in her fondest memory. Suddenly startling into recollection, she cries, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” How strange that she should have forgotten it! Her spiritual lethargy had dimmed her memory and caused her to feel and act as if it were not true, as if her God had never revealed Himself to her. Then she saw with amazement that notwithstanding all the heavy chastisement which the Lord had sent her and notwithstanding all her backslidings, there was still a hope of mercy, no, there was the certainty of it, for the unchanging God had said, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Are any of you forgetful or unaware of this sacred Truth of God? Has it never occurred to you that God has spoken to His people? Though you are a child of God, have you been taken up with so many inferior things that you have let go the blessed memory of former appearances of the Lord to your soul? May the Holy Spirit awake you at this time! May there come a blessed awakening hour to your drowsy spirits! This startling remembrance came to Israel at a time when her sorrows were very great and her sins were greater, still. She had been wounded so that she was sick and sore—and she found no healing medicine—and none to bind up her wounds. In her distress she remembered not only her faults, but also the former loving kindnesses of her Lord.

She gathered from that ancient assurance of Divine Grace that her God loved her, still, and would return to her in great mercy. She dwelt with hope upon that Divine assurance of irrevocable favor—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” When earthly joys ebb out, it is a blessed thing if they make room for memories of heavenly visitations and gracious assurances! When you are at your lowest, it may happen that then the God of All Grace comes in and brings to your remembrance the love of your espousals and the joy of former days, when the candle of the Lord shone round about you.

At the same time, it was not merely a time of inward sorrow, but a period of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord, for Jehovah was speaking in tones of Sovereign Grace and pouring forth great rivers of promises and seas of mercy. See the first verse—“At the same time, says the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel and they shall be My people.”

Sometimes you pour water down a dry pump and that sets it working so that it pours forth streams of its own and so, when our gracious God pours in His love into the soul, our own love begins to flow and with it memories awake and a thousand recollections cause us to bring to mind the ancient love in which we before delighted, and we cry, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me.”

It only needs a touch, this morning, of that pierced hand to make our hard hearts soft! If our Divine Lord will only come by His Spirit and visit us as we sit in these pews, the waters of love will flow within until the wilderness shall become a pool and the dry land springs of water! Long may we have suffered a great decay of spiritual life, but we shall, on a sudden, be restored and then our hearts will burn and glow with holy attachment to Him whose love has not changed, though we have so sadly fallen. God grant it may be so! May a renewed appearing of the Lord revive our joy in His appearing of old! While you are sitting there, listening to my words, may a still small voice be heard within your souls, melting your hearts and causing you to say, “Yes, I had almost forgotten it, but ‘The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.’”

May the grand discovery of everlasting love be made by many of you for the first time in your lives! Oh, for the surprises of Almighty Grace! As when one in plowing stumbles on treasure hid in a field and rejoices exceedingly, even so may you rejoice in newly discovered love! Or if you know it already, may you feel its drawings for the thousandth time and may it be to you still fresh and new, as though you had never felt it before. The visits of God’s Grace and the discoveries of His love to our hearts never grow stale! We can go over this heavenly ground again and again and always behold new glories in it! May an overpowering memory of the Lord’s love come over us all at this time, by the power of the Holy Spirit!

I shall handle the text, first, by calling your attention to the marvelous appearing—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Secondly, to the matchless declaration—“Saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” And thirdly, to the manifest evidence of this love—“Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” May the Holy Spirit be poured forth, anointing every word I speak with Divine unction and may this discourse be precious to His people!

I. First, consider THE MARVELLOUS APPEARING—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Here are two persons, but how different in degree! Here we have, “me,” a good-for-nothing creature, apt to forget my Lord and to live as if there were no God—yet He has not ignored or neglected me. There is the High and Holy One, whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain and He has appeared to me. Between me and the great Jehovah there have been communications—the solitary silences have been broken—“The Lord has appeared,” has appeared “unto me.”

He has looked through the window. He has shown Himself through the lattices—“The Lord has appeared.” Hundreds in this House of Prayer can each one say, without doubt or hesitation, “The Lord has appeared unto me.” Perhaps of late the Lord has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world, but even if it has not been so just now, yet there was a happy time, now in the old long ago, when you saw the Lord. This is a very wonderful thing, that Jehovah the Eternal should reveal Himself to the creature of an hour—that the thrice Holy should speak to the greatly guilty! See here we have “the Lord” and “me”—and between these two, this is the golden link, an appearance in infinite love—“The Lord has appeared unto me.”

That the All-Glorious should put in an appearance among His angels and unveil Himself to Cherubim and Seraphim, I can more easily understand. But it is incomprehensible that the Creator of the ends of the earth, of whose understanding there is no searching, should visit me, a sinful child of man! Yet this which surpasses understanding is undoubtedly true. My Brothers and Sisters, we have enjoyed the Supernatural—we have risen out of the region of materialism into the spirit realm where God dwells and condescends to commune with mortal men! We can say, “The Lord has appeared unto me.” It was necessary that He should do so, for nothing but His appearing could have scattered our darkness, removed our death and brought us salvation.

It needed that He should appear, for nothing but a vision of His love could have won our hearts for Himself and delivered them from the fascinations of this present evil world. Tell it among the skeptics and the earthworms—“The Lord has appeared unto me.” I care not who questions it, for the results of His gracious visit are in my Nature and my life! The event is recorded in the diary of my memory in indelible ink! But it is also written in my soul and the experience of every day deepens the inscription! Is not this even as the Lord promised of old, “They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them”?

Do I hear some asking, How is this? I understand that God appeared to Israel, but how to me? Let me picture the discovery of Grace as it comes to the awakening mind, when it learns to sit at the feet of Jesus, saved by faith in the great Sacrifice. Touched by the Spirit of God, we find that the Lord appeared to each one of us in the promises of His work. Every promise in God’s Word is a promise to every Believer, or to every character such as that to which it was first given. When God said this or that to the saints of old, my Soul, He said it to you! I read the word as first spoken to Abraham, Moses, or David—but in very deed each utterance is for me! What a discovery! This Bible is God’s letter of love to me! No promise of the Word of God is for one individual only. Though the promise was whispered in one ear at first, that one favored person was the representative of all who have like faith.

With what delight you will now read your Bibles, when you can see that in them the Lord has appeared of old unto you and spoken words of love to you personally! Does the Word of God speak to Believers? I am a Believer and therefore it speaks to me. Does the Word speak to praying men and women? I pray—it speaks to me. The richest word in all that Book is as much the inheritance of the Believer today as it was the heritage of

David and we may find the words of the Lord and eat them as the Bread of our souls, as Jeremiah did, for, in this sacred Book, “The Lord has appeared of old” to each one of His believing family.

Furthermore, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me,” in the Person of His Son. God came to each Believer in Christ Jesus. God came in boundless love to each one of us as “Immanuel, God with us.” Towards each one of us He “took upon Him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Listen, my Heart! In His Manhood and humiliation the Lord God appeared to you! On the Cross your Lord Jesus showed Himself to you in love. Now you have found it out, is it not a glorious discovery? It was not only for the innumerable multitude that Jesus died, but for you, my Soul, for YOU! I wish, Beloved, we could always look upon Jesus as God’s embodied love to us— to us in particular. Will you take a faith-view of Jesus at this time as dying for sinners and for you as a sinner in particular? Say, “Yes, 1,800 years ago and more, the Lord in the Person of His dear Son appeared unto me in Gethsemane and on Calvary as my Lord and my God, and yet my Substitute and Savior.”

Since then, the Lord has constantly appeared unto us in the power of His Holy Spirit. Do you remember when first your sin was set in order before your tearful eyes and you trembled for fear of the justice which you had provoked? Do you remember when you heard the story of the Crucified Redeemer? When you saw the atoning Sacrifice? When you looked to Jesus and were lightened? It was the Holy Spirit who was leading you out of yourself—and God by the Holy Spirit was appearing unto you. How long has it been? I hope I speak to some who have lately been renewed by the Holy Spirit and to you this appearing is fresh as morning dew! But I speak to many more whose call by Divine Grace was long ago.

It was “of old” that the Holy Spirit came into saving contact with your spirit and drew you with the cords of love and with the bands of a man. These past appearances have been eclipsed by others still more clear and full but, at the same time, as Israel remembered the first Passover as the beginning of things with the nation, so do you remember those first appearances of the Lord—for then you began to live! Some of us can remember where the Lord Jesus first met with us. Though it had been in the desert as with Moses, or by the brook as with Jacob, or by the city as with Joshua, or in the furnace as with Shadrach, we have forever reckoned the place to be holiness unto the Lord. Call it Jehovah-Shammah for the Lord was there!

Now, dear Friends, we hold this appearance in precious memory—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me.” Many things are preserved in the treasure house of memory, but this is the choicest of our jewels. How gracious, how glorious was the appearance of God in Christ Jesus to our soul! God full of mercy, God mighty to save, God the salvation of His people—what a sight is this! There was nothing like it at first! There is nothing like it now! Nothing that has ever been discovered by us since has borne comparison in preciousness to that marvelous manifestation of the ever-loving God! Time may obliterate a thousand memories but it can never wear away the recollection of the Lord’s appearances unto us!

This appearance came in private assurance. To me it was as personal as it was sure. I used to hear the preacher, but then I heard my God! I used to see the congregation but then I saw Him who is invisible. I used to feel the power of words but now I have felt the immeasurable energy of their substance. God Himself filled and thrilled my soul! Through and through, His almighty love pierced my heart. I know that some of you think that if God were to show Himself to you, as He did to Moses or Elijah, it would be a vast blessing to you. But the Lord’s present appearances are not a whit less comforting and establishing. Manifestations by His Word and Spirit are by no means second in value to those of a miraculous sort. In no case can God, who is pure Spirit, be seen by the eye—He is only known by our spirit—and therefore His spiritual appearing is all we should desire.

Oh, the encompassing of Divine Love, when it wraps us about as a cloud enfolded the disciples upon Tabor! When the sacred hand of Love grasps our very heart, we feel the heavenly grip and every part and power of our being is moved! God has an indescribable way of putting Himself into communication with His people through Jesus Christ, by His Holy Spirit and when this occurs, they say, “The Lord has appeared unto me.” There is, then, no hearing and seeing for other people—“The Lord has appeared unto me.” Come, my Brothers and Sisters, shall we go back to that time of love when first the Lord said to us, “Live”? That was a word, indeed! Then every word in the Bible seemed for us. When we went up to the house of God every hymn and Scripture lesson was for us. And when we heard the sermon the Lord manifested Himself in it to us. “He loved me, and gave Himself for me” was our daily song, for He had, personally, and of a surety, drawn near unto our soul and shed abroad His love there by the Holy Spirit.

I cannot help calling your attention to the fact that the Lord came in positive certainty. The text does not say, “I hoped so,” or, “I thought so,” but, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying.” She who spoke thus saw the appearance and heard the speech. Brethren, be sure about your spiritual experience! It would be a horrible thing to leave spiritual things a matter of question, or to regard them as visionary and uncertain. To me it is bliss to say, “I know Whom I have believed.” My soul cannot content herself with less than certainty. I desire never to take a step upon an, “if,” or a, “perhaps.” I have often waited as to spiritual movements till I could find beneath my foot one of God’s shalls and wills upon which I could securely stand. I can never be content with the bare hope that I may be a child of God—I must have the Spirit bearing witness with my spirit that I am born of God.

Give me Infallible Truth. I want facts, not fancies. O Beloved, let your experience be made up of facts and not of notions and ideas! Seek to use the plain, straightforward utterance of my text—“The Lord appeared of old unto me, saying.” If that is your case, you are happy. If it is not so, you are in an evil plight, for you are evidently without God and therefore without hope.

II. My second head is THE MATCHLESS DECLARATION—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” I do not want you, at this moment, so much to hear me and to consider my statement, as to behold the appearance of the Lord and enjoy for yourself personally and at once, the gracious assurance of heavenly Grace. Here is a word from God of amazing love—Jehovah says, “I have loved you.” Think it over. Believe it. Stagger not at it. If the husband should say to his wife, “I have loved you,” she would believe him—it would seem only natural that he should do so.

And when Jehovah says to you, a feeble woman, an unknown man, “I have loved you,” He means it. This is no fiction. God means by love what we mean by it—only His love is higher, deeper, fuller, holier than ours can ever be. Looking from His Throne, the insufferable light of which your eye could not endure, Jehovah speaks in accents of fervent affection and He says to you, “I have loved you.” Get hold of this Truth that God really loves you—that you are the object of the intense delight of the Host High—and what more would you have? God’s heart to you is Love! Be amazed. Be enraptured with this!

Note, next, it is a declaration of unalloyed love. The Lord had been bruising, wounding and crushing His people and yet He says, “I have loved you.” These cruel wounds were all in love. What? When He struck, did He love? “Yes, I have loved you.” What? When she was past human help and foul with sin? “Yes,” says He, “I have loved you.” “But, Lord, I have never been worthy of it.” “No,” He says, “but I have loved you all the same.” But, Lord, I have not been conscious of it. “I have loved you all the same.” But, Lord, I have run away from Your loving guidance. “I have loved you all the same.” God’s heart to His people is love, love, love, love, only love! Without beginning, without end, without measure, without change is the love of Jehovah to His elect. “I have loved you.”

Oh, when I sat at home and tried to eat this roll, as the Prophet did, it satiated my soul with fatness! I ardently wished that I might have voice and strength to tell out this blessed Truth to you. And then I thought— Well, what does it matter if I should be faint and feeble, if they will only think of the text believingly—and get it into their hearts by present enjoyment—it may even be better that the preacher should be nowhere and the Truth should be all in all. When we drink from the well we do not want the water to taste of the pitcher. If you have nothing from me I hope you will have the more from my Master. You will have no taste of me this morning, but only of this precious declaration of the Lord. “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

It is love, love only, love always, love perfect, love to the uttermost. This statement is a declaration of love in contrast with certain other things. Did you notice in the 14th verse of the 30th chapter, “All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not”? Let me sound those two notes in sharp contrast—“All your lovers have forgotten you,” but—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” What a difference between the false friendship of the world and sin—and the changeless love of God! You, being earth-bound in heart, have been going after your idols and they have all deceived you. You have been trusting here and there and your trusts have all betrayed you! But the Lord Jehovah says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

You have provoked Him to jealousy by gods which were no gods, but He has never ceased His love. O Friends, how sadly have we erred by spiritual idolatry! How often have we hewed out broken cisterns which hold no water and yet our God loves us the same as always! What a miracle of Grace is this! As for our love to Him, how fickle! We have been hot today and cold tomorrow. Our love has been an April day—warm sunshine and cold showers—but the Lord has loved us with infinite constancy, even with an everlasting love! He has never changed. He could not love us more—He would not love us less. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

The contrast is very beautiful if we place over against it either the world’s love to us, or our own love to God. Jehovah, when He came to His people in Egypt, made Himself known as, “I Am that I Am”—the immutable God who abides forever the same. As such He has revealed Himself to us, for He is without variableness or shadow of turning. How sweetly does Immutability smile on us as we hear it say, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”! Thus, dear Friends, our text is a word of love in the past—“I have loved you.” We were rebels and He loved us. We were dead in trespasses and in sins and He loved us. We rejected His Divine Grace and defied His warnings, but He loved us. We came to His feet all trembling and afraid—and He loved us and washed us and robed us. He loved us and therefore He saved us.

Since then we have been earthly, sinful, changeful, unbelieving, proud, foolish—but He has loved us without pause. We have been ill and racked with pain, but He has loved us. We have lost our dearest relatives by the Lord’s hand, but even in this He loved us. Everything has been in a whirl round about us, but He has loved us with fixed affection. Our life has been a strange labyrinth, but He has loved us and that love has been the clue of the maze. How sweet it is, Beloved, to roll up the years gone by and put them away with this label—“Days of the loving kindness of the Lord!” The matchless declaration of the text is a voice of love in the present. The Lord loves the Believer now. Whatever discomfort you are in, the Lord loves you. In this house, perhaps, your heart is failing you with fear, but the Lord still says to you, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

“Everlasting” includes today. Things present are provided for as well as things to come. External circumstances do not change the love of God nor will your internal condition do so. Has He not said, “I am God, I change not”? Everlasting love makes no leaps and jumps so as to leave out this day of trouble and that hour of temptation. Even at this dark hour your name is on the heart of your God. The text is a voice of love in the future. It means, “I will love you forever.” God has not loved us with a love which will die out after a certain length of time—His love is like Himself—“from everlasting to everlasting.” If you will read the chapter through to the end,

you will see how God was about to deal with His chosen. He says, “I will build you, and you shall be built.” “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” “I will turn their mourning into joy.” “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” These are outpourings of a love which goes on forever—

*“Father, ‘twas Your love that knew us  
Earth’s foundations long before:  
That same love to Jesus drew us  
By its sweet constraining power,  
And will keep us  
Safely now, and evermore.”*

It is a joy worth 10,000 worlds to have this assurance sealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit! “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” This is a declaration of love secured to us—secured in many ways. Did you observe in this chapter how the Lord secures His love to His people, first, by a Covenant? Read the first verse—“I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.” See further on from verse 31 to thirty-four. The Covenant is summed up in these words, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” And if it is so, the Lord’s love must, indeed, be everlasting. God has pledged Himself to His saints by a Covenant of salt, “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” The tenor of the Covenant is, “I will, and they shall.”

How my heart delights in this! God loves me with an everlasting love and He embodies that love in an Everlasting Covenant. Further, this love is secured by relationship. Will you dart your eye on to the 9th verse and read the last part of it? “I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.” A man cannot get rid of fatherhood by any possible means. Yes, though my boy should transgress and dishonor his father’s name, yet I am still his father. There is no getting out of this relationship by any conceivable method and so, if, indeed, the Lord is unto you a Father, He will always give you a father’s love. In your adoption and regeneration the Lord has avowed Himself to be your Father and has virtually said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

“The son abides always.” “If children, then heirs.” His love is pledged again by redemption. Read the 11th verse—“For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” Would you see the indenture of God’s Covenant love? Behold it in the indented hands and feet of the Crucified Redeemer! How shall Christ leave off loving His people when He has their names engraved on the palms of His hands? Redemption has sealed everlasting love. That spear which found His heart and set flowing its blood and its water has killed all doubts as to the eternal endurance of our Lord’s love! From now on let no man question our Well-Beloved, for He bears in His body the marks of His everlasting love! Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever— and His love to His chosen is at this time what it was before time began!

Once more, in this passage of the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord certifies His love to His people in a very solemn way by calling Heaven and earth to witness it. Let me read from the 35th verse. “Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is His name: if those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the Lord; If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord.”

Thus are the laws of Nature made to seal the Law of Love! God, that cannot lie, thus makes the whole creation to be a guarantee of His abiding love to His own. I pray you, believe Him and be joyful in His House of Prayer. This is a declaration of love divinely confessed. The Lord has not sent this assurance to us by a Prophet, but He has made it Himself—“The Lord has appeared.” This declaration does not come through another tongue or lips, but the Divine Lover Himself breathes His own love words to His chosen—“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

Notice, that it is love sealed with a “yes.” God would have us go no further in our ordinary speech than to say, “yes, yes”—and surely we may be content with so much from Himself. His “yes” amounts to a sacred declaration—“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He lifts His hand to Heaven and He swears—swears by Himself, because He can swear by no greater—“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Beloved, feast upon this! I am very conscious of the feebleness of my exposition, but I am equally conscious of the great strength of the precious doctrines which I have set before you.

III. We finish, thirdly, with THE MANIFEST EVIDENCE. “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Here are drawings mentioned. Have you not felt them? We have not seen God, Beloved, but we have felt Him drawing us. Oh, what tugs He gave to some of us when we were children! Do you remember, when you were boys and girls, when you could not sleep at nights for heavenly drawings towards Divine things? Do you remember, when you were alone in the country, how you would sit down under a hedge and cry—you scarcely knew why—longing for something better than you had as yet reached?

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus drew you out of the horrible pit? Out of the midnight of despair? Do you remember how He drew you till He set your feet upon a rock? He drew you from spiritual death, from the corruption of sin, from the dominion of the devil! He drew you into life, love and liberty. He drew you to the foot of the Cross, to the Throne of Grace, to the Church of Christ! How well do I recall the hour when I was drawn to the place where I saw One hanging on a tree in agonies and blood—then and there I looked—and as I looked I lived! Since then the

Lord has drawn me along the paths of duty and delight, of faith and peace, of love and joy, of hope and rapture.

These were drawings resulting from love. He drew us because He loved us with an everlasting love. Other drawings of Divine goodness are resisted—resisted, in some cases, to the bitter end—and men justly perish. But the drawings of everlasting love effect their purpose. If you have been drawn to Christ, it is because God loved you before the world began! Do not think the Lord began to love you when you began to love Him. Oh, no! If God loves you now, He loved you before He created the earth. If this day He loves you, He loved you when there were no days, but the Ancient of Days. He saw you through the glass of His prescience and He loved you and predestinated you to be conformed unto the image of His Son—and from this purpose of love He will never turn aside. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance [change].” He will not alter the thing which has gone out of His lips.

Here are drawings mentioned—these were drawings from God. How sweetly, how Omnipotently God can draw! When He begins to draw a man, that person may pull back and perhaps, even for years, may stand out against Divine Grace—but when the Lord puts forth His Omnipotence the man is bound to yield. Without violating the will of man or making him less a free agent than he used to be, the loving kindness of the Lord can act as a charm upon him and win him completely with his full consent. “Draw me; we will run after You.” He draws, and we run. When Jehovah would have Israel come to Zion, it soon comes to pass that Israel longs to go there.

See in the sixth verse: “For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.” We yield to the drawings because they come from the Lord’s own hand and their power lies in His love. As the drawings come from God, so are they drawings to God. Blessed is he whose heart is being drawn nearer and nearer to the Most High. Naturally, we struggle back to carnal things—we get taken up with business, with family, and with a thousand groveling cares—but when the Holy Spirit draws, it is upward and heavenward! He draws us to repentance, to faith, to love, to holiness and to continuance in well-doing. Oh, that we may now feel Divine drawings towards Him who is our All in All!

The Lord assures us that these are drawings of His loving kindness. However He draws, it is in love and whenever He draws, it is in love. Observe that the Church does not here say, “The Lord drew me,” but the Lord Himself says, “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” God knows better about His drawings than we do. We think that He pulls and snatches in anger, but He knows that He has always drawn in loving kindness! Because the horse is willful, it thinks the driver stern—our waywardness makes us think our Lord austere. The forces which He puts forth to work upon us are tender, gentle, kind and loving. He has drawn you and me “with loving kindness.” I am sure He has thus dealt with me. Will you think of your own case and bless His name?

Lord, You have drawn me when I did not know it. You have drawn me when I thought I was willingly moving of my own accord. I see it now and I bless Your name for it. Draw me, still, that I may still say, “Your gentleness has made me great.” What a wonderful word is that—“loving kindness”—“loving,” “kindness”—two of the choicest jewels set side by side! Kindness is “kin-nedness,” and the Lord Jesus treats us as His kin—and He does this in the most loving manner. “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” He might have whipped me to Himself. He might have dragged me to the City of Refuge. He might have threatened me into repentance. He might have thundered me into submission. But no, “with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

I spoke to a Brother in Christ, yesterday, who called himself—and I think he spoke the truth—“a specially favored one.” I take that title, also. Take it, my Sister! Take it, my Brother! Does it not fit you well? Has not the Lord been specially good to you? “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” “Alas,” cries one, “but I have been whipped.” “You have chastised me and I was chastised.” Very true, but how few have been the strokes compared with what you deserved! “Oh, but God has rebuked me sharply,” says another. I answer, again, how few have been His chidings compared with what we might have expected considering our evil ways! Prevailingly His cords have been cords of love and His bands have been the bands of a man. Bless the Lord, O my Soul! He leads me beside the still waters.

Only one thing more. These drawings are to be continuous. “With loving kindness have I drawn you” and He means to do the same forevermore. If you will look the chapter through, you will see that God promises to keep on drawing. See verse eight—“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.” Verse nine—“They shall come. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way.” Read verse 10—“He that scattered Israel will gather him.” See verse 12—“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.” He that has begun to draw will go on drawing us till He has safely landed us where His everlasting love shall be our endless theme of song—even in Heaven where we shall dwell in eternal fellowship with the Eternal God! The everlastingness of Divine Love is the crown of it all!

I would not care to preach to you a Gospel which has no final perseverance in it. Spiritual life which can die is not the eternal life promised in the Gospel—and heavenly love which can fail is not the everlasting love of our text! Whenever I find that doctrine left out, I feel as if they had taken away the wheat from the barn and the grapes from the winepress. If the salvation which you set forth to be that of Christ is a temporary one, you may have it that like it—I will have none of it! I believe in everlasting love and I can do with nothing less! My hope to get to Heaven lies in this—as far as I have come on the road, the Lord has drawn me and He will draw me the rest of the way. I have had no strength of my own until now—I have had no might but what He has afforded me—and I look to the Lord,

still, for all the Grace I shall need between this spot and the gate of pearl! Such a magnificent text as ours ought to make us consider two things.  
The first is, Is it so? Am I drawn? If God loves you with an everlasting love,  
He has drawn you by His loving kindness—is it so or not? Has He drawn  
you by His Holy Spirit so that you have followed? Are you a Believer? Do  
you carry Christ’s Cross? You have been drawn to this. Then take home  
these gracious words—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” If you  
have not been so drawn, do you not wish you were? Oh, it were worth dying a thousand deaths to be a Christian after that fashion of Christianity  
which is based on everlasting love! Here is a glorious foundation—love  
without beginning, love without end—free, sovereign, unchangeable love!  
Not love bought by merit in us, nor produced by our efforts or entreaties—  
but love which comes to us because God will love and has chosen in His  
Divine Sovereignty to love us. “Everlasting love!” Why, the syllables are  
music! If you can climb that height, you have climbed where it is worth  
while to abide forever!  
O Friends, if you cannot claim this, at any rate desire it and go humbly  
on your knees to Christ Jesus and look to Him and live! But, child of God,  
if you know these drawings and if it is true that God loves you with an everlasting love, then are you resting? “I have a feeble hope,” says one.  
What? How can you talk so? He who is loved with an everlasting love and  
knows it, should swim in an ocean of joy! Not a wave of trouble should  
disturb the glassy sea of his delight! What is to make a man happy if this  
will not?  
Come, come! We must have no more hanging heads. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! If the Lord has loved me with an everlasting love, I will not be cast  
down though the earth is removed! His love is better than wealth! His love  
is better than health (great blessing as that is)! His love is better than  
honor, better than usefulness! Everlasting love—and you have it! Man  
alive, wipe the tears out of your eyes and lift up your head! “Oh, rest in  
the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,” for if He has loved you so, what  
have you to fear? What is to be done but to love Him in return who has  
loved us so much? One thing I know—  
*“All that remains for me  
Is but to love and sing,  
And wait until the angels come  
To bear me to my King.”*

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Jeremiah 30:12-17; 31:1-14.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—220, 229, 748.

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NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE  
NO. 2880

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.

**“The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love:  
therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Jeremiah 31:3.**

IT is said that when the stars cannot be seen during the day from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a deep well, they would be visible at once and, certainly, it is a fact that many of the brightest of God’s promises are usually seen by His children when they are passing through some of their darkest experiences. As surely as God puts them into the furnace of affliction and trial, He will be with them in the furnace. I do not read that Jacob ever saw the Angel of the Lord until that night when, by the brook Jabbok, “there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day,” but then, the wrestling Jacob met the wrestling Angel foot to foot. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the “Captain of the Lord’s host” until, outside the walls of Jericho, his Divine Leader appeared to him. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord until, as a stranger in the plains of Mamre, He manifested Himself to His servant in the form of a traveler and His friends needing hospitality and refreshment.

It is in our most desperate straits that we often have our most joyous Revelations. John must go to “the isle that is called Patmos” before he could have the wondrous Revelation that was there given to him. It was only on that barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from the world’s light, that he could find the fitting darkness in which to view the Glory of Heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth! The message of our text was given to Jeremiah in a time of deep distress—it was meant to be helpful to the Lord’s people in their greatest desolations. That being the case, we may use it in a threefold manner and view it, first, as an answer to many complaints. Secondly, as teaching some exceedingly valuable doctrines and, thirdly, as a stimulant to self-examination as to our state before God.

I. First, then, our text may be viewed as AN ANSWER TO MANY COMPLAINTS.  
If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the word, “saying,” is in italics, showing that it is not in the original, but has been supplied by the translators. Sometimes they have inserted words which have really brought out the meaning more clearly—but, in this case, if I understand the passage, they have rather obscured the sense. The fact is, the first sentence is a complaint on the part of Israel. In the previous verse, God had said, “The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.” “Ah,” said Israel, “but that was centuries ago—‘the Lord has appeared of old unto me.’” There was a note of complaint even in the expression of gratitude, as much as to say, “Times are changed, for the Lord does not appear unto me now.” The complaint was that His choice Revelations and wondrous deliverances were all in the ages long ago. But the Lord’s answer was, in effect, “It is true that these Revelations and deliverances were in the past, but they are designed to yield you present comfort, for they prove that I have loved you with an ancient love and, since I am Immutable, you may omit the word, ancient, and insert, everlasting—‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.’”  
Then, to complete the answer, the Lord avers that even in Israel’s present time of mourning He had manifested His loving kindness. He seems to say, “Is not that as much as I ever did? Talk of all the wonders that I worked in the days gone by, when I cut Rahab in pieces and wounded the dragon—this is a greater wonder, that I have drawn you with loving kindness! Say not that the former times were better than these. Say not that the wonder-working power of God is exhausted. I loved you of old, but I also love you today and I have proved it by drawing you with the bands of My love. This is as great a miracle, as high a privilege and as sure a sign of My love to you as anything I did in the olden days.”  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, is not this sometimes our complaint—that we read in the Bible of what God did of old, but we see nothing like that nowadays? Indeed, some people think that although there were wonders in those ancient times, the oracle has long ceased to speak. I daresay you have heard of the poor ignorant woman who, on being told by her minister about the crucifixion of Christ, said, “Well, well, Sir, if it was so, it happened a long while ago and a great way off—but let us hope the story is not true.” I address some people, not quite so ignorant as that woman, who, nevertheless, when I preach about the wonders God has worked, say, “Well, Sir, those things happened long ago and a great way off—but it is not at all probable that God would do anything like that now.” What? Do you think that His arm is waxed short, or that His hands have become powerless, so that He is not now able to help His people as He did in the ages gone by? This is the complaint of many! Perhaps they do not put it into words, but this is what they often say in their heart.  
What is God’s answer to this complaint? Let each Believer hear Him say, “I have done for you as great wonders as I ever did for Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. I have worked miracles for you as matchless as when I brought Israel up out of Egypt, or led the chosen nation through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. Did I bring them up out of Egypt? Have I not brought you up out of the dominion of sin? Did I break the power of Pharaoh? Have I not crushed the might of Satan? Did I divide the Red Sea for Israel to pass over? Have I not made a pathway for you, through many a tumultuous sea, so that you have gone over dry shod? Did I feed the people with manna in the wilderness and have I not fed you—not with bread, alone, but also with the Words which have come forth out of My mouth? Did I cause Moses to lift up the bronze serpent, that they might be healed when they were bitten by the serpents? And have I not lifted up the Son of Man, that whoever looks unto Him may be cured of the serpent-bite of sin? Did I bring them into Canaan and give them rest? And have I not said to you, ‘There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God’? Did I drive out the Canaanite before them and give them possession of the land? And have I not driven out your sins and will I not, by My Spirit, purify and cleanse your whole life? Did I give them Prophets after my own heart—and have I not given you shepherds who have fed you with knowledge and with understanding? Did I give to them, at last, King David to sit upon his throne—and have I not given to you great David’s greater Son and Lord to be the King of your heart and to rule over your entire being? Did I give them Solomon, a temple and riches and glory? And have I not promised to you Heaven and greater riches, glories and splendors than anything I ever gave to him when he ruled over Israel?”  
I feel sure that if you will carefully look into it, your own experience will prove to be far more wonderful than anything which God did of old, so that you will have no reason to say, “The Lord appeared of old unto our fathers, but He is not now with their children.” We are apt, sometimes, to think that natural miracles are greater than spiritual ones—for instance, that the dividing of the Red Sea, as recorded in the Book of Exodus, is a greater miracle than the forgiving of sins, as recorded in the Gospels. But if you will weigh these two things in the balances of the sanctuary, you will at once see that the spiritual miracle is infinitely greater than the natural one. It is an easy thing to shut the mouths of ordinary lions, but it is a great deal more difficult to shut the mouth of the roaring lion of Hell who goes about seeking whom he may devour. It is a very simple matter for the Omnipotent God to make a world—He speaks and it is done! But to remake an innumerable company of His creatures who have become debased and spiritually dead—this is, indeed, a work only comparable to that which He accomplished when He “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.”  
God made the world without any suffering, but He could not redeem even one soul without unknown agonies. At the close of the six days work of Creation, God could say of everything that He had made, that it was very good. But, on the Cross, the Savior could not say, “It is finished,” until His very heart had been broken with anguish and reproach. God could rejoice over the works of His hands—and His delights could be with the sons of men, but, after man had fallen, God could not lift him up again without sighs, groans and bloody sweat—yes, death itself, the death of deaths—“the death of the Cross.”  
Therefore, let none of us, in these days, say that the former times were better than the present ones, or that God has ceased to perform His mighty works. He has done as much for us as He ever did for our fathers—so let us praise and bless His holy name, and laud and magnify His deeds of Grace! We, as a church, perhaps, are apt to think that we must not expect great things from God in these times. Why not—I pray— why not? Did not God give tongues of fire and send His Apostles forth to preach the Word to the people of every clime under Heaven? And is it not a fact that, within a hundred years of Christ’s death, His Gospel had been proclaimed through all the then known world? And is it not possible that from this time forth the Church of Christ may take great strides like a giant, instead of creeping like a snail? Why may not the army of the Cross march onward—  
*“From victory unto victory”—*  
instead of being so frequently repulsed? Is the Church of Christ always to be like a little stream in which you may see the pebbles lie? No! Let her be like Kishon, the mighty torrent that swept away the hosts of Sisera and Jabin, and let her carry off the legions of darkness into the depths of despair! Let God but arise in His might and wondrous works such as He did in the days of Huss, and Luther, and Calvin shall be done again! The thunder-claps of Whitefield and Wesley shall reverberate again! God can make all His ministers to be flames of fire if He so pleases. He can once more awaken His Church, scatter all her foes before her and enrich her with the spoils of the holy war!  
We have not fallen upon evil days, Beloved. We may be feeble, but our God is not! The light may be dim just now, but the sun is not dim. What if the winds do not always blow with hurricane force? They are but slumbering for a while and will awake with all their known vigor and drive the chariots of the sky at resistless speed! What if the ocean should seem, just now, to be sleeping in its briny bed? Before long it will respond to the Psalmist’s invitation, “Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof.” If the stars should be, for a little while, hidden from your gaze, they will soon pierce through the darkness and, once again, shall you behold those eyes of Heaven peering down in mercy upon you! God can speedily renew to you all the manifestations of His Presence! Ebbs shall be followed by floods, winters by summers, and our present indications of a state of death shall give place to signs and tokens of a glorious life! Say not, complainingly, O Church of God, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me,” but rather rejoice and revel in His comforting assurance, “Yes, I did appear of old unto you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.’”  
I have thus explained how I believe our text was intended to be used.  
II. Now we will look at it as TEACHING SOME EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE DOCTRINES.  
And, first, I believe that it teaches us the Doctrine of Effectual Calling— “With loving kindness have I drawn you.” No one ever comes to the Lord unless the Lord, Himself, draws him. He cannot come and he will not come. Christ said to the murmuring Jews, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” And to those who sought to kill Him because of His miracles on the Sabbath, He said, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” That is the sternest blow against free-will of which I know! What a free-willer can make out of that text, I cannot tell. He says that any man can come to Christ, yet Christ said to some, “You will not come to Me.” And both observation and experience prove that this is still true. Never yet did a soul come to Christ till first Christ came to it. There are some who think that the Doctrine of Effectual Calling means that God forces men to repent and believe against their wills—a more absurd and unscriptural notion than that could hardly be mentioned! God does not drag men to Heaven by the hair of their heads! There is a wide difference between physical force and spiritual force. God does not save an unwilling man—He makes him willing in the day of His power.  
We may not be able to explain all about this great mystery, yet we may firmly believe—in full accordance with the laws which regulate human minds and, without at all violating the free agency of His creatures—that God knows how to persuade men! Yes, and how sweetly to “compel them to come in,” that His house may be filled! There is a sort of compulsion, you know, which one exercises by argument. The force of logic, or the spell of eloquence, we all acknowledge. In this way the understanding is

overwhelmed. The mind, at first, resists, and says, “I will not do suchand-such,” but you bring argument after argument to bear upon it until, at last, it yields and says, “I am compelled to do it.” Yet it acts willingly, freely and not without pleasure. The understanding has been enlightened that acts upon the rest of the powers of the mind—and thus the man is influenced. We may even say compelled without any violation of the fact that he is free!  
And so the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding by bringing the Truth of God to the mind and, through that Truth, leads the soul to see certain consequences that follow from it. Then the understanding, being enlightened, the soul, with full consent, comes to Christ. The Holy Spirit does what you and I cannot do, for He acts directly upon the will. We cannot do that except by physical force and, even then, the will is not really changed, for, if a man resolves that he will not do a certain thing but you afterwards compel him to do it, I question if his will is actually conquered. But the Holy Spirit knows how to apprehend “My Lord Will-BeWill”—as Bunyan calls him—put him in irons and lead him away captive. There is still the will, but I can hardly say that it is put into fetters, for it was in fetters before! But it is as changed and assimilated to the will of God that it is really free in its love of holiness. It seemed to be free before, but it was a slave to evil passions. Free-will is a slave, by nature, but when Christ comes and, (as some would say), fetters it with the golden chains of love—then the will becomes free, indeed!  
Thus I have shown you how the Holy Spirit acts upon the will. He can also act upon the heart which is, perhaps, an even more important part of the man. When a man truly loves any objective, he is always willing to do anything in furtherance of that objective. And so, when the Holy Spirit shows to the mind’s eye the beauties of Christ, His sufficiency and adaptation to the needs of the soul, the heart begins to love Christ. Where the heart goes, the will must follow—especially if it is led by “My Lord Understanding, the Lord Mayor of Mansoul,” according to Bunyan’s Holy War. So, though no soul ever comes to Christ without being drawn to Him, yet let it always be understood that such drawing is in perfect accordance with the laws which govern human minds and that the Spirit of God thus acts without, in the least degree, violating the freedom which God has given to men!  
The text says that God draws His people “with loving kindness.” Yet it is quite certain that the Holy Spirit makes use of the Law of the Lord in drawing men to Christ and salvation. The thunders of the Law, the terrors of judgment, the stings of conscience and the pangs of death are all employed for this purpose—but they are all tempered and softened by the loving kindness of the Lord! In every instance you will find that it is His loving kindness that gives the finishing stroke—even with those who are driven to Christ by that stern teacher, the Law. The prodigal set out for his father’s house from a sense of need, “but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.” So that the last steps he took towards his father’s house were taken with those kisses still warm upon his cheek and His father’s welcome still music in his ears! Rightly do we sing— *“Law and terrors do but harden  
All the while they work alone.  
But a sense of blood bought-pardon  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.”*  
And when that sense of blood-bought pardon comes to the heart, the Law’s thunders are all hushed and the heart is won for God!  
The Master came one night to the door of a man’s heart and knocked on it with the mailed gloves of the Law upon His hands. The door creaked and shook, but it did not open, and the man put up against it all the furniture he could find, to keep it from opening, crying, all the while, “I will never be forced to yield.” So the Master turned away for a time, but, by-and-by, He came back and, with His own soft hand, using mostly that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again, oh, so softly and tenderly! This time the door did not shake, but, strange to say, it opened and there, upon his knees, the once-unwilling host was found, waiting to welcome his Divine Guest! He said to Him, “Come in, come in! You have knocked in such a way that I can no longer resist You. I could not think of Your pierced hand leaving its bloody mark upon my door and then of Your going away homeless—Your head filled with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night. Come in, come in! You have won my heart and I yield to You, You blessed Lord and Savior!” It is so, I believe, in every case—loving kindness wins the day! What Moses could not do with his hammer, Christ does with His Cross. What Moses, with the two tablets of stone, could never do, Christ does with one touch of the finger of His mercy!  
This is the Doctrine of Effectual Calling as I see it in the text. Do you all understand it experimentally? Can each one of you say with Dr. Doddridge—  
If so, may He continue to draw you until, at last, He shall draw you from earth to Heaven and you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out forever!  
I also see in the text the Doctrine of Eternal Love. Why has the Lord drawn His people to Himself? Because He loved them “with an everlasting love.” To some good people, the word, “election,” sounds almost like blasphemy. If “predestination” is mentioned, they think it is something dreadful! Yet that Doctrine is in the text and you cannot get the idea of “predestination” away from the word, “everlasting.” The reason—and the only reason why any man is ever drawn out from the world and brought to Christ, is to be found in the eternal love of God! There is nothing more, naturally, in that man than in any other man. Indeed, in many cases he is worse than others. If salvation had been the reward of merit, he would have been left out. There is, by nature, nothing in man to win the heart of Christ. What form, what comeliness is there in human nature in His sight? Shall blackness win the heart of Him who is without blemish and without spot? Shall loathsome leprosy be attractive to the Divine Being? Shall deformity so charm the eyes of Jehovah that He shall love it? It cannot be! The only reason for God’s love to us is that He will love us. From that fountain of His own dateless love springs our effectual calling and everything else that comes to us!  
Let us pause awhile and meditate upon this everlasting love. Let every Believer in Jesus think upon it to his own comfort. There are many old things in the world—we like to see old castles, old abbeys and old ruins— but, long before those castles and abbeys were built, Christ Jesus had proved His love to us by redeeming us from our sins by shedding His precious blood for us on Calvary’s Cross! We delight to travel in foreign countries and to see the remains of old Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, or other wonders of the world. But long before any of those stupendous structures were piled, God had declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the old serpent’s head! It is delightful to go back, in thought, to the time when the hills were born—when the hoary Alps were yet infants and when the aged ocean was but a baby, sporting in its newborn existence and clapping its hands in its early glee. But if you go back as far as that, you have not begun to get anywhere near the time when God, in covenant with Christ, gave to Him a people and promised that they should be His forever and ever!  
Scientists love to go back to the most remote geological periods—to those ages before man was created—when those various deposits of shells, bones and other materials were made which are gradually being discovered. But you must go further back than that! Yes, you must go back beyond the very first creative act of God—and even then you will not have reached that period of which the Psalmist says, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” Fly back in imagination, if you can, to the time when the unnavigated ether had never been disturbed by the wing of cherub and when the song of the seraphim had never startled the silence of the infinite! Go back to the time when God dwelt alone and you have only then begun to approach that mysterious eternity when God loved His people “with an everlasting love.” This wondrous love, too, was from eternity fixed upon such a worm as I am—and such worms as you are, Beloved. What a marvel it is that the Eternal should ever have deigned to think upon me, or upon you, my Brother, my Sister! Try to grasp it, if you can—though it is one of those things which only “expressive silence” can set forth. “HE loved me—from everlasting!” Feed on this glorious Truth of God, O Christian, and remember that your being drawn to Christ is the effect of this eternal love and is, at the same time, the proof of it—the proof that you were upon God’s heart long before He—  
*“Spread the flowing seas abroad,  
And built the lofty skies!”*  
Read the text another way and it will teach us a third Doctrine. The word, “everlasting,” looks not only backward, but forward. “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That is to say, “I have drawn you because I intend to save you to everlasting. I would not have called you by My Grace if I had meant to ever leave you to perish. I would not have begun the good work in your soul, by drawing you with loving kindness, if I had not intended to bring you to My Glory at the last.” O beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, love without beginning is indeed sweet, but there is a still more luscious sweetness in love without end! It will do us good to dilate a little upon this wondrous Truth of God, nor shall we need to draw much upon our imagination in doing so. I can readily picture the time when this dark hair of mine shall be silvered over with gray and the sunlight of Heaven shall begin to whiten my brow. Yes, but God’s promise is, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” It needs no great stretch of the imagination to look forward to the time when the old man will have to lean upon his staff and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened and the grasshopper shall be a burden. Perhaps it will be the lot of some of us young people to grow old together—if so, may we grow ripe as we grow old! But if we are the Lord’s people, we shall be able, each one, to say as infirmities increase upon us, “My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”  
Then we look forward to that silent chamber where friends will stand by our bed and whisper, “He cannot last long now.” Whether we shall hear them say it, or not, we cannot tell, but, “we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Now the last moment comes. The death sweat is on our brow, the death rattle is in our throat, yet David’s words are fulfilled in our experience—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Now my soul has stretched her wings! She has left mortality behind, to—  
*“Soar through tracks unknown”—*  
but still she sings—

*“He drew me, and I followed on, Charmed to confess the voice Divine”?  
“Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.”*In due time will come the great Day of Judgment, but—

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay? While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

Now the drama of Time is finished. Eternity has come and we shall be “forever with the Lord!” The sun has spent its fire, the moon has paled its feeble light, the elements have been burned up with fervent heat, the stars have shut their eyes in eternal blindness and the universe dissolves as the billow’s foam sinks into the wave that bears it. But still, our Lord’s words describe the joy of His people—“the righteous into life eternal.” Oh, that precious everlasting love of God, always ours, because with loving kindness He has drawn us!

There is a thief over there who wants to steal away this Doctrine from me. He has been borrowing the old-fashioned burglarious instruments of dead men—the pick-locks of Arminius and the center-bits of Mr. Wesley—a good man, but one who was on a bad errand when he tried to take this choice and comfortable Doctrine from the children of God. Yet I do not care what any of them may say or do, “for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If we are in Christ, there is one thing which should make us feel very safe—if anything could ever divide us from the love of Christ, we would have been divided long ago. Suppose that our troubles could do it—then it would have been done long since, for we have had a sea full of them already! Yet, in six troubles the Lord has been with us and, in seven, He has not forsaken us!

Suppose that sin could do it—then, Brothers and Sisters, it would have been done in the first hour after our conversion. I must certainly make my sorrowful confession—

*“If ever it could come to pass  
That God’s own child should fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day!”*

If the Lord had ever meant us to fall into Hell, we would have gone there years ago.

“But,” say some, “perhaps we may meet with strong temptations.” Yes, probably we shall, but we shall never meet with a temptation stronger than the arm of God can enable us to overcome! Others say, “But perhaps we may backslide.” Yes, I know we may. But if we do, the Lord will say to us, even then, “Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you.” Yet others say, “But perhaps we may make the Lord angry with us.” Yes, I know we may, but I also remember how He pleaded with those who did so in the olden day—“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.”

This is a question about which we need not dispute here, for I do not suppose that there is one member of this church who ever entertains a doubt about the truth of this Doctrine. We sing over and over again—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine?*

*Then Jesus is forever mine!”*  
And we delight to repeat that confident assurance of Toplady, whose own end was so joyous because of his enjoyment of this precious Truth of God—

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the Earnest is given!  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”*

III. I was to have concluded my discourse by considering our text as A STIMULANT TO SELF-EXAMINATION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD, but our time has gone, so I can only ask this all-important question— Brothers and Sisters, have you any part and lot in these things of which I have been speaking? Are you the objects of eternal love?

“That is just what I would like to know,” says one, “can you tell me?” Well, I cannot climb to Heaven to read the roll of the redeemed, nor can I tell you of a way to go up Jacob’s ladder to read it for yourself. But there is a way of knowing whether God loved you before He made the world— and whether He will love you after the world has ceased to be. It is this— has He drawn you with His loving kindness? Examine your hearts and see. Have you felt your need of Jesus? Has that need constrained you to pray to Him? Has that prayer been answered by your being enabled to put your trust in Him? Have you been drawn away from the confidence in which you once boasted? Have you been drawn away from the love of your old sin? Have you—to sum up all—been made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Then, never doubt your election and never doubt your glorification! “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

What are you doing, Mr. Unbelief? You are trying to separate glorification from calling, but you can never do it, for God has joined them together so securely that neither death nor Hell can break the bond that unites them! Remember—“whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” May we all be there, among the heavenly birds of paradise—

*“And vie with Gabriel while He sings,  
In notes almost Divine”*  
of love without beginning and of favor without end! Amen.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ISAIAH 60**

The subject of this chapter is “The glory of the Church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction.”

Verse 1. Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. The Church is like the moon which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the Church, then the Church shines by reflecting His light. The Glory of Jehovah is her glory. If that is withdrawn, she is dark, indeed, but when that shines into her and through her, then her brightness is great, indeed.

2, 3. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon you and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God’s face. And when that falls upon the Church, then the Church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness—and multitudes come to the light. Even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

4. Lift up your eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to you: your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. There is no sign here of the Church of God being deserted. On the contrary, she shall become, through the Grace of God, the center of attraction! Men shall come from distant lands to her—however far removed they were, they shall still come—“your sons shall come from far.” She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand—“and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.”

5. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto you. Oh that we might live to see this happy day when we shall feel a holy awe because of God’s Glory as revealed in His Church! This fear is not a servile dread but a holy awe of God. And then the heart shall be enlarged—we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things and see great things. “Your heart shall fear and be enlarged,” for the sailor far away upon the sea and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come to you.

6, 7. The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you: they shall come up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory. These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they, too, shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry and come to unite with the Church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope shall be brought in by the Sovereign Grace of God.

8. Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows? The Church is astonished! She asks, “Who can they be?”  
9, 10. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And the sons of strangers shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister unto them for in My wrath I smote you, but in My favor have I had mercy on you. The Church of God is one continuously. At first it was a Jewish Church and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race and from Tarshish and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the Church of God—and they shall come much more numerously in the years that have not yet arrived.  
11-14. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto you the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish, yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you. Or, if they do not themselves come, their children shall; each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of Grace and, in due time, shall come the great ingathering.  
14-22. And as they that despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet, and they shall call you, The City of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breasts of kings: and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones iron: I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the LORD shall be unto you an Everlasting Light, and your God your Glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be your Everlasting Light and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time. “Amen! Amen!” So say we with all our heart!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE DRAWINGS OF LOVE  
NO. 3561

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1917.  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Jeremiah 31:3.**

From the context it is clear that this passage primarily refers to God’s ancient people, the natural descendants of Abraham. He chose them from of old and separated them from the nations of the world. Their election fills a large chapter in history and it shines with resplendent luster in prophecy. There is an interval during which they have experienced strange vicissitudes, been visited with heavy chastisements and acquired an evil reputation for the perverseness of their mind and the obstinacy of their heart. Yet a future glory awaits them when they shall turn unto the Lord their God, again, be restored to their land and acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the King of the Jews, their own anointed King. Without abating, however, a jot or tittle from the literal significance of these words as they were addressed by the Hebrew Prophet to the Hebrew race, we may accept them as an Oracle of God referring to the entire Church of His redeemed family and pertaining to every distinct member of that sacred community. Every Christian, therefore, whose faith can grasp the testimony, may appropriate it to himself. As many a Believer has heard, so every Believer may hear the voice of the Holy Spirit sounding in his ears these words, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

There are two things of which we propose to speak briefly tonight— the unspeakable blessing—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” And the unmistakable evidence—“therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

How exceedingly great and precious this assurance! How priceless this blessing to be embraced with the love, the everlasting love of God! Our God is a God of Infinite Benevolence. Towards all His creatures He shows His goodwill. His tender mercies are over all His works. He wishes well to all mankind. With what force and with what feeling he asserts it! “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11). And whoever of the whole human race, penitent for past sin, will turn to Jesus, the Savior of sinners, he shall find in Him pardon for the past and Grace for the future! This general Truth of God, which we have always steadfastly maintained, which we never saw any reason to doubt and which we have proclaimed as widely as our ministry could reach, is not at all inconsistent with the fact that God has a chosen people among the children of men who were beloved of Him, foreknown to Him and ordained by Him to inherit all spiritual blessings before the foundation of the world! As an elect people, they are the special objects of His love. On their behalf the Covenant of Grace was made. For them the blood of Christ was shed on Calvary. In them the Spirit of God works effectually to their salvation. Of them and to them it is that such words as these are spoken, “I have loved you with an everlasting love”—a love far superior to mere benevolence—towering above it as the mountain above the sea! A kinder love, deeper, far sweeter than that bounty of Providence which gilds the earth with sunshine, or scatters the drops of morning dew—a love that reveals its preciousness in the drops of blood distilled from the Savior’s heart and manifests its personal, immutable favor to souls beloved in the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the seal of their redemption and the sign of their adoption. So the Spirit, Himself, bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God! Now think for a little while of—

I. THIS INESTIMABLE BLESSING.  
Let us consider the text word by word. “I have loved you,” Who is the speaker? “I,” the great “I am,” Jehovah the Lord! There is but one God, and that God fills all things. “By Him all things were made, and through Him all things consist.” He is not far away, to be spoken of as though He were at an infinite distance from us, though Heaven is His Throne—for He is here with us. We live in Him, move in Him and have our being in Him. Imagination’s utmost stretch fails to grasp any true conception of what God is. The strong wing of reason, though it were stronger than that of the far-famed albatross, would utterly fail if it should attempt to find out God. Incomprehensible are you, O Jehovah, Your Being is too great for mortal mind to compass! Yet this we understand—Your voice has reached us—from the excellent Glory it has broken in tones distinctly on our ears—“Yes, I have loved you.” Believer in Christ, have you heard it? The love of any creature is precious. We prize the love of the beggar in the street. We are flattered by it. We cannot estimate it by silver or gold. Most men court the acquaintance or esteem the friendship of those among their fellow creatures who are in anyway distinguished for rank, for learning, or for wealth. There is a charm in living in the esteem of those who, themselves, are estimable, but no passion of our nature will supply me with an adequate comparison when I ask what must it be to be loved with the love of God! To be loved by Him whose dignity is beyond degree, whose power to bless is infinite, whose faithfulness never varies, whose Immutability stands fast like great mountains—to be loved by Him who dies not, and who will be with us when we die, to be caressed by Him who changes not in all our cares, to be shielded by His love when we stand at the Judgment Seat and pass the last dread ordeal that responsible creatures have to undergo! Oh, to be loved of God! Had you the hatred of all mankind, this honey would turn their gall into sweetness! It were enough to make you start up from the dungeon of wretchedness, from the chamber of poverty—yes, or from the bed of death! How like an angel you might feel—and know that such you are—a prince of the blood Imperial! If this is true of you, my Friend, in unspeakable joy you may emulate the bliss of blest spirits who see Jehovah and adore Him before His Throne!  
Who is loved? “I have loved you.” Drink that in if you can, Christian! Come to that wellhead—here is joy for you, indeed! Repeat the words to yourself with fitting emphasis, “Yes, I have loved you.” Is it not amazing that the Mighty God should love any of the race of Adam—so insignificant, so ephemeral, so soon to pass away? Did an angel love an ant creeping on an anthill, it were strange, though the disparity is comparatively trivial between these two—but for the eternal God to love a finite man is a marvel of marvels! And yet had He loved all men everywhere, save and except myself, it had not so amazed me as when I grasp the Truth in relation to myself that He has loved me! Let me hear His voice saying, “Yes, I have loved you,” and forthwith I sit down abashed with humility and overwhelmed with gratitude, to exclaim with David, “What am I, and what is my father’s house, that You have brought me here? Why have You loved me?” Surely there was nothing in my natural constitution, nothing in my circumstances, nothing in my transient career that could merit Your esteem or regard, O my God! Why, then, have You spoken thus unto Your servant, saying, “I have loved you”?  
Oh, how well I could imagine His having rather said to one and another of us, “I have despised you!” You were, perhaps, once a drunk, yet He loved you! A swearer, yet He loved you! You had a furious temper, yet He loved you! And you have, even now, infirmities and imperfections that make you sometimes loathe yourself and lie down in shame, weary of life, chafed with the conflict in which you have to fight with such besetting sins day by day—evil thoughts and evil desires so degrading to your nature, so disgusting to yourself, so dishonoring to your God. Still, He says, “Yes, I have loved you.” Come, Brothers and Sisters, hear the Word of God and heed it! Do not fritter away the sweetness of the text with annoying questions! Here it is. In large and legible letters it is written. Come to this wellhead and drink! Take your fill and slake your thirst with this Divine Love. If you believe in Jesus, what though you are poor, obscure, illiterate and compassed with infirmities which make you despise yourself, yet He who cannot lie says, “I have loved you.” These words have been said to a Magdalene—they have been spoken to one possessed with seven devils—they were whispered in the heart of the dying thief! Within the tenfold darkness of despair, itself, they have sounded their note of cheer. Blessed be the name of the Lord, you and I can hear the voice of His Spirit, as He bears witness with our spirit, “Yes, I have loved you.” What a disparity by Nature, what a conjunction by Grace between these two, the, “I,” and the, “you”—the Infinite “I” and the insignificant “you”— the first Person so grand, the second person so paltry!  
Whenever I attempt to speak about God’s love, I feel that I would rather hold my tongue, sit down to ponder and ask Believers to be kind enough to join me in meditation rather than wait upon my feeble expressions. If the love of God utterly surpasses human knowledge, how much more a mortal’s speech? What is it He bestows? That God should be merciful to us is a theme for praise. That He should pity us is a cause for gratitude. But that He should love us is a subject for constant wonder, as well as praise and gratitude! Love us? Why, the beggars in the street may excite our pity, and towards the criminals in our jails we may be moved with compassion—but we feel we could not love many whom we would cheerfully help. Yet God loves those whom He has saved from their sins and delivered from the wrath to come! Between that great heart in Heaven and this poor throbbing, aching heart on earth there is love established—love of the dearest, truest, sweetest and most faithful kind! In fact, the love of woman, the mother’s love, the love of the spouse—these are but the water—but the love of God is the wine! These are but the things of the earth, but the love of God is the celestial! The mother’s love mirrors the love of God, as the dewdrop mirrors the sun, but as the dewdrop compasses not that mighty orb, so no love that beats in a human bosom can ever compass, as no words can express the height, length and breadth of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!  
“Yes, I have loved you.” Oh, come near then, Christian! Your Father, He that chastened you yesterday, loves you! He whom you forget so often and whom you have offended so constantly, yet loves you! You know what it is to love. Translate the love you bear to your dearest friend and look at it and say, “God loves me better than this.” Do you think there are some you could die for cheerfully, whose pain you would freely take if you could ease them of it for a while, upon whose weary bed you would cheerfully lie down if a night of suffering could be spared him? Your Father loves you better than that and Jesus proves it to you! He took your sins, your sorrows, your death, your grave, that you might be pardoned, accepted and received into Divine favor—and so might live and be blessed forevermore!  
Passing on with our meditation, let us observe that there is incomparable strength, as well as inexhaustible sweetness in this assurance, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” That word, “everlasting,” is the very marrow of the Gospel. Take it away, and you have robbed the sacred Oracle of its most Divine part! The love of God is “everlasting.” The word bears three ideas within it. It has never had a beginning. God never began to love His people. Before Adam fell. Before man was made, or the mountains were brought forth. Before the blue heavens were stretched abroad, there were thoughts of love in His heart towards us! He began to create, He began actually to redeem—but He never began to love. It is eternal or “everlasting” love which glows in the bosom of God towards every one of His chosen people! Some of our hearers, strange to say, take no delight in this Doctrine. But if you know that everlasting love is yours, you will rejoice to hear it proclaimed again and again! You will welcome the joyful sound. Ah, God’s love is no mushroom growth. It sprung not up yesterday, nor will it perish tomorrow but, like the eternal hills, it stands fast. You were loved of your God before He had fashioned Adam’s clay, or ever this round world was rolled from between His palm to spin in its mighty orb! Long before the stars began to shine, before time was, when God dwelt in eternity all alone, He loved you, then, with an everlasting love!  
The second idea is that He loves His people without cessation. It would not be everlasting if it came now and then to a halt—if it were like the Australian rivers which flow on, become dry and flow on again. The love of God is not so. It swells and flows on like some mighty river of Europe or America, ever expanding, mighty, joyous river returning again into the eternal ocean from where it came. It never pauses. Christian, your God’s love to you is always the same. He cannot love you more! He will not love you less! Never, when afflictions multiply, when terrors frighten you or when your distresses abound, does God’s love falter or flag. Let the rod fall ever so heavily upon you, the hand that moves, like the heart that prompts the stroke, is full of love! Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His Grace. Whether He brings you down into the depths of misery, or lifts you up into the seventh Heaven of delight, His faithful love never varies or fluctuates—it is everlasting in its continuity.  
And, being everlasting, the third thought is, it never ends. You will grow gray soon, but the love of God shall still have its locks bushy and black as a raven with the verdure of youth! You will die soon, but the love of God will not expire. Your spirit will mount and traverse unknown tracts but that love shall encompass you there! And at the bar of judgment, amidst the splendors of the Resurrection Morning in the Millennial Glory, and in the eternity that shall follow, the love of God shall be your unfailing portion! Never shall that love desert you. A destiny how splendid! For your soul an heritage, how boundless! Stand tonight on your Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the north, and the south, to the east and the west, for the infinite prospective that lies before you is all your own inheritance! God began not to love you, nor will He ever cease to love you! You are His and you shall be His when worlds shall pass away and time shall cease to be! There is infinitely more solace and satisfaction here than I can bring out. I must leave it with you and commend it to your meditation. I am sure there is no more delightful manna for the pilgrims in the wilderness to feed upon than this Doctrine applied to the heart! The love of God towards us personally in Jesus Christ is an everlasting love. Now we come to the second point, which is—  
II. THE UNMISTAKABLE MANIFESTATION, the manifestation by which this love is made known. Good people often get puzzled with the Doctrine of Election. In their simplicity they sometimes ask, “How can we know whether we are the Lord’s chosen, or ascertain if our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life?” You cannot scan that mystic roll, or pry between those folded leaves. Had you an angel’s wing and a seraph’s eye, you could not read what God has written in His book! The Lord knows them that are His. No man shall know by any Revelation save that which the Holy Spirit gives according to my text. There is a way of knowing and it is this—“Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Were you ever drawn? Have you been drawn with loving kindness? If so, then there is evidence that the Lord loved you with an everlasting love! Be ready, therefore, to judge yourselves. You are challenged with this pointed question—Were you ever Divinely drawn? Say now, Beloved, have you experienced this sacred attraction that made you willing in the day of His power? Were you ever drawn from sin to holiness? You loved sin once—in it you found much pleasure. There were some forms and fashions of vice and folly which were very dear to your heart. Have your tastes been changed and your track been turned by the Sovereign charm of this Divine loving kindness? Can you say, “The things I once loved, I now hate. And what gave me pleasure, now causes me a pang”? Is it so? I do not ask you whether you are perfect and upright. Alas, who of us could answer this question otherwise than with blushes of shame? But I do ask if you hate sin in every shape and desire holiness in every form? Would you be perfect if you could be? If you could live as you like, how would you like to live? Is your answer, “I would live as though it were possible for me to serve God day and night in His Temple, without a wandering thought or a rebellious wish”? Ah, then, if you have been thus drawn from sin to holiness by the way of the Cross, no doubt He loved you with an everlasting love and you need not discredit it! You may be as sure of it as if an angel should come and drop a letter into your hands on which those words would be inscribed! Yes, still surer, for the angel might have missed his way, but God’s Word cannot err! If you are thus drawn, He has loved you with an everlasting love!  
Listen again. Have you ever been drawn from self to Jesus? There was a time when you thought yourself as good as other men. Had the bottom of your heart been searched, there would have been found written there, “I do not see that I am so great an offender as the most of my neighbors. I am respectable, upright, moral. I should hope it would speed well with me at the last, for if I am not, now, all that I should be, I shall try to be good and by earnest endeavors, joined with fervent prayers and repentance, I hope to fit myself for Heaven.” Oh, that you may be drawn away from all such empty conceit and led to rest your hope solely on that blessed Man who sits at the right hand of God, crowned with Glory, though He was once fastened to the Cross, despised and rejected of men and made to suffer as a scapegoat for our sins! This, Beloved, would be a sure sign that you had renounced yourself and closed in with Christ. You must have been loved with an everlasting love. It is as impossible for any of the elect of God to come to Christ and lay hold on Him without Divine drawing, as it would be for devils to feel tenderness of heart and repentance towards God! If you can say from your heart—  
*“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling,”*

then His drawing may suffice as the proving that He loved you with an everlasting love!

Have you ever been drawn from sight to faith, from consulting your creature faculties to confidence in God? You used to depend only on what you called your common sense. You walked by the judgment of your own mind. Do you now trust in Him who truly is, though He is invisible—who speaks to you, though His voice is inaudible? Have you a sense, day by day, of the Presence of One Supreme whom you cannot hear nor see? Does the unseen Presence of God affect you in your actions? Do motives drawn from the next world influence you? Do you, in the day of trouble, lean upon an arm of flesh, or cry and pray, and make supplication to the Almighty? Have you learned to walk in dependence upon the living God, even if His Providence seems to fail you and gives a lie to His promises? Know, then, that a life of faith is a special gift of God—it is the fruit of Divine Protection so you are enabled to walk with God—and He deigns to befriend you so you may humbly but safely conclude that your name stands inscribed in the records of the chosen! To be drawn into a life of faith is a blessed evidence of Christ’s love.

Are you, moreover, day by day being drawn from earth to Heaven? Do you feel as if there were a magnet up there drawing your heart so that when you are at work in your business, in your family with all its cares, you cannot help darting a prayer up to the Most High? Do you ever feel this onward impulse of something you do not understand, which impels you to have fellowship with God beyond the skies? Oh, if this is so, rest assured that it is Christ that draws you! There is a link between you and Heaven—and Christ is drawing that link, and lifting your soul forward towards Himself. I love that sweet hymn and I hope you love the sentiment of it—

*“My heart is with Him on the Throne.  
And ill can brook delay!  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Make haste and come away!’”*

If your heart is here, below, then your treasure is here. But if your heart is up there—if your brightest hopes, your fondest wishes are in the heavenly places—your treasure is manifestly there and the title-deeds of that treasure will be found in the eternal purpose of God whereby He ordained you unto Himself that you might show forth His praise! Thus have I tried to show you that those who are thus drawn may be assured that they were loved with an everlasting love. And now will you further observe that it is with loving kindness they are drawn?

Some people are frightened into religion. Beware of any religion that depends upon exciting your terror! Some people’s religion consists entirely of doing what they think they must do, though they do not like it. They are afraid of punishment, or they are anxious for a reward. Such is not the religion of Jesus Christ! It is said that the soldiers of Persia were driven into battle and that the sound of the whips of the generals could be heard even while the battle was raging— lashing on the unwilling ranks to fulfill their part in the fray! Not so went the Greeks to battle. They rushed like lions amidst a flock of sheep to tear their prey. They fought for their country, for their temples, for their lives, for all that they held dear—and right cheerily from such an impulse within did they engage in the war. The difference between the Greeks and the Persians is just the difference I want to describe among the professed followers of our Lord. The genuine Christian serves God because he loves Him, not that he fears Hell, for he knows that he has been delivered from condemnation, being washed in Jesus’ blood! He serves God not that he expects to earn Heaven—he scorns the idea. Heaven is not to be merited by our poor paltry works. And besides, Heaven is his inheritance since Christ has given it to him, having made his title sure! He serves God because he loves Him. He is drawn by a sense of the love of God towards him to love God in return. Who is the best servant? Not, surely, the man who only does what he is paid to do—who serves you for his wage and who would betray your interest to benefit himself! Rather is he the true servant who would cling to you in all your fortunes or misfortunes, through good or through evil report.

Some of the old-fashioned servants were so attached to their masters that they were reckoned on and regarded as members of the family. Those are the true servants of Christ who love Him and render Him their services, not menially for the pay they count upon, but loyally because their hearts are faithful and true to Him! They love Him so that they could not turn aside from Him, or seek another Lord. Say now, are you thus drawn with loving kindness? What a lovely word this, “loving kindness,” is! “Kindness,” seems to be like some huge opal or some sparkling diamond, a Koh-I-Noor, and love seems to be like fine gold to encircle it! I think I could stand and look at that word, “loving kindness,” till with sacred enchantment I burst into a song! There is such a charming sweetness and yet such an immutable stability in the Grace of God which it reveals that our rapture is kindled as often as we review it! Of that loving kindness I have tasted here below and of that loving kindness I hope to sing in yonder skies in worthier notes than this weak voice can now compass! The loving kindness of the Lord, as it beams from His eyes, as it is communicated by His helping hands, as it is expressed by His gentle, tender voice, quickens the soul in the path of duty and restrains it from falling into sin! How can I do this great wickedness, how can I sin against so almighty a Friend whose kindness to me is so gratuitous, so constant, and so exceedingly generous?—

*“Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain, I count my loss!  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His Cross.  
Yes, and I must and will esteem  
All things but loss for Jesus’ sake!  
Oh, may my soul be found in Him  
And of His righteousness partake!”*

Thus clearly and thus surely may you judge for yourselves whether you are God’s chosen or not. Are you drawn and how are you drawn? Is it with loving kindness? These are the two points that melt and fuse in experience. As before that God whose eyes of fire search you through and through, I do conjure you to judge and righteously judge right now as to your own condition! Be not satisfied to rest peacefully until you can say, “Thanks and praise to God’s eternal love, I am drawn by Grace! By Divine Grace I am constrained. From now on I freely yield myself up to Christ to be His servant, His disciple, His friend, His brother, forever and forever. The Lord has appeared unto me, saying, ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.’”

Do I hear a sigh come up from some in this assembly? A sigh which, being interpreted, would say, “Alas, for me this sacred solace was never mine! I was never drawn. I feel no love, no such melting favors as your description of loving kindness ever dawned on me. But, ah, I wish I were drawn, that I had a part among that blessed throng who shall forever see His face! Oh, that I could believe that I, though the meanest of them all, should find my name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!” Why Friend, with you it would seem the drawing has begun! Surely God’s loving kindness has made your mouth water! I rejoice exceedingly over those who hunger after the Bread of Life, for they shall speedily be filled! Right well I know my Master will give it to them. If you desire Christ, depend upon it, Christ desires you! No sinner was ever beforehand with Christ. When you are willing to have Him, He is evidently willing to have you! You had not put out one hand towards Him if He had not already put two hands on you! Oh, if you will but trust the bleeding Lamb—believe that He can save you—and trust in Him to save you with unfeigned confidence, then you are already drawn! This is proof positive that God has loved you from before the world’s beginning!

Oh, how I would that some might be drawn tonight! Some who have been great and grievous sinners. There are many such among the chosen vessels of mercy. God grant some of you young people may be drawn. And you who, though no longer young, are still without the blessing, I cannot bear the thought that you should tarry longer uncalled by Sovereign Grace. May the Holy Spirit attract you! May you feel in your heart the wish to belong to Christ—the desire to be counted among them when He makes up His jewels. Turn that wish into a prayer! Bow your head, now, and pray with this petition. God will hear your secret sighs. He does not reject sincere prayers, however badly they may be worded. If you can get no further than a sigh, it has its value in His kind esteem. The tear that fell just now upon the floor of the pew was not lost, for an angel tracked and treasured it and carried it on high. God will accept you if you will accept Christ. If you trust Jesus now, ‘tis done! You are saved! The moment a sinner believes and trusts in Christ, he is saved—saved forever! In that moment his iniquity is blotted out and he is accepted in the Beloved. From that moment he might sing—

*“‘Tis done, the great transaction’s done! I am my Lord’s and He is mine!  
He drew me and I followed on,  
Glad to obey the voice Divine!”*

The Lord appear to you, speak to you and bless you, saying to you, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MATTHEW 7:13-23.**

13, 14. Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it. Be up and on your journey. Enter in at the gate at the head of the way and do not stand hesitating. If it is the right road, you will find the entrance somewhat difficult and exceedingly narrow, for it demands self-denial and calls for strictness of obedience and watchfulness of spirit. Nevertheless, “enter you in at the strait gate.” Whatever its drawbacks of fewness of pilgrims, or straitness of entrance, yet choose it and use it! True, there is another road, broad and much frequented—but it leads to destruction. Men go to ruin along the turnpike road but the Way to Heaven is a bridle path. There may come other days when the many will crowd the narrow way, but at this time, to be a popular road, it must be broad—broad in doctrine, so-called, in morals and in spirituals. But those on the strait road shall go straight to Glory— and those on the broad road are all abroad. All is well that ends well! We can afford to be straitened in the right way rather than enlarged in the wrong way because the first ends in endless life and the second hastens down to everlasting death! Lord, deliver me from the temptation to be “broad,” and keep me in the narrow way, though few find it!

15. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. We have need of our judgments and we must try the spirits of those who profess to be sent of God. There are men of great gifts who are “false prophets.’’ These affect the look, language and spirit of God’s people, while really they long to devour souls, even as wolves thirst for the blood of sheep. “Sheep’s clothing” is all very fine, but we must look beneath it and spy out the wolves! A man is what he is inwardly. We had need beware. This precept is timely at this hour. We must be careful, not only about our way, but about our leaders! They come to us—they come as prophets—they come with every outward commendation but they are very Balaams and will surely curse those they pretend to bless!

16. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Their teaching, their living and their effect upon our minds will be a sure test to us. Every doctrine and doctrinaire may thus be tried. If we gather grapes from them, they are not thorns. If they produce nothing but thistledown, they are not fig trees. Some object to this practical method of test, but wise Christians will carry it with them as the ultimate touchstone. What is the effect of modern theology upon the spirituality, the prayerfulness, the holiness of the people? Has it any good, effect?

17, 18. Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every man produces according to his nature, he cannot do otherwise. Good tree, good fruit. Corrupt tree, evil fruit. There is no possibility of the effect being higher and better than the cause. The truly good does not bring forth evil—it would be contrary to its nature. The radically bad never rises to produce good, though it may seem to do so. Therefore, the one and the other may be known by the special fruit of each. Our King is a great Teacher of prudence. We are not to judge, but we are to know—and the rule for this knowledge is as simple as it is safe. Such knowledge of men may save us from great mischief which would come to us through associating with bad and deceitful persons.

19. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Here is the end to which evil things are tending. The ax and the fire await the ungodly, however fine they may look with the foliage of profession. Only let time enough be given and every man on earth who bears no good fruit will meet his doom! It is not merely the wicked, the bearer of poison berries, that will be cut down, but the neutral, also—the man who bears no fruit of positive virtue must also be cast into the fire!

20. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. It is not ours to hew or to burn, but it is ours to know. This knowledge is to save us from coming under the shadow or influence of false teachers. Who wants to build his nest upon a tree which is soon to be cut down? Who would choose a barren tree for the center of his orchard? Lord, let me remember that I am to judge myself by this rule. Make me a true fruit-bearing tree.

21. Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the will of My Father who is in Heaven. No verbal homage will suffice! “Not everyone that says.” We may believe in our Lord’s Deity and we may take great pains to affirm it over and over again with our, “Lord, Lord”—but unless we carry out the commands of the Father, we pay no true homage to the Son! We may acknowledge our obligations to Jesus and so call Him, “Lord, Lord”—but if we never practically carry out those obligations, what is the value of our admissions? Our King receives not into His Kingdom those whose religion lies in words and ceremonies, but only those whose lives display the obedience of true discipleship!

22, 23. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you who work iniquity! An orthodox creed will not save if it stands alone, neither will it be sure to do so if accompanied by official position and service. These people said, “Lord, Lord,” and, in addition, pleaded their prophesying or preaching in His name. All the preaching in the world will not save the preacher if he does not practice what he preaches! Yes, and he may have been successful— successful to a very high degree—“and in Your name have cast out devils”—and yet, without personal holiness, he who casts out devils will be cast out himself! The success boasted of many have had about it surprising circumstances of varied interest—“and in Your name done many wonderful works”—and yet the man may be unknown to Christ! Three times over the person is described as doing all “in Your name,” and yet the Lord, whose name he used so freely, so boldly, knew nothing of him and would not allow him to remain in His company! The Lord cannot endure the presence of those who call Him, “Lord, Lord,” and then work iniquity! They professed to Him that they knew Him, but He will “profess unto them, I never knew you.” How solemn is this reminder to me and to others! Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father’s will! We may be known by all to have great spiritual power over devils and men—yet our Lord may not acknowledge us in that Great Day, but may drive us out as impostors whom He cannot tolerate in His Presence!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3139 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A PROMISE FOR THE BLIND  
NO. 3139

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, CHURCH STREET, BLACKFRIARS ROAD, ON TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1855.

[ON BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN BLIND RELIEF SOCIETY.]

**“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.”  
Jeremiah 31:8.**

POOR Israel, as a nation, had its ups and downs. It was sometimes in captivity and soon it experienced a deliverance. At one time it was diminished and brought low through affliction, persecution, or sorrow. At another, it was multiplied and increased exceedingly. It was the deliverance from one of these evil seasons that Jeremiah was commissioned to announce by the promise that the Lord’s people would come again to their own land.

Let us consider, for a few minutes, the circumstances of these Israelites. It must have been a sorrowful thing for them to dwell in a land that was not their own, to hear a language they didn’t understood, to see the fierce inhabitants, their enemies, and the idolatrous worship of the heathen gods. We can well conceive of their mournful spirit and the feeling with which they gave utterance to their plaintive song, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” But God sent among them Prophets who told them that they would be restored and herein lay the glory of the promise—that it included all the captive people of God— whatever might be their rank or position! The blind, the halt and the lame would all come back. The hoary-headed man with his staff, equally with the young and vigorous—the lame as well as he who could run like the rabbit—all would come to the Mountain of the Lord! Nor should even women be left behind—“The blind and the lame, the woman with child and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there.” Had the Prophet not said that the blind and the lame would come, that their faces should be turned towards the holy city—had he not said that they would enter into the Temple of the Lord—they might have thought that being poor and blind, they would never be allowed to come unto the holy mountain, even Zion.

But, my Friends, this text has a further prophetical signification in its reference to the gathering in of the Jews in the latter times. And with this we have more particularly to do. I believe in the restoration of the Jews to their own land in the last days. I am a firm believer in the gathering in of the Jews at a future time. Before Jesus Christ shall again come upon this earth, the Jews shall be permitted to go to their beloved Palestine. At present they are only at the entrance gates. I am told that the Jews have a practice of bringing some of the soil of their own country to England under the seal of the chief rabbi. And that at their death it affords them the highest joy to know that they will have a portion of this soil buried with them, even were it no more than sufficient to cover a sixpence. They have another idea—of course, it is a very foolish one—that every Jew dying in a foreign land travels underground direct to Palestine. It is because they love their country that they believe such a lie!

But whatever may be our opinion respecting the Jews and their position, this I know—though they ought not to be fettered and oppressed, though they ought to have a vote in Parliament, though they ought to be freed from civil disabilities, yet they never can amalgamate with other nations. The time will come when they shall leave their sordid ideas in the pursuit of gain to secure the treasures of Paradise. They are now a scattered people and must be till the last times. Then suddenly they shall rise, touched by the influence of the Spirit of God, again to be His people. Their temple shall again resound with the worship of God and old Zion will be again built! Then may we truly expect the latter-day Glory shall come. Certainly, if I read my Bible aright, I must believe that the downtrodden, despised Jew shall again be glad and poor old Judea, that has been the scoff and scorn of mankind, shall again be lifted up and restored—and shall shine forth “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!”

If it is so, mark you, the blind Jew and the lame Jew will as surely go to Jerusalem as any of the rest of the Jews! They will all go—the blind, the lame, the woman travailing with child will all meet in God’s holy Temple.

However, I leave this case of the Jews, their coming up from Babylon and the last gathering in of Israel. I know very little of them, but would rather speak of my text under another aspect. You know that God has a peculiar people, as much a chosen nation as the Jews ever were—a called and elected people whom the Father has chosen from before the foundation of the world—a redeemed people whom Jesus has purchased with His precious blood. They are a sanctified people because God has separated them from the rest of mankind. Well, all these people are to be brought in, to be gathered to Christ—everyone whom God has chosen, redeemed and sanctified shall come to Mount Zion! Blessed be God, they shall all come to this city above! God’s wheat shall all be gathered into God’s garner. The ransomed of the Lord shall all join the throng around the Throne of God forever—

*“To bless the conduct of His Grace,  
And make His glories known.”*

My text says the blind and the lame shall meet there. Now I am about to speak, first of all, of the characters named in the text. And then I am going to try to show you the duties of Christians to the persons so designated, or spoken of, as the lame and the blind.

I. First, I am to speak of THE CHARACTERS NAMED IN THE TEXT— “the blind and the lame.”  
We will speak of the blind first. There are three classes of blind people—the physically blind, the mentally blind and the spiritually blind. In illustration, I would take you to the London Road and there you will find these three orders of blind people. There is the school for the blind, where you will find the physically blind. Just before you is the Roman Catholic Cathedral—there you will find the spiritually blind. And further on is the Bethlehem Hospital, commonly called Bedlam, where you will find the mentally blind. These are, then, the three divisions—the naturally, or physically blind, the mentally blind and the spiritually blind.  
Well, first, we refer to the physically blind. If chosen of God, they will love Him and they shall all come to Heaven. Ah, poor Adam, how many are the infirmities which your one sin has entailed upon your offspring! Oh, mother Eve, how did your act of transgression bring on us a train of woes! Lameness, blindness, deafness along with all the sad ailments of the paralytic, the dumb, the deformed! But all honor to the Second Adam! He overcomes these infirmities! He saves “the blind and the lame.” Through His Sovereign Grace, He loves many of the poor, darkened sons of men. Blind men are not chosen for soldiers except in the army of God, but in that army He enlists many blind warriors and makes them the best of His soldiers! Yes, blind saints, God loves you and will not exclude you from Heaven! The man who has to go leaning on his crutch all through the journey of life is not refused at Heaven’s door because of his crutches. You blind men, groping along in the world, when you arrive at Heaven’s gate, are you to be excluded because of the lack of your eyes? Rather, the moment they come to its threshold, God speaks the word and the withered limb regains its strength, the dim eye its luster and thus, “the blind and the lame” become fitted to join the shining multitude around the Throne of God!  
We know that if we die aged, we shall not be aged in Heaven—there are no furrows on the brow of the glorified ones! Their eyes know no dimness—they know not what it is to have infirmities of body, for mortality is exchanged for immortality! It may be that we are weakly here. It may be that we have a feeble, diseased, emaciated body here. But there we shall have a spiritual body, like unto Christ’s glorious body, clothed in light and majesty! We shall then be partakers of the bliss of Heaven, shining as the stars in the firmament forever and forever! Now, you physically blind, you who do not see the glorious rays of the sun, do not be downcast, but remember that there have been many illustrious saints who have endured the same calamity. Chief and foremost, remember the Blind Bard of Paradise, who, when his eyes were darkened, saw things that others had never imagined! I mean Milton. Though you are deprived of your temporal sight, you may see far into the deep things of God! Others have been blind as well as you. Many blind men have been great men. You physically blind, rejoice that blind though you are, if you look to Christ, by faith, you will join “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.”  
But, then, secondly, the mentally blind shall be restored. I have referred to Bedlam for an illustration. I do not mean, by that, to refer to those who have suffered the entire loss of their reason. It would be a very doubtful question to discuss whether a person born without the use of his natural reason can be an object of Divine Grace. It would lead to a great deal of discussion, without any practical result, so I leave it alone. But there is such a thing as practical mental blindness. There may be the master-mind, gigantic conceptions, a fruitful imagination with the power of leading and governing other minds—and yet there may be a degree of mental blindness. We are all somewhat blind. We have all, we must confess, an imperfect vision—except the “Pope” who claims to be infallible and, therefore, proves that he is more blind than the rest of us! There are some of us who feel our fallibility in point of judgment and who are obliged to acknowledge our ignorance and lack of clear mental perception.  
But, my Friends, some of the mentally blind shall enter Heaven. I now refer to those whose mental powers are very weak. I sometimes meet with these mentally blind people. They do not know much of their own language and, perhaps, have never put as many as a half a dozen words together in their lives in public. I once heard of one of these, an old woman, who had heard a most uninteresting discourse upon metaphysics, but she called it “a blessed sermon, for,” she said, “the minister told us all about the Savior being both meat and physic, too.” I think that was a good mistake! She, like many of the mentally blind, could not understand one-half of the words that are used by some of our preachers. She belonged to the somewhat mentally blind folk who have not had the benefit of teaching or training. Well, blessed be God, they do not need it to find the way to Heaven! “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”  
Well, all these mentally blind shall come. There will be people in Heaven who never read a word in their lives. I know not how low the Grace of God can go. Some poor creatures who know nothing of the things of earth, even these may understand the Gospel, it is so plain! We do not need a giant intellect in order to grasp its Doctrines. Its element and substance is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Believer, ignorant though you may be, you can comprehend this grand scheme of man’s redemption, so do not say that because you are poor and ignorant, you will not enter Heaven!  
But, then, thirdly, there are the spiritually blind. Whenever you find a person spiritually blind, you ought to be very careful how you speak to him, or of him. I do think this is a matter in which we often fail. The discussion between Catholics and Protestants has been far from what it ought to have been. We seem bent upon forcing them to submit at once to our views, but this is wrong of us. We may condemn wrong principles, but let us always speak gently of the men who hold them. They are spiritually blind, so we should deal kindly with them, avoiding that bitterness of spirit which is so often manifested. Sick men will not take your medicine if you give them vinegar with it—give them something sweet with it and they will take it. So be kind and loving to the spiritually blind and they will be likely to give heed to you.  
To say nothing of the Church of Rome, the Puseyites, or Arminians—to go no further than the present congregation—there are many spiritually blind here! Oh, men or woman, do you see your lost and ruined state by nature? No. Did you ever, by faith, see Christ crucified on the Cross for man’s redemption? No, you did not! Did you ever understand the sufficiency of the mediatorial Sacrifice of Christ? No, you did not! Did you ever realize what vital union with the Person of Christ means? No! Has the Holy Spirit ever spoken in your heart? You are obliged to confess that you know nothing about His purifying influence! Ah, then, you are blind—spiritually blind! Chapelgoer, churchgoer—having the form of religion without the power, you are blind as a bat which can only fly in the night! Or like the owl—when daylight comes, you will not be able to find your way. Unless the scales are removed from your eyes, you will be exposed to the Judgment of God! But if the Holy Spirit illuminates you, though now blind, you shall come to Zion with the rest of the chosen race!  
But my text also mentions the lame. These are not so much the subject of our consideration tonight and may, therefore, be passed over briefly. But many of the lame are to get to Heaven. Who are they? Well, Brothers and Sisters, there are some of God’s people who are lame because they are weak in faith. We sometimes hear a great deal said about possessing a full assurance of being a child of God and then, every now and then, we hear of others who have a doubt, or only a hope, concerning their salvation. As good Joseph Irons used to say, “They keep hope, hope, hoping—hop, hop, hopping all their lives because they can’t walk.” Little-Faith is always lame. Yet, although some of you never could say with certainty that you are the people of God, yet one or another of you can say with sincerity—  
*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall;  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my All.”*  
You lame ones, fear not—you will not be cast out! Two snails entered the ark—how they got there, I cannot tell. It must have taken them a long time. They must have started rather early, unless Noah took them part of the way. So, some of you are snails—you are on the right road, but it will take you a long while to get into the ark unless some blessed Noah helps you!  
Again, backsliders are lame. There are Christians to be found who believe that it is possible to fall from a state of Grace. Here I would speak cautiously. God’s people cannot fall finally—but they can fall a long way. When a Christian falls, it is no light matter. I hear some talking of falling and getting up again, as if it were nothing. But let them turn to Hebrews

6:4-6. [See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] But we will rejoice that— *“Grace will complete what Grace begins,  
To save from sorrows or from sins.”*

I do not say that a Christian may not fall and break a limb—but I do say that a child of God cannot fall, spiritually, and break his neck! He cannot fall without grievous injury. The result, in his experience, will be unhappiness and misery. Look at poor David—after falling into that great sin, his history was nothing but troubles from rebellious sons and enemies! You loving, living children of the blessed God, I know that you will not talk lightly of falling into sin. Backsliders, fallen ones, God will have mercy upon you if you are truly penitent. It is a glorious fact that the sorrowing backsliders shall not be left behind. Backsliders shall sing above, as God’s restored children, whom He always has loved. Blind and lame ones, believe in the Lord and you shall be found amongst the followers of the Lamb at the last!

II. Now secondly and very briefly, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES TO THESE BLIND PEOPLE?  
I answer, first, to the spiritually blind, our duty is to pray for them. Yes, I believe we should never do anything without prayer. However much you may profess to love them, yet if you do not pray for them, I cannot believe what you say! An infidel once met a Christian and said to him, “You don’t believe in the Bible. You don’t believe in the Gospel!” “I do,” the Christian replied. “Well, then, how is it that as I pass you in going to my business every day, you have never spoken to me concerning my soul? You don’t believe the Bible!” “I do.” “I cannot believe you,” he said, “for if you do, you are very unfeeling.”  
Now, Christians, if you believe that you have spiritually blind people around you, what is your duty towards them? Sirs, unless you feel a deep concern about their state, I fear that the heavenly Physician has not removed the spiritual cataract from your eyes! If we believe their position to be one of extreme peril—that they, for lack of the Light of God to guide them—are perishing, how we ought to exert ourselves on their behalf! The ministers do not feel enough for souls in this degenerate age, but keep on preaching, preaching, preaching, or read, read, reading their good-for-nothing manuscripts—and yet there is no increase to their churches! The minister is here in the pulpit and the people are down below in the pews. There is no golden link of sympathy between them. We need more of this sympathy! We need more intense love to souls, the souls of the ungodly! We need to go more to God’s Throne to plead for you and then to plead with you! As God’s ambassadors, we say with Paul, “We pray you, in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.” It is no trifling matter to be spiritually blind! It is no light matter to have no eyes! No, the blind are sure not to enter Heaven if they die spiritually blind! They must have their eyes enlightened by God if they are to be found above! May the ever-blessed and glorious God awaken all the spiritually blind! May we who are ministers and all others who have the opportunity use it, under God’s blessing, to throw the Light of God upon their dark minds! Try to get your neighbors to the House of God, but take care that it is a Gospel ministry to which you invite them! Take care that you prove the value of the Gospel you possess by your own consistent practice. Pray for them and it may be that God will give them repentance unto life.  
And then, next, our duty to the mentally blind is to be very charitable and try to instruct them. We must manifest, in all our dealings with them, a kindness of disposition, never attempting to thrash them into what we believe to be right. I do not believe in the utility of bigoted denunciations. I sometimes differ from my Christian Brothers, but I do not quarrel with them on that account. All I can say is, “Well, Brother, if you can’t see it, I cannot help it. It is in the Bible and I can see it plainly enough.” We, as Calvinists, believe that men cannot see the Truth of God unless it is revealed to them by God. We should, therefore, be the last to condemn the ignorant, but should do our utmost to instruct them and to open their eyes. It is of no use to attempt to force a man to believe. It has been

said— *“Convince a man against his will,  
He’s of the same opinion still.”*  
So, whenever you get into an argument with a mentally blind man, suppose it to be a Roman Catholic, don’t get cross with him. If you do, you  
will never make a friend of your opponent. Suppose others do not see as  
you do on some matters, on infant baptism or anything else—and I think  
we Baptists very often err in our temper in some of our discussions—  
well, don’t try to compel them to see as you see! Brothers and Sisters,  
that is not the way to convince them of the Truth of our beliefs. Instead  
of acting like that, we should try to show them the Truth as it is in the  
Bible—and then they must shut their eyes or else see it. “It is there,” you  
say—“if you can’t see it, I shall not be cross or out of temper with you.”  
Never let us be cross with the mentally blind. You know that the policeman, when he meets a man at night, turns his lantern straight upon the  
man’s eyes—so must we turn the Light of Truth upon these blind eyes  
and not take out the truncheon to thrash them! We should also reflect  
that there was a time when we, too, knew nothing. It therefore behooves  
us to act kindly to the younger scholars in the school, seeing that we  
have not always been in the highest class.  
But now to conclude, we have to speak of our duty to the physically  
blind. There are some good people who would be glad to work for their  
living, but they are disabled through affliction. Among these are the  
blind. When I go among the sick and poor, I find so many to relieve that  
when I have given all I can afford, there is still more to do. Well, there  
they are, and to do them any permanent good you must give them something week by week. I was thinking, suppose another globe were created  
and rolled up alongside this world, so that when any in this world became sick, or blind, or helpless, we could put them over into the other  
world to get rid of them? Well, suppose that were done, Brothers and Sisters? You would soon want them back again! “There is dear Sister Soand-So. She is entirely dependent upon the charity of her friends, but  
she has such rich deep experience—we have derived so much comfort  
from her society that we must have her back.” Then, if these poor sufferers were in another world, you would have no way of doing good by relieving them—and then you would wish you could do doing something for  
them for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would then have to complain, “Here is this shilling—I don’t know what to do with it. Here I have  
money that I cannot use because there are no objects of charity to whom  
I can give it—I wish Jesus Christ would come down to earth again. Would I not minister to His necessities if He were here? Yes, that I would! I would give Him the best of things that were to be found anywhere. Then I would sit at His feet, washing them with my tears and wiping them with the hair of my head.”  
You say that, but if all these poor blind people were in another world, there would be no one to whom you could minister for His sake, so Jesus Christ has sent some of them to us that we may have the opportunity of doing good to them and that, by-and-by, He may be able to say to us, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” He has cast some blind people upon the Church on purpose—to give us the treat of doing something for them. He has said, “The poor you have always with you.” He allows you the opportunity of showing your love to Him by relieving those who need your help. When I hear of a church where they are all gentlemen, I always say farewell to that, for where there are no poor, the ship will soon sink! If there are no poor there, Christ will soon give them some if they are a real Gospel Church.  
Now, the reason we have a Blind Society is simply this—there are some good people who cannot help themselves because they are blind and helpless. There is one from my Church and some from other Churches. It is not a very large Society—it is all the better for that, for I find that in the great Societies, there is so much influence needed and so many votes required, that those who need help most cannot obtain it! And those who do not need it so much, but have the influence, get it all! Well, in this Christian Blind Relief Society, some of these poor blind people receive a trifle every week and I assure you they are all needy and deserving objects of your charity.  
This is what we ask you tonight to support. Jesus Christ stands at the door and says to you as you leave, “Give Me something, this night, if you love Me.”  
I have to appeal so often, and am followed so much by my own people, that I have not the face to ask you for anything tonight, so Christ shall ask, instead, and I will ask next time. Remember the poor! Take care of the blind!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**MATTHEW 9:27-35; 20:29-34.**

[The first page of the preceding Sermon shows that it was delivered in the year 1855, before the beloved preacher had come of age. The Expositions given by Mr. Spurgeon at that early period were not reported, as they were in the later years of his ministry. Consequently, two passages

relating to Christ’s healing of the blind have been selected from The Gospel of the Kingdom, the popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew which was being prepared by Mr. Spurgeon almost up to the time of his Home-going in January, 1892. Readers will

therefore have the opportunity of comparing the messages left on record by him near the beginning and near the close of his long and prosperous London pastorate.]

Matthew 9:27. And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us! No sooner does Jesus move, than fresh candidates for His bounty appear! The blind seek sight from Him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction—they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they “followed Him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us.” Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus and, therefore, they went one way and used one prayer, to one and the same Person. Our Lord is here called by His royal name—“You Son of David.” Even the blind could see that He was a king’s son! As Son of David, He is entreated to show mercy and act according to His royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties and mercy alone can restore them. This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into Truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction, always remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in His mercy.

28. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. They were most eager for the gift. They gave Him no leisure—they pressed into the house where He had sought privacy and rest—they came to Him, even to Jesus Himself! The Lord would have them express their faith and so He makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about Himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith—this is always the vital point! They could not see, but they could believe and they did so. They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed, for our Lord put it plainly, “Believe you that I am able to do THIS?” They had also a clear view of the Character of Him to whom they applied, for they had already styled Him, “Son of David,” and now they called Him, “Lord.”

29. Then touched He their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you. Again He questions their faith and this time He throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in Him. “According to your faith be it unto you.” He touched them with His hand, but they must also touch Him with their faith! The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which He acts so continually that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the Kingdom of God. We have the measuring of our own mercies— our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive! Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

30. And their eyes were opened and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. They both saw the double miracle was worked at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light! Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact and deserved to be made widely known, but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence. He “immediately charged them.” He left them no option—He demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame—He wanted less crowding, He wished to avoid excitement and, therefore, He was express and peremptory in His order—“See that no man knows it.”

31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. They most industriously published what they were told to conceal till “all that country” rang with the news! In this they erred greatly and probably caused the Savior so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that He had to leave the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord! However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He does not seek applause, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets that He may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy His example.

We do not wonder that our Lord’s name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how He opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but exhorted to make known the wonders of His Grace. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us “spread abroad His fame.”

32. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in. Note the, “behold.” The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord—“they brought” him—thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is “a dumb man.” Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is “possessed with a devil.” Poor creature! Will anything be done for him?

33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit! “The devil was cast out” and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man and so, when the Evil One was gone, “the dumb spoke.” How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said, it matters not—the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented—and in this they only said the truth—“It was never so seen in Israel.” Jesus is great at surprises! He has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration, yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord’s mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe! O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions as they have never known before!

34. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils. Of course they had some bitter sentence ready! Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord, in another place so easily answered! They hinted that such power over demons must have come to Him through an unholy compact with “the prince of the devils.” Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin!

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Matthew 20:29, 30. And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David! On Jericho a curse had rested, but the

Presence of Jesus brought it a blessing! We suppose He must go through Jericho as once before He must go through Samaria. Our Lord departed from Jericho and a vast crowd attended Him, for His fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning His doings till two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. Behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside. They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold them. They had taken up a hopeful position, by the wayside, for there they would be likely to hear any good news and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes and they used their hearing well! On enquiry, they learned that Jesus passed by and believing that He could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to Him—they cried out. Their plea was pity—“Have mercy on us.” Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus—“O Lord, You Son of David.” Our Lord’s sermon was interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho. But this never displeased Him—neither would true preachers of the Gospel be disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

31. And the multitude rebuked them, told them they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David! The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the shouts of the blind men—therefore the multitude rebuked them. Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet and hold their peace—and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties, but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight—and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness! Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, they cried the more. Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus Christ!

Unvarying was the blind beggars’ cry—“ Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David!” Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed—in words which leaped from their hearts—they repeated their prayer and their plea. And it was no vain repetition!

32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will you that I shall do unto you? Jesus stood still. At the voice of prayer, the Sun of Righteousness paused in His progress! Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet! He called them—and this because they had called Him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to Him. There is no need to tell us that. They were at His feet as soon as the words were uttered! How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of Mercy, yet refuse to come! Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes and so He would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal enquiry—“What will you that I shall do unto you?” It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship would find it difficult to answer. You say you “wish to be saved”—what do you mean by those words?

33. They said unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened!” They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was needed, no form of words—the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

34. So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him. So—that is, since they thus stated their desire and had so great a need, Jesus had compassion on them, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft and their consequent poverty. He touched their eyes. What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh and worked such deeds of power! Immediately their eyes received sight. Only a touch and light entered! Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for they followed Him. We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus and keep close to His heels.

Oh, that the reader, if he is spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will, in an instant, shine forth upon the soul and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind! The Son of David still lives and still opens the eyes of the blind! He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant and he will see what he shall see—and he will forever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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GATHERING IN THE CHOSEN  
NO. 3308

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1866.

**“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together; a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.” Jeremiah 31:8, 9.**

THERE IS a wonderful variety in the acts of God and yet there is a most singular uniformity. So complete is this uniformity that any one deliverance which God works for His people will be found to be, in its main features, just like any other of His deliverances.

Starting —for it is a convenient starting-point—with the deliverance of God’s people out of Egypt, there are many points of similarity between that marvel of mercy and the bringing back of the banished tribes from Babylon to their own land. There was a manifestation of the same gracious consideration, of the same Omnipotent power, of the some efficient purpose worked out in all points according to God’s Eternal Covenant. Then, taking another great leap, that return from Babylon is, no doubt, a very fair picture and a very excellent type of the gathering together in their own land of the Jews in the days that are yet to come when they shall say to one another, “Let us go up to the house of our God.” Everybody will admit that it will be as great a wonder to see the Jews, who are now a nation scattered abroad throughout the whole world, once more dwelling together in Palestine, as it was for them to have been brought out of Egypt or delivered out of Babylon in days long past! But taking a still greater leap, this again is a type of the greatest of all deliverances— the deliverance neither of the Jews alone nor of the Gentiles alone, but of the whole chosen company who shall be brought out from all the lands of sin and error into which they have been driven by their first parents’ fall and their own actual transgressions! They shall be brought out by the same almighty power, only on a far greater scale, and they shall meet, as in a common focus, in that Jerusalem above which is the home of all the chosen! I want to turn your thoughts toward that glorious future when the vast assembly of the redeemed will “sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints.”

I. And, first, I am going to show you that we have, in the text, DEITY MANIFESTED.  
There is a Divine ring about the text as there was in that ancient fiat which startled the darkness and caused it to flee away. “Let there be light, and there was light.” So here the Lord says, “I will bring them and gather them…and they shall come…I will lead them. I will cause them to walk; they shall not stumble.” It is, “I will,” and, “they shall” all the way through! There is no admission of doubt or of the possibility of failure. Jehovah speaks in the Sovereignty of His power and says, “I will do this, and I will do that,” and there is not an, “if,” or a, “perhaps,” or a “maybe” to mar the certainty of the Divine Declarations—“I will” and “they shall.”  
Remember, Beloved, that it was so in Egypt. “ Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Yet, when the Lord smote his firstborn with all the first-born throughout the land of Egypt, “he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as you have said.” And when the time came for captive Israel to return from Babylon, God had but to speak and the iron bars snapped in sunder and the gates of brass flew open! So also shall it be in the latter days when the Jews are restored to their own land. By some mysterious influence which probably many of them will not be able to understand, they will be irresistibly drawn from all parts of the earth to Emmanuel’s land and, meanwhile, that same Divine Energy is gathering together the chosen unto the great Shiloh, for “unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Invisible bands of love are continually drawing to Christ those for whom He died. The mighty magnet of His atoning Sacrifice is constantly attracting to Him the members of His redeemed family—more in one age than in another, yet always according to the eternal purpose and decree of God—for although He acts mysteriously and silently, yet He always “works all things after the counsel of His own will.”  
I do not know any theme upon which one might dilate with greater joy than that of the Omnipotent energy of God as displayed in the salvation of sinners, yet it must always be understood that we proclaim this Truth in complete harmony with the responsibility of man and his absolute free agency. I have always taught you that the Omnipotence of God over the human heart is never exercised in such a way as to violate the free will of man. It would be a clumsy kind of Omnipotence that would do as it pleased with men whether they were willing or not! But it is Divine Omnipotence that molds the will, enlightens the judgment and fashions the heart and mind and character of man according to the Lord’s eternal purpose. Yet, on the other hand, let me beseech you never to let your ideas of the free agency of man prevent you from adoring the Omnipotent Sovereignty of God. We are not to have man’s free will sitting on the throne! Its place is that of a humble servant waiting at Jehovah’s feet. Let the glorious Truth of God that “the Lord reigns” be proclaimed in its fullest sense and let the man who dares to limit the Sovereignty of God answer for it before Him who, with a rod of iron, would dash in pieces the potter’s vessel that presumed to say, “Why have you made me thus?” We believe that when the great drama of human history is complete, it will conform in every jot and tittle to the eternal plan that was in the mind of God long before He spoke the great creative word which called the Heaven and the earth into existence!  
In the bringing up of Israel out of Babylon there were a great many questions to be considered. Would the king be willing to let them go? Would they themselves be willing to go? By what process could they be ranged under one leader? How could they be provided for and provisioned for such a long journey? By what means could they be safely conducted through the perils of the wilderness? How could they again be settled in a land which had become barren through the curse of God resting upon it? Yet, when the set time came, all these difficulties vanished! As God was in that plan of bringing His people back from Babylon, the king’s heart was turned as the husbandman turns the channel of irrigation in the midst of the garden! As God was in it, the Jews sighed and longed to return to Jerusalem! As God was in it, they went back, not like trembling doves flying from a pursuing hawks but like a bannered host returning from the conquest loaded with spoil!  
Just so is it with the sinner and the salvation of his soul—there are many questions that he may want to ask. How can prejudice be subdued? How can ignorance be overcome? How can the stubborn will be controlled? How is it possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin and the leopard his spots? But, when God comes forth to save, it is as though a man walked through cobwebs and brushed them away from him on either side, or as though a giant stalked through a host of pigmies and made them fly to right or left—  
*“When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?”*  
When He puts forth the fullness of His strength to effect His Divine Purpose, who shall say to Him, “What are You doing?” Therefore, you ministers of God, be bold, for you serve the Lord God Omnipotent! You servants of Christ in every sphere, be brave, for you have not espoused a losing cause! Everyone of you, though you may be but little in the army of the Lord, yet are—  
**“Strong in the Lord of Hosts,  
And in His mighty power”—**  
for His Kingdom cannot be overthrown, it must spread until it fills the whole earth! And God, even our own God, must be exalted and the praises of His holy name and of His glorious work must go on ringing down the ages forever and ever!  
II. Now turning to the second point, we see in the text DIFFICULTIES REMOVED.  
Difficulties would naturally be suggested by unbelieving minds. It would be said, in the first place, that the people had gone too far away ever to be gathered. Yet the Lord says, “I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth.” There may be at the present time, some of the Lord’s chosen far away in Greenland, Labrador, and other lands of snow and ice. There were some, in the olden times, when the Moravian Brethren went forth at God’s command to bring to Christ those who belonged to Him in “the north country.” There were also others in the far-away islands of the south—cannibals given up to the wildest passions—but Christ had bought them with His precious blood and a sacred instinct compelled John Williams and many other martyrs and missionaries to go forth to the Apostolic task of turning savages into saints! It may be that God has many of His chosen ones at the present moment in the center of Africa—and if it is so, they shall not die before the Gospel has been made known to them and they have been brought to trust in Him who loved them and gave Himself for them! Distance is no distance in the sight of God! He sees all the inhabitants of the globe at a single glance and His gaze is fixed upon the blood-bought sons and daughters of men wherever these may be dwelling! And He will gather them from all the coasts of the earth where their lot has been cast.  
And as distance of space is no obstacle to the bestowed of God’s mercy, so neither is the distance that is caused by the greatness of sin. “Now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.” There may be one among those whom I am now addressing who has gone to the cold “north country” of infidelity, where he stands shivering in the biting winds of doubt and skepticism. Ah, but my Friend, God is able to bring you to Himself even from that dreary region! There may be some who have gone to the uttermost coasts of sin until they have become masters in iniquity, trafficking upon the broad sea of transgression and doing business in the deep waters of infamy and perhaps of blasphemy. Ah, but if you are among these who were given to Christ, God will gather you sooner or later—even if you have sold yourself to the devil, “your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand.” If you are, indeed, “bought with a price,” Christ will surely gather you with the rest of His redeemed! By might and main He will make a conquest of you, for, when the Lord determines to bring His people to Himself, neither material distance nor moral distance can prevent Him from doing so!  
There was also another difficulty—not only were these people in Babylon far away from Jerusalem, but some of them were blind. What did it matter to them where they lived? No landscape, even though it was as grand as that which Moses saw from the top of Pisgah, could have any attraction for them. Even if others go back, shall not the blind be left behind? Of what service are the blind? How shall they behold the beauty of the Lord? But the Lord said that He would bring back the blind with the others from the north country, and from the outcasts of the earth, and we may apply this promise to those who are spiritually blind. How can you get at a man who will not see his own sin and who will not or cannot see the beauty of God’s plan of salvation? How are you to get at those whose eyes are covered with the scales of prejudice? How can you reach the Romanist whose eyes are plastered up with ceremonies and superstitions? How can you convince the work-monger that his own good deeds, of which he thinks so much, are blinding him to the beauties of Christ? How can these blind ones be saved? Ah, Beloved, no eye is too blind for God to pour light into it! And some of us can bear our personal testimony upon this matter. We would never have known the Grace of God in truth if that Grace had not come to us in our blind ignorance and enlightened us! May it be so with some who are here tonight! Is there a very ignorant person here? Well, my dear Friend, do you know that you are a sinner, that you are guilty in the sight of God? Then do you know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save such guilty sinners as you are? If so, and you put your trust in Him, you are already wise unto salvation however little you may know about other matters! Learn the great Truth that Christ died in the place of all who believe in Him and you will no longer be numbered among the spiritually blind!  
With those blind people in Babylon there seem to have been some lame folk and an objector might have said, “Surely, if the caravan is to pass through the desert, it would be better to leave these poor limping ones at home! How can they ever be brought to Jerusalem?” But the Lord said, “The blind shall be led, and the lame shall be carried, but they must not be

left behind.” Now, there are some who are morally lame. If ever they enter into life, it will be among the crippled and the maimed. They seem as if they could not walk uprightly, there is a limp in their gait. Their knees are weak, they cannot pray as they would. Lame Sinners—are you here tonight? Do you feel as if you cannot get to Christ, and cannot pray, and cannot do anything right? Well, do but cry to Him, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Turn your eyes to Christ, think of Him as He hung upon the Cross and trust Him to save you, and you shall find that, lame as you are, you shall be brought safely Home! Mr. Ready-toHalt shall get to Heaven as surely as Mr. Great-Heart himself!  
Then there were some others of whom it was said that they could not possibly join the caravan—“the woman with child and her that travails with child.” These were certainly unfit to go—they were in such a weak state that they could not take that long journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, yet the Lord said, “I will gather them and bring them,” and so He did! Well, there are some like them in our midst tonight, burdened ones who have a load of sin pressing upon them, fainting ones whose souls are in a sacred travail. They would gladly run, but they cannot even stand! And they are all too apt to fall. But, O you who are thus souldistressed, the blessing is that Jesus Christ will not leave you behind! You shall be brought with the rest of the chosen seed to the heavenly Jerusalem to praise and magnify your great Deliverer forever and ever!  
III. Now in the third place, we have in the text not only Deity manifested, and difficulties removed, but we also have DESCRIPTIONS GIVEN.  
How shall this great company be brought to the Jerusalem which is above? Listen! There is a mighty host on the march, but I hear no sound of trumpet, no voice of mirth, no song of joy! What do I hear? Weeping, mourning, lamentation—“They shall come with weeping.” That is the music to which sinners usually set out for the heavenly Canaan—seldom if ever is that start made without tears! It is not the shriek of despair. It is not the groan of disappointment. It is not the yell of rage, and hate. It is the plaintive wail of a soul that says to God, “I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and are no more worthy to be called Your son.” From those who compose that throng you may, every now and then, catch such sorrowful sentences as these, “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” “My sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity. I will be sorry for my sins.” This is the kind of music that we hear from those who are setting out for Heaven! Have you, my Friend, ever practiced it? You will never sing in Glory if you have never wept over your sin! I do not merely mean such tears as men and women shed, though these will probably not be absent, but I mean that you will experience that spiritual sorrow which is often too deep for tears. May God the Holy Spirit teach us to weep at the remembrance of our sin, to weep at the foot of the Cross as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!  
Listen again! Now I hear another note rising from the great caravan, the note of supplication. It is the hour of prayer. They have got beyond weeping into anxiety, desire, petition, request—and I hear many voices crying, “Save Your people who trust in You. Be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause Your face to shine upon us.” In our day, the supplication takes some such form as this, “Reveal Yourself unto us, O Christ, for in You do we put our trust! In Your name have we set up our banners. Come forth, O Lord, as our Helper and Deliverer!” The march is with weeping and supplication—and I believe these two things will attend that caravan right up to the brink of Jordan! The last tear will be dropped in Jordan’s flowing stream, for we shall sorrow no more and repent no more when we stand before the Eternal Throne of God! And the last prayer—at any rate, the last prayer that has any sense of sin in it— shall be breathed on the bank of the river which we cross to enter into Glory!  
I must next direct your attention to something in our text about the road the caravan has to traverse—“I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters.” They had to pass through a wilderness in going from Egypt to Canaan, and also in returning from Babylon. And we, also, have to traverse the wilderness of this world in journeying to the better Promised Land above. But as they had water in abundance on their long marches, we, also, have “the rivers of waters” of Divine Grace and Almighty Love. When we first began to seek the Lord, we found that one of the channels in which the precious rivers were flowing was this precious Bible at which we still quench our spiritual thirst. Then, when we trusted in Jesus, and confessed our faith in Him, we found the two ordinances that He instituted—Believers’ Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—to be as refreshing to our spirit as cold water is to the thirsty. I trust that you, Beloved, while sitting under the sound of the Word of God, have often been able to drink of the brook by the way. And certainly private prayer and intimate fellowship with God, and, above all, the secret and mysterious indwelling of the Holy Spirit have caused you “to walk by the rivers of waters,” so that although the earth is in itself arid, “a dry and thirsty land where no water is,” you have found that from the foot of the Cross there flows a living stream from which all the chosen may continue to drink until they come to that “pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.”  
In the description of the caravan route we are next told that it is “a straight way.” The path to Heaven is not at all difficult to find. It would be very difficult to find the way to Heaven by the rites and ceremonies about which some are so particular, but to those who trust in Jesus, the way of salvation is a very simple one, so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool in other things, need not err therein! If any of you are trying to find your way to Heaven by the road of your own good works, you may well be puzzled, for you are off the right track altogether! But the Believer’s path is straight and plain. He trusts and he is saved! He looks and he lives! He believes God’s Word and he proves that it is true! You know that the way of policy, such as ungodly men often follow in this world, is a very crooked way, and Christians are sometimes tempted to tread that treacherous path. But that is the slimy way into which the devil led our first parents, and nothing but evil can come to those who walk in it! The giving up of the whole heart and soul to Christ is the simple way of being saved—and then yielding complete obedience to Christ is the simple way of living. The Lord’s promise is, “I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way”—not in a crooked, twisting, winding, in-and-out way, but in a straight way—the way of faith in Christ and of unquestioning obedience to His commands.  
The description of this straight way concludes thus, “Wherein they shall not stumble.” It is a good thing to have a straight road, but it is a better thing to have also a sure foot! And God, who teaches His people to do right, also gives them Grace to do it. These blind ones and lame ones and weak ones of whom I have been speaking, are upheld by Sovereign Grace in the narrow way in which the Lord is leading them. My eye seems to catch the glorious vision! I see the blind finding their way to the great center of eternal blessedness. I see the lame come running as though they had wings on their feet to speed them onward to the pearly gates above! I see the vast blood-bought throng, from the North, and the South, and the East, and the West, casting away, by Divine Grace, all their burden and their cares! And with the fetters of their sins snapped forever, streaming in crowds to the one blessed center—  
*“Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest”—*  
where we ourselves expect, by-and-by, to be! Angels and the redeemed from among men must be continually witnessing the arrival of those who, first chosen by the Father, then redeemed by the Son, then regenerated by the Holy Spirit, have repented of sin and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and by Grace have been preserved in their march through the wilderness and brought Home to that blessed city from which they shall go no more out forever! Well may we sing—  
**“O Paradise eternal!  
What bliss to enter you,  
And once within your portals,  
Secure forever be!  
In you no sin nor sorrow,  
No pain nor death is known—  
But pure glad life, enduring  
As Heaven’s benignant throne!  
There all around shall love us,  
And we return their love  
One band of happy spirits,  
One family above.”**  
IV. Now I must close when I have spoken but for a minute upon the last point, which is DIGNITY BESTOWED. “For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.”  
Those who are brought out of the bondage of sin, as Israel was brought out of Egypt and Babylon, by the almighty power and Grace of God, are acknowledged by Him as His children. John writes concerning Jesus, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave Him power (the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” This relationship cannot be disputed and cannot be disturbed—and this is the relationship which exists between God and every pardoned sinner! Happy soul! Though once in the family of Satan and an heir of wrath, you are now a child and an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ!  
I think there are some here whose mouths are set a-watering for this same blessing and who are longing to be found among the innumerable multitude who shall be gathered in the heavenly Jerusalem at the last! Well, if you truly desire to be the Lord’s, that is a sign and token that the Lord also desires to have you as His child! That is a true declaration in one of our hymns—  
*“No sinner can be beforehand with You.”*If you really desire to have God as your God, and Christ as your Savior, God desires it, too, and Christ desires it. If you are willing to be saved, do not imagine that Christ is unwilling to save you! If you are coming to Christ, Christ is coming to you. No, He HAS come to you, or you would never want to come to Him! “Only believe.” These are Christ’s words to you now—believe that He is able to save you through the merit of His atoning Sacrifice and through the prevalence of His intercession before His Father’s Throne above. Trust Him! Trust Him to save you now, and then you also shall be among the redeemed of the Lord who shall return and come with singing unto Zion! Everlasting joy shall be upon your head! You shall obtain gladness and joy—and sorrow and mourning shall flee away from you forever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 31:1-28.**

Verse 1. At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. How divinely He talks—as only God can talk! These people had rejected Him, yet He says, “They shall be My people,” not only some of them, but all of them! “I will be the God of all the families of Israel.” Behold the wonderful power of Divine Grace upon the hearts of rebellious sinners. There are no “ifs,” and no, “buts,” here! It is, “I will” and, “they shall.” God knows how to work out His own purposes of love and mercy!

2. Thus says the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found Grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. If we ever do get true rest of soul, God must cause us to rest. As David said, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” The rest of the heart is a miracle of Divine Power!

3. The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn

you. [See Sermons #1914, Volume 32—SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED; #2149, Volume 36—EVERLASTING LOVE REVEALED and #2880, Volume 50—NEW TOKENS OF ANCIENT LOVE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There

is the source of everything that is good and gracious— “everlasting love.” When God has once set that love upon His people, anything and everything that is for their good may come out of it! All temporal good and all eternal blessings will come out of everlasting love. Oh, that we might, each one of us, have Grace to appropriate these blessed words to himself—“I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” They were given to Israel of old, but the spiritual Israel possess all the privileges of the natural Israel, and much more.

4. Again I will build you, and you shall be built. Whatever God does is done effectually—there is never any failure in His work.  
4. O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. They had wept and mourned, but they were to dance! They had been very sad and disconsolate, but they were to take down their harps from the willows, and even to have their tabrets or timbrels again.

5. You shall yet plant vines upon the mountain of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. God makes the luxuries of Grace to be common things to His people. Fare that once seemed so rare as to be enjoyed only on high days and holidays shall become everyday meat to His people when their Lord reveals Himself to them!

6. For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the Mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For many a year Israel had gone to Bethel to worship the calves, or stayed at home to adore the shrine of Ashtaroth. Now they were to go to Zion to serve Jehovah! See what the Grace of God can do even for idolaters? If any of us have been bowing down to our idols, may we this day turn to the living God! May the power of His Grace lead us to go heartily and unanimously to worship the Lord our God.

7, 8. For thus says the LORD; Sing with gladness, for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there. Whatever God does, He does thoroughly. When He shall restore His ancient people, He will not leave the weak ones behind and if, today, we are enjoying His Presence, the most afflicted and the most infirm among us shall know what the joy of the Lord means! The Lord grant it, and we will praise His holy name.

9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. Weeping and prayer go well together. There is no prayer like a wet prayer saturated with the tears of repentance.

9. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way— Hear this, you mourners! God will supply your need with rivers of waters, and He will make you walk in a straight way. Sometimes we are perplexed because the road seems to wind in and out like a labyrinth, but God can lead us in a straight way! “I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way”—

9. Wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born. They had forgotten their relationship to Jehovah, but He still remembered that they were His children.

10, 11. Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off and say He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. They were the Lord’s chosen people even when they were in captivity in Babylon! He had scattered them because of their sin, but He would gather them in His mercy.

12-14. Therefore they shall come and bring in the height of Zion and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat and for wine and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness says the LORD. What a blessed change this was for those who had sorrowfully cried, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” And we rejoice in a still greater change when the Lord brings us into spiritual liberty!

15-17. Thus says the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping, for her children refused to be comforted, for her children, because they were not. Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded says the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border. A mother’s sorrow over her lost babies is very great and long-enduring, but if she is a Christian, she shall meet them again in the land of the blessed, and shall be parted from them no more forever.

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. [See Sermons  
#743, Volume 13—EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF and #2104, Volume 35—THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

What a wonderfully expressive word that word, “bemoaning,” is! 18, 19. You have chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unac  
customed to the yoke: turn You me, and I shall be turned; for You are the  
LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I  
was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Hear what the Lord  
says about these bemoaning ones, these sin-loathing ones— 20. Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? Or we may render  
it, “Is this Ephraim, My dear son? Is this My pleasant child?” He is all  
that now that he begins to hate his sin!  
20. For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.  
Think of this, you who forget your God, you backsliders, wanderers from  
your Father’s house!  
20, 21. Therefore My heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy  
upon him, says the LORD. Set you up way marks, make you high heaps.  
Raise signs along the road at various points to let other travelers know  
the way in which they should go.  
21, 22. Set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you  
went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. How  
long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? for the LORD has  
created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Whereas  
the enemy had compassed Jerusalem round about, now Jerusalem was  
to be the besieger, and to compass her enemies and defeat them. Some  
interpreters think this is an allusion to the birth of the Savior, that “new  
thing in the earth”—the Incarnation of the Son of God.  
23-25. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they  
shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. This prophecy is to be fulfilled in the restoration of Israel to Palestine. Until that happens, the promise bears a spiritual meaning to all the children of God. O weary Soul, you shall be satiated—that is more than being satisfied! You shall have as much of holiness and joy as you can hold! Plead His promise now, O sorrowful Soul, and may God  
fulfill it to you!  
26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.  
Well might it be. Poor Jeremiah, who so often wept over the woes of  
Israel, was the very man to be refreshed when he heard from God that He  
would visit His people in mercy, and bring them back to their own land!  
Happy dreamer, who dreams such a blessed dream as this, a dream that  
came true in due time!  
27-28. Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will sow the  
house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the  
seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over  
them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy,  
and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the  
LORD. What a black list of words we first have here! God’s way of dealing  
with His people when they wander away from Him is very stern. They  
must be brought back, but it will be over a very rough road. The Lord  
says that He “watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to  
throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict.” And in the same measure He  
now declares that He will watch over them to do them good. As our tribulations abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ Jesus! If  
you have been bitterly convicted of sin, you shall be sweetly convicted of  
pardon. The deeper God digs the foundation, the higher He means to  
build the house. Those who are brought to Him in great affliction very often afterwards know more of Christ and more of the love of God than any  
others!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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FOURFOLD SATISFACTION  
NO. 2726

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 12, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 4, 1880.

**“And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness. And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord... For I have  
satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.” Jeremiah 31:14, 25.**

THE subject of this morning [Sermon #1549, Volume 26—GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] was

spiritual thirst, and the promises made thereto. I tried to encourage those who are not at rest concerning the state of their souls—those who have strong and ardent desires to escape from the wrath to come—I tried to encourage them to partake of Christ, by faith, that they might find peace of heart and so might be perfectly satisfied. I believe that some did find peace this morning. We shall be on the look-out for them and hope that they will speedily come and tell us what God has done for their souls.

But, on this occasion our subject is the very opposite of that of this morning. It is neither thirst nor hunger, but perfect satisfaction, not strength of agonizing desire, but rest of holy satiety of which I am about to speak, in the earnest hope that all of you who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ may enjoy this perfect satisfaction even at this very hour. There are four forms of satisfaction described in the four sentences of the two verses which form our text.

I. The first is GOD’S SERVANTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE APPOINTED SACRIFICE. Read the first sentence of verse 14—“I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.”

God’s people are His children, but they are also His servants. And their service, viewed from one special point, is that of priests. Christ has made all of us who believe in Him to be kings and priests unto our God. It is the business of every Christian to be a priest. There is now no special order of priests apart from the general body of believers in Christ. We regard the use of the term, “priests,” as relating to any other persons as utterly misleading and untrue. Every man who is a Christian is a priest unto God and he daily offers unto God the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. In fact, his whole life should be a sacrifice—his ordinary garments should be his priestly vestments—and wherever he is, the place should be a temple for God’s worship. His own house and every room in it should be consecrated to the Lord’s service. And every action of his life should be the act of one who is holy unto the Lord and who does everything with a view to the Glory of God.

Priests, of course, must have a sacrifice, and it is the special privilege of the priests of God that they shall be satisfied by eating the fat of that sacrifice. If you read, when you are at home, in the 7th chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will find that the Aaronic priests were forbidden to eat the fat of the sacrifice and, in fact, to eat any portion of the fat of a beast that had been sacrificed to God was a crime that was punishable with death! There were certain portions of the sacrificial animals that were allotted to the priests, but all that was described as, “the fat thereof,” was for God, and for God alone, so that, under the Jewish dispensation, the priest could never be satisfied with fatness. But Christ has made us priests after another order than that of Aaron—and the richest part of the Sacrifice, the very fat of it—is now ours to feed upon!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, what is the Sacrifice of which we speak today, but the Lord Jesus Christ? We know of no other atoning Sacrifice but the blessed Person, body, soul, spirit, and blood of Jesus Christ, our Incarnate God and Savior! It is with this Sacrifice that Believers are perfectly satisfied.

First, we are satisfied with Christ as our Sin-Offering. Brethren, He did really take upon Himself our sin and He did make an end of it upon the Cross. Believing in Christ Jesus, we have no more consciousness of sin so far as its guilt is concerned. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. When Christ took our sins, we had not one of them left. We were clear of them, in God’s sight, the moment that Christ became our Substitute. And when, by faith, we laid our hand on that dear head of His and made confession of our transgression, we received the personal assurance that our sin was made to meet upon Him more than 1,800 years ago. When He was nailed to the accursed tree, outside the gate, He presented a sin-offering for our sake and that one offering was effectual, for by it He has fulfilled the great prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Brothers and Sisters, you believe this great Truth of God, I know you do, but are you satisfied with it? If you are not, you ought to be, for what better fountain of cleansing can you desire than the precious blood of Christ? What better way of Atonement do you need than that Christ should bear the wrath of God for you—that He should take your sin and hurl it into the depths of the sea where it can never be found again? When He had done this, he cried, “It is finished!” And it was finished forever—so are you not perfectly satisfied with Christ as your Sin-Offering?

Next, we are satisfied with Christ as our Burnt-Offering. Under that aspect, also, He was well pleasing to God. Man was bound to bring to God a perfect obedience which would please his Maker. By himself, man could never do this. But Christ has done it, and you and I who believe in Him are perfectly satisfied that God is well pleased with Him, and also well pleased with us who are representatively in Him. By faith, wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, with His finished work imputed to us and His perfect robe covering us as with raiment of worked gold, we believe that we are beautiful in the sight of God, “accepted in the Beloved,” so that He can use His words to the spouse in the Canticles and say to us, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you.” If you believe this and have really a firm grip of it, you are perfectly satisfied with Christ as your justifying righteousness, the Burnt-Offering with which God is well pleased so that He smells in it a savor of rest.

There was another offering, called the peace-offering, in which the worshipper partook with God of the sacrifice in token of complete reconciliation between God and the sinner. Are you not perfectly satisfied with Christ as your Peace-Offering? You feed upon Him and God feeds upon Him and, therefore, you feel yourself to be at perfect peace with God, do you not? “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Have you that peace, Beloved? If you are looking to Christ alone as your Savior, I know that you do feel within you that deep “peace of God, which passes all understanding,” which does “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Do you need any better peace with God than Christ has made? Do you need any better reconciliation than Christ has accomplished? I know you do not and you can, at this moment, from your inmost soul say, “God has satisfied my soul with the Sacrifice of His dear Son. The fatness of that Sacrifice has filled me and I am delighted with it. Christ has put away all my sin. He has made me acceptable unto God. He has given me the enjoyment of peace with God and communion with Him. Now am I fully contented.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when a man truly lays hold of Christ, he gets fully satisfied. People come to us and say, “Why don’t you take up the modern-thought doctrines? Why don’t you study the new theories that so many have accepted?” Well, the reason is that when we have the best Object for our faith that we can ever get, we feel as if that is quite good enough for us. We cannot imagine anything that could give such rest to our entire nature as a belief in Christ has done. If you can really prove to us that there is something better, we are not fools, and we shall be quite willing to accept it—but we greatly question whether you will ever bring us to your way of thinking, for this Christ of ours, in whom we have believed, is so good, great, gracious and glorious, that He fills and overfills us, and we do not see what more we could ever want or have!

Oh, how long was my mind in bitter anguish till I came to eat the fat of Christ’s Sacrifice! And when I trusted in Him as my Substitute, He at once satisfied the demands of my intellect. I seemed to think that it was the most glorious invention possible, even to God, that Christ should die, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Then I understood how God could be justified and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—how He could pardon me and yet punish my sin—how there should be no violation of His justice and yet no limitation of His mercy because Christ stepped in and paid all my debt, so that it was justly as well as mercifully struck out from the record of God! There are some very great intellects in the world—no doubt there are much greater ones than mine—but, as far as mine is concerned, that doctrine of Christ’s Substitution perfectly satisfies me.

Words fail me when I try to tell you how fully this Truth of God also satisfies my conscience. My conscience, burdened, troubled and perplexed when it was once awakened, used to plague me day and night. I said to myself, “If God does not punish me for my sins, He ought to do so.” I could not believe in any love of God that did not punish my sin. But when I saw that He bade His sword awake against His own dear Son who stood in my place—when I saw that He was too just to wink at sin and pass by transgression, but visited it upon a willing Substitute—blessed be His name, then my conscience found a place of perfect rest! I felt that I could love God and trust God because He had not winked at sin, but had punished it, in the Person of His dear Son, on my behalf! Oh, this fat of the Sacrifice satisfies God’s servants as to their conscience!

And now it also satisfies my affections. And it will satisfy yours, dear Friend, if you trust to it. You need somebody to love—everybody does. You cannot go through the world simply living inside your own ribs. You must live in somebody’s heart and if you give your heart altogether to any human being, you will be disappointed. But, oh, when you love Christ with all your heart—when you live wholly for Him, then you have something that fills your heart right up! Here your love can rest! It can roost and build its nest in the wounds of Jesus! There is nothing that can fill the affections of any one of us like the dear Person of our suffering Lord.

And I am sure that He also satisfies all our hopes. Large as they may be, there is enough in Christ to fully gratify them. And as for our fears, He fills them up so that we seem to have nothing to fear! “If God is for us,” in Christ, “who can be against us?” If Christ has died for us, who is he that condemns us? And what is there that can now separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Oh, if you would all but try this blessed plan of believing in Jesus as the Lamb of God slain for your sin—if you would but eat the fat of this great Sacrifice—you, also, would prove the truth of the first sentence of our text, “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.” In that way you would have all you could take in and a great deal more than all you need!

II. Now let us turn to the second sentence of our text. “My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord.” This teaches us that AS GOD’S PEOPLE, WE ARE SATISFIED WITH GOD’S GOODNESS. All through my discourse, I shall be appealing to you, dear Friends, and asking you whether it is not as I say. Come now, Beloved, you who are the Lord’s people, I want to ask you a few questions concerning His goodness to you.

First, are you satisfied with God’s eternal purposes? Your names are written in His Book of Life. He chose you from eternity to be His. Before the torch of light had kindled the first shining orb, He had looked upon you with Prescient eyes and loved you! You are satisfied about that great Truth of God, I hope—“I have loved you with an everlasting love.” “Satisfied,” did I say? That word seems scarcely good enough! Sit down and turn over in your mind this eternal love of God and you will feel such delight within your soul, if you feel as I do, that you will soon have tears streaming down your cheeks for very joy as you sing—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn!  
Chosen of You ere time began,  
I choose You in return.”*

Well, now, out of that eternal love comes adoption into God’s family. Taking us out of the family of the Prince of Darkness, He has made us His own sons and daughters! Are you satisfied with that adoption? Do you need any higher honor than to be a child of God? For, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Earthly sovereigns are accustomed to confer titles of nobility upon certain of their subjects. I suppose there is something in the honor, though not much. But when God makes a man His child, He puts him among the princes of the blood royal of Heaven, the imperial family of the skies! The peerages of Heaven are so glorious that all the nobilities of earth sink into utter insignificance in comparison with them! You, poor man, and you, humble woman, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, are allied to the God that made Heaven and earth! You have been admitted distinctly into the one Divinely royal family of the universe! Are you not satisfied with this honor? You should be, indeed, more than satisfied with this goodness of the Lord!

Well, now, since you have become the subject of this adoption, all God’s dealings with you have been the dealings of a Father. He treats you now as His sons. Perhaps, at the present moment, you do not feel quite satisfied with God’s dealings with you. But if you are in a right spirit, you will be. It may be that God has stripped you of your wealth and pulled you down from the high places you once occupied—you now stand in a very lowly position compared with that which you once filled. Yet, Beloved, if faith is in active exercise, you will say concerning the Lord’s dealings with you, “What pleases Him, pleases me. Whether He lifts me up, or casts me down, since He does it out of fatherly love and makes all things work for my good, I will be satisfied with whatever He does, for it is all goodness and it is written, ‘My people shall be satisfied with My goodness.’”

O dear Friends, this is a happy state of mind to be in, to be content with all that happens to us—to have done with wishing for any alteration in God’s dealings with us—to be satisfied with whatever He gives and just as satisfied when He withholds—to be even as a weaned child, crying no more after this poor world, but giving yourself up entirely to your loving Father’s care! May God grant to each one of you this privilege of being perfectly satisfied with His Providential dealings with you! You will be a very naughty child if you are not—and you will bring upon yourself a heap of trouble if you kick against what God has done. It will cost you more pain to rebel against God’s will than that will ever can cause you if you yield to it.

Are you not also satisfied with the goodness of God in His promises? Take your Bible—is it not a galaxy of stars—everyone of them infinitely more precious than the whole of the wealth of this world? All that you need for time and for eternity is included in the promises of God’s Word—

*“What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

I am quite sure that you are also satisfied with your prospects. Why, I think, that you will each one say, “I am infinitely more than satisfied with the prospect before me. It is too bright, too good, too glorious.” I am sure that God’s people, when they are in a right state of heart, are so satisfied with His goodness that they do not wish for anything more. They can hardly conceive of more than God has prepared for them that love Him. Let me but have God’s goodness and all may be as God wills! Only grant me Your favor, O my God, and I will make no choice of continent or climate, of poverty or wealth, of sickness or health, of time to live or time to die. If I have Your goodness, all else is but a trifle. God’s people show that they are satisfied with God’s goodness for they have no wish to change it for anything else. They would not give up their God if all the kingdoms of the world could be delivered over to them—they do not desire anything better for their children than God’s goodness. When you, who are parents, think of your dear ones growing up around you, you are naturally anxious about their prospects. If you did but know that they were all the Lord’s children, you would say, “We really care for nothing more than that. Their fortune is made when once their father’s God has become their God.”

This spirit of resignation makes you content to wait here below, whether it is threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, or less, or more! That question will not trouble you so long as God’s goodness follows you. And this satisfaction also makes you happy in the thought of departure out of this world—not impatient, but still expectant, hoping for the day to come soon when, borne on wings sublime, you shall leave behind you all the fret and care of this poor undeveloped life, and shall enter into the Glory where your spirit shall expand itself in the full Light of God and you shall know what God has prepared for them that love Him.

III. I can only speak very briefly upon the third sentence of our text, which is found in the 25th verse. “I have satiated the weary soul.” THIS SATISFACTION IS MEANT FOR WEARY PILGRIMS.

First, they are to be satisfied with Divine refreshments. Was it not so with you, Beloved, when you started on the heavenly pilgrimage? I should like to recall to you, my Brothers and Sisters, that memorable day when first you knew the Lord. In my own case, I can testify that I was very heavy of heart and very weary in spirit. Often did Satan tempt me to give up seeking rest, for I had sought so long in vain. I had attended the ordinances of God’s House, and used the means of Grace with great diligence, yet I think I was none the better, but rather grew worse. But the moment that I looked to Christ upon the Cross—the very instant I understood that all I had to do was to look unto Him and be saved—truly He had satiated my weary soul! I could have danced for joy, or shouted “Hallelujah!” at that moment! And by the hour together my spirit was singing, “Praise the Lord!” I did not know how to sufficiently express my delight.

You remember that time yourselves, do you not, when the Lord satiated your weary soul? He had given you all that your soul could feed upon and a great deal more. You were like a mouse that gets into a dairy full of cheese—you knew that you could not eat it all so you seemed to bury yourself in the fatness and fullness of the Lord’s mercy! There was no hope that you would be able to take it all in. It was so with me, I know. I felt like a little fish in the Atlantic, swimming where I pleased— above, beneath, around on all sides there was an infinity of delight that much more than filled my soul. That is what the Lord does for us when we begin to trust in Jesus. How has it been with us since then?

Well, Brothers and Sisters, I for one testify that He has continued to revive us. We have often been weary since those early days. Sometimes, weary in the Lord’s service, though never weary of it. We have been wearied with pain. We have been wearied with trials. We have been wearied with doubts and fears. We have been wearied with the assaults of Satan. We have been wearied with the unkindness of men and weary in a great many ways, but, oh, whenever we have come to Christ, how speedily He has satiated our weary soul! We could laugh at opposition then! We could cheerfully take up our heaviest cross and find it light as a feather! And we marched onward singing—

*“In darkest shades if He appears,  
My dawning is begun!  
He is my soul’s sweet morning star,  
And He my rising sun.”*

Perhaps our greatest weariness is weariness of ourselves. The one person that troubles me most is the one from whom I cannot get away as long as I am here. There is, I expect, a troublesome fellow who worries and bothers you a great deal—that is, yourself. Well, dear Friend, when you are weary of self, you will find it a blessed thing just to look away to Christ and say, “Lord, I am empty, but You are my fullness. I am weakness itself, but You are my strength. I am a mass of sin and misery, but You are my righteousness and my salvation. I am less than nothing, but You are all in all to me.” It is when we are most sick of self that we are most fond of our Savior—and it is when we get most weary of sinning that we find the sweetest repose in our sin-conquering Redeemer!

So, you see there is perfect satisfaction for weary souls, and well there may be, for look, you weary ones, and see what you have to give you this satisfaction! God the Father is yours, to be your Father! God the Son is yours, to be your Husband, your Head! God the Holy Spirit is yours, to be your Comforter, your perpetual Indweller. “All things are yours. . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” The Covenant, in which the “all things” are wrapped up, is yours, for He has made with you “an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Heaven is yours, with its golden streets, its green inviting fields, its endless glories, its boundless bliss—all is yours. Are you not satisfied, O poor weary one? Throw yourself down upon the couch of God’s goodness and take your fill of rest, for this is the rest, and this is the refreshing and, “so He gives His Beloved sleep.”

IV. The last sentence of our text can only just be touched upon. It speaks of SATISFACTION FOR MOURNERS. “I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”

There are plenty of sorrowful souls about and, no doubt, there are many in this congregation. As we look into their faces, they appear tolerably cheerful, but, “the heart knows his own bitterness.” There are some of us who are, at times, very heavy of heart—but when we do wear sackcloth, we always wear it next to our skin. I can speak for myself upon that matter. I do not like to wear sackcloth outside for everybody to see because if we do that, we make other people wear it, too, for we set a fashion of mourning. But this is our Lord’s command—“When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face; that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.”

But, now, where are you, sorrowful ones? Here is satisfaction for you, whatever may be the cause of your weeping and grieving. Are you sorrowing about past sin? Well, the Lord has given you perfect satisfaction concerning that matter, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He tells you that He has put away all your iniquity—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” You need not be downcast concerning the sins that God tells you have ceased to be! Remember that wonderful declaration in Jeremiah 50:20? “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

Perhaps you are sorrowful about inbred sin. You grieve because you cannot live as you would like to live. That is a blessed kind of sorrow. All God’s servants have to fight with inward corruption, more or less, and it often makes us cry with the Apostle, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But do not stop at that question—go on to say with Paul, on another occasion, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Your inward sins will all be conquered! There is not one Canaanite in the land who will not be destroyed by the power of your glorious Joshua, Jesus, who is leading you on to the battle! You shall be perfect, one day, before the Presence of God. With exceeding joy you shall be presented, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”  
Perhaps, however, some of you may be sorrowing because of your present troubles. Then the Lord comforts you by telling you that your troubles are working for your lasting good. I should like to bear my own witness to the Lord’s goodness to me and I desire to bless Him as much for the cups full of bitterness as for the chalices of sweet delight. And I really and honestly believe that, of the two, I have gained more by affliction than by joy. And I have more reason to praise God, at this moment, for deep depression and heart sorrow than for all the joys I have ever known, with but one exception, that is, the joy of believing in Christ and having fellowship with Him. Put all earthly enjoyments together and I do not think that they are worthy to be compared with the benefit of sanctified sorrow

There may be some of you who are sorrowing because of dear children whom you have lost. The text says, “I have replenished every sorrowful soul” so that you must not sorrow over these dear ones who have died, especially after you have read in this chapter about God comforting Rachel concerning her slain children. You know how the innocents were murdered at Bethlehem by the cruel Herod and Rachel mourned for them in this Prophetic lamentation. But the Lord said to her, “They shall come again from the land of the enemy.” It is a high honor to be the mother of a child in Heaven! It is something still higher to be mother to many sweet little ones who have gone on before you and who are singing up there an everlasting song of praise unto the King! It is a wondrous joy to be the father of those who, day and night, wait upon God in Heaven and see His face, and serve Him evermore! So be not sad or downcast if that is your case. As for all who die in the Lord, we sorrow not as those who are without hope. There will be blessed meetings, by-and-by. You look back, with great sorrow, to the loss of a dear husband, wife, brother, sister, father, mother—yes, but you know where they are and you have the blessed assurance that you shall meet them again in the day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised—and you, with them, shall form an unbroken family around the Throne of God in Heaven!

What is your sorrow, dear Friend? I will not stop to go into any further particulars, but whatever it may be, there is sufficient Grace stored up in Christ to take all your sorrow away. Come, aching head, lay yourself down upon the bosom of the loving Jesus! Come, weary heart, lean your whole weight upon His wounded side! Come, child of God with the sad countenance, and the red eyes of sorrow, look to the Man of Sorrows, grief’s close acquaintance, and learn from Him where the River of Salvation perpetually flows! If the Lord will but reveal Himself to you, you will need no other consolation, for He is, Himself, the Consolation of Israel.

Some of you may not come to this place many more times. Perhaps you are getting old and very feeble. Well, suppose you never come again—we shall be sorry to miss you if we ourselves remain, but you will not be sorry to be “forever with the Lord.” You are going from good to better and from better to best! And what will the best be? If, at the Lord’s Table, down here, you have sometimes had such raptures that you hardly knew how to bear the joy—and I know that you have had such bliss—what will it be to see your Savior face to face and to be forever with Him where you can never grieve Him again and where He will pour out all the love that is in His heart into your glorified spirit? All that may happen to you within a week, within an hour, within a moment! Nobody knows how near we are to the King’s pearly gate, so let us not sorrow too much, nor be too much cast down. Listen to the music of the golden harps—they are ringing out so sweetly that if we could but open these ears of ours a little more, we might catch at least some stray notes from the everlasting harmonies! Some of you are nearer to Heaven than you think you are. If these eyes could but be opened, or be taken away altogether, so that the spirit might see without the hindrance of these poor dim glasses, what a sight it would be! The jeweled city, with its 12 foundations all formed of precious stones—and the eternal Light shining out of it from the face of God and the Lamb, for no other light is needed there—

*“What must it be to be there?”*

Just think that we may be there within the next ten minutes and this thought should make us bear without a sigh the sorrows of the present moment, whatever they may be—

*“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,”*so let us—  
*“Smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song”*—and God be with us evermore, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 31:1-26.**

Verses 1-3. At the same time, says the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. Thus says the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found Grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. Was there ever a sweeter word from Heaven than this—everlasting love proved by the drawings of Divine Grace? I know that your hearts will be full of music if ever the Spirit of God has spoken home to your soul such a message as this! Let us read it again. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

4, 5. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel: you shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. You shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. God has kind purposes of love towards His ancient people and He will yet bring Israel again to her own land. And, spiritually, He has like purposes of love to all His elect. And they shall joy and rejoice with unspeakable delight. What if you are barren for a while? God shall yet come to you and you shall be fruitful.

6-9. For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus says the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, O LORD, save Your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born. Do not forget the first meaning of this passage in its reference to Israel, but suck in also the consolation which comes from it to all who are believers in Christ. The Lord will certainly bring all His chosen ones to Himself. Blind as they are—wandering as they have been—they shall come back to Him! They shall come back with tears of repentance, and with refreshments of mercy: “by the rivers of water.” They shall come back to their God, who says, “I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born.”

10, 11. Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Redemption lies at the bottom of every favor that we receive from God. He blesses us because He has redeemed us. He has bought us with so great a price that we are too dear for Him to ever lose us. Because He has bought His flock, He will, therefore, fetch it away from the enemy.

12-14 . Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness. And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD. Why, these very words are full of marrow and fatness! The promise is inexpressibly sweet! What must the fulfillment of it be? Oh, for faith to lay hold upon it! Yet there is a note of sorrow mingled with the pealing of the joy-bells—

15, 16. Thus says the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus says the LORD; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. “Your lost babes shall live; their very bodies, moldering in the earth, shall rise again. Be not grieved or vexed overmuch, for, ‘they shall come again from the land of the enemy.’”

17. And there is hope in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border. There is another sorrow—a deeper sorrow than grief over children, that is, sorrow for sin—

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. You have chastised me, and I was chastised. And that was the end of it.  
18. As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Since Your chastisements have been of little service to me, lay Your hand upon me—  
18, 19. Restore me, and I shall be turned; for You are the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented. Repentance is a turning from sin unto the Lord.  
19. And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. In very grief of heart, as if I could not smite myself enough for having sinned.  
19. I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Now when a man talks like that, how does God speak?  
20. Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still. “Not only do I remember him, but ‘I do earnestly remember him still.’”  
20. Therefore My heart yearns for him. “I cannot bear to see his misery.”  
20. I will surely have mercy upon him, says the LORD. Oh, what blessedness there is in this gracious promise!  
21-26. Set you up landmarks, make you high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me. I should think it was. If a man could dream like that, he might well wish to go to sleep again! To dream of everlasting love, of gracious drawings, of heavenly restorations, of sin forgiven, sorrow removed and desire satisfied, well may the Prophet, say, “My sleep was sweet unto me.” May we, when we are awake, learn what the Prophet heard in his sleep!

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EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF  
NO. 743

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me, and I was chastised as a bull unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn You me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord my God.” Jeremiah 31:18.**

THE heathen described their fabled deity, Jove, as sitting far aloft regardless of the common affairs of this lower world. Upon a few kings and princes he might turn an observant eye, but the most of men were creatures far too insignificant to affect the mind of Jove. Whether they lived or died was nothing to him—they fulfilled their destinies and passed away, while Jove remained serenely still, or nodded as his august will might be.

Not such is Jehovah, the God of Heaven and of earth! He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his going.” He regards the cries of the afflicted. “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” “Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” Though He is so great a God that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He deigns to dwell with the man who is of a contrite and humble spirit.

God has not left us as the ostrich leaves her young. Say not that we are left without a Friend to care for us—our Maker has not gone away! He has not shut up the gates of Heaven! He has not closed His ear from hearing, neither has He restrained His hand from helping us! Still does He hear His Ephraims when they bemoan themselves, and He sends them the mercy for which they pine. Let us conceive, as far as may be, of the nearness of God to every mourning soul, for it is marvelous and worthy of admiration.

When her Majesty, some months ago, heard of the desolation which had been caused by an accident in the pits, her tender heart hastened to the relief of the widows and the fatherless, but at the moment of the calamity she was not on the spot in person. She could not be in the pit to hear the groans and sustain the faith of the dying. No, she could not be in the cottage to mark the tears of the widow and to cheer her with heavenly promises. But our God is on the spot where calamity occurs, for in Him we live and move and have our being! He is the greatest of comforters, and He is also the most approachable.

He is “a very present help in time of trouble.” He needs no messengers to bear to Him the news of our grief or penitence, for He is not far from any of us. Mourner, your sigh is known to God as soon as you have heaved it! No, before your grief thus found a vent He saw it struggling within you! Yes, and the grief which you cannot express in words God can see and interpret! He knows the language of our grief, the meaning of our tears. Blessed be the ever-present God that He is upon the spot where the bemoaning of penitents are heard and bends a gracious ear to the cry of His children!

This morning my first desire is that each of us may feel that God is here and may be reached by us—that whatever our condition of mind may be, the Lord is well aware of it—and that if there should be caused by this service even so much as the faintest ripple of a desire towards Him, He will note it in His book—and if that desire should increase into a wave of prayer, it will not be lost upon Him. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”

I shall now, as I am strengthened by God, first ask your kind attention to a sinner bemoaning himself. Secondly, I shall wish you to remember God as hearing Him. And thirdly, our largest subject probably will be God fulfilling the desire of that bemoaning penitent, and turning him effectually from his sins.

I. First, observe carefully, A SINNER BEMOANING HIMSELF. Last Sunday we preached upon two sinners, but we had little or no bemoaning [#742—“A Sermon to Open Neglecters and Nominal Followers of Religion.] One of them said, “I will not go,” and the other said, “I go, Sir,” but went not. We are a stage farther this morning. We introduce to you one whose heart has been affected by Divine Grace—whose conscience has been awakened, whose soul has been quickened—and we find him, according to the expressive word of the text, “bemoaning himself.”

The very word is doleful to the ear—it reminds us of the mourning of doves—we cannot pronounce it without feeling that it reveals a depth of sorrow. It is a word which tells of pain, anguish, fear, restlessness, sad remembrances, terrible forebodings and raging desires. Ephraim was “bemoaning himself.” Viewing the sorrow before us, we note that he who bemoaned himself was bowed down with a peculiar grief. He did not lament for his children with the bitter weeping of Rachel. He did not mourn oven friends and kinsfolk withered under the blast of death. He was not as one crying out through pangs of bodily pain because a limb was crushed, or a bone was broken.

He bemoaned himself, but not because he had lost his goods. Not because the ship had foundered at sea, or the house was wrapped in flames, or his riches had taken to themselves wings and flown away. No, his sorrow was of another kind. He bemoaned himself with a more mysterious and more bitter grief. The cause of the sorrow lay within—he was “bemoaning himself! This is, I say, a peculiar sorrow—one which the most of men look down upon with scorn. I pray God, my Hearers, that you may not be strangers to it for, unless you bemoan yourselves you shall never make the angels merry, for their rejoicing is over “one sinner that repents.”

There is no weight of glory for those who have never mourned the weight of sin! If you have never bemoaned yourself you have never enjoyed peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The sorrow of the text is that of a soul visited by God the Holy Spirit—the inward grief of a man who has been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is bitter sorrow, but so blessed are its results that I will call it a bitter sweet! It brings darkness with it, but it is the darkness of the last hour of the night which heralds the dawn of the day! Godly sorrow is well-founded sorrow. I will try to describe its sources.

When a sinner bemoans himself in this way, “Alas! Alas!” he says, “I have found out that all is true which I have oftentimes been told by God’s ministers. I have, indeed, offended my Maker! I have grieved the God who gave me my being! I have made my best Friend to be my enemy because of my sin. I have set myself in opposition to the King of kings! I cannot fight it out with Him, for He is too great for me. What shall I do? To where shall I fly? It is surely true and just that He should punish me, and woe is me, for I cannot bear His anger! If my ribs were iron and my flesh were granite, I should dissolve in the heat of His wrath. I can no more resist Him than flax can stand against fire, or stubble against the flame.

“Woe is me! I have roused Omnipotence to be my enemy! I have set all Heaven in array against me! I cannot resist, and I cannot escape—what, then, shall I do? Shall I promise that I will be better? Alas, my reformations cannot blot out my past sins, for my old offenses will still demand a punishment even if I commit no more! But worse and worse, I now discover that my nature is full of sin and will rebel continually! Thorns and thistles will grow in the accursed soil of my heart, no matter what I do to pluck them up by the roots! I am not only thus an enemy to God by my actions, but by my very nature. Woe is me! Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then might I, who have been accustomed to evil, learn to do well. Alas, I am a traitor to my God, a stranger to peace and happiness, a slave to sin, in bondage to evil.”

To the mind in this state it is no wonder if the thought occurs, “Oh, that I had never been born! Would to God I had been created a dog or a toad sooner than have become a sinful man, for I see my end, my dreadful end! I shall march on from bad to worse, and when I shall die the wrath of God will come upon me to the uttermost! Forever shall I be banished from all hope of happiness. I cannot endure the wrath to come! To where shall I fly, or what shall I do? If I try to pray, my lips refuse to express my heart’s desires—no, I cannot tell what to desire nor how to pray. Alas! Alas! I am undone, indeed! I am lost! Lost! Lost! Would God that there were mercy for me.”

There is good ground in the sinner’s state for all his bemoaning. The fears to which I have given utterance are all reasonable and wellgrounded—fears so truly the offspring of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience that if, dear Hearer, you have never felt them—I pray that you may do so before you sun has set! This sorrow is humble sorrow. Notice, it is not written, “I hear Ephraim excusing himself,” or “flattering himself,” or “making new resolutions,” but, “I have heard him bemoaning himself.”

When God the Holy Spirit gives genuine conviction of sin to a man, how he changes in his own esteem! He finds that all his righteousnesses are just a bundle of filthy rags. He thought them to be clean, white vestments, fair as the robes of the redeemed in Heaven. And he was proud to think of arraying himself in them. But when he unpacked them in the daylight he saw them to be full of holes, reduced to rags and tatters and, what was worse, polluted with horrible filth! So he threw them all away and fell to bemoaning himself.

An awakened conscience does not say, “I could not help it, it was my nature, I was led into it by my passions. I was tempted by my circumstances.” No, it gives up all excuses because it sees their hollowness. “I sinned,” says the man, “I knew it was sin. I chose it willfully. I might have avoided it, but I would not. I set darkness for light and light for darkness. I am a willful offender.” Instead of laying a flattering unction to his soul, he sees sin to be exceedingly sinful and laments it.

My Hearers, am I describing some of you? I trust, before the Lord, some of you can see your own photographs here, and if so, I have joyful news from the Lord for you, for broken hearts shall be bound up by the Lord Jesus Himself—and eternal life shall be given you if you rest in Him! Please notice that this sorrow was thoughtful sorrow, for Ephraim reviews his past life—“You have chastised me.” What came of it? Why, “I was chastised,” and that was all. Are there not some of you in this Hall who might say, “Great God, You Yourself must deal with me, for none but Yourself can ever save me. I have been laid upon a bed of sickness, and I have recovered from it. And there was an end of the sickness, but I was none the better for it.

“I lost my wife, I buried my children, I have suffered hard blows, but that is all—all my afflictions have produced no good result. Lord, I have had sickness after sickness but I am rather worse than better! Like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke, beaten but not subdued, struck but still obstinate.” The more the untrained bull is goaded, the more it kicks, and it will not wear the yoke with patience. Have you not been like it? When you have heard a sermon, you have laughed at it! When your mother’s tears have fallen for you, you have despised them. When your wife’s prayers have gone up to Heaven, you have turned them into ridicule. You have been chastised and chastised, but no good has followed it.

Some of you have wearied the Lord with your iniquities, till He asks, “What shall I do with you?” Take heed, for patience endures not forever! The Lord will not always plow upon a rock. He will not always sow upon the thankless sand. “For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God. But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.” I trust that many of you are sensible that no outward Providences, persuasions, or preaching will suffice to save you—you need effectual Grace to convert your soul or you will perish forever.

I beg you to notice the bemoaning of the text in one more respect, namely, that it was hopeless and yet hopeful. Ephraim says, “Lord, it is of no use to chastise me, for I only get worse. But do You turn me, and I shall be turned.” I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of Northern Italy, where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it, but when I perceived that it was made of mud, I reflected that the more she scrubbed the worse it would be.

The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement. There must be a new nature implanted, or the man will be only “washed to deeper stains.” “You must be born again.” Ours is not a case for mending, but for making new. The meaning of the prayer in my text is, “Lord, do not chastise me, but turn me. Do it Yourself, and then it will be done. Turn me, and I shall be turned, but if You do not do it I am past hope.” O troubled Soul, if the Lord shall put His hand to the work this morning, what a wonderful change will He work in you! But only His own right hand can do it. Pray, then, this prayer—

*“‘Turn me, and I shall be turned.”  
“No outward forms can make you clean, Your leprosy lies deep within.”*

No resolving of yours can cleanse you any more than the Ethiopian can make himself white by resolving to be so! Only the Holy Spirit can purify you with the blood of Jesus. He who gives life to the dead can give spiritual life to you. He can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh! I invite you, therefore, to pray, “Turn me, O God, and I shall be turned.” And I bid you exercise the appropriating Grace of faith and say, “for You are the Lord my God.” Are you made willing to take Jehovah to be your God today, my Hearer? Are you willing to give up the world, its pleasures, and its gains?

Are you willing to give up self, fashion, pomp, self-indulgence, and sin in every shape? If you are, then I beseech you wait not till you get home, but, standing or sitting where you now are, let Ephraim’s bemoaning prayer be yours, “Turn me, Lord! Convert me! Make a new man of me! Turn me, and I shall be turned—for You can do it so that it will be well done, thoroughly done, effectually done, permanently done, unhesitatingly done. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned, even I. Though I have been set on mischief. Though none beside could ever move my flinty soul. Though I was so dogged and resolved that one might as well have tried to rule the winds or command the tempest as to curb my will, yet, Lord You can do it.”

I see at this moment some of you dashing at full speed down the hill like wild horses, and none can restrain you. In vain we may call to you! In vain we throw fences across the road—you leap over every barrier, determined to be lost! But let Almighty Grace interpose! Let the Lord Himself appear! He can twist His hand in the neck which seemed clothed with thunder! He can throw back the maddened steed! He can thrust the bit of Divine Grace into its foaming mouth and constrain the once untamable being to bear the yoke of love. May such a feat of Grace be performed in some sinner’s heart this day!

II. I do not know where Ephraim was when he bemoaned himself, but I SEE THE LORD OBSERVING HIM. I know not where some of you hide yourselves now that you are pricked in your conscience. Some retire to their bedrooms. Some shut themselves in their closets. Many a countryman has wept behind the hedge, or climbed into a hayloft, or leaped into a saw pit to pray. It little matters where you seek the Lord. He will be sure to see you—and even if it is in the crowded street of Cheapside or Cornhill—if your soul is in prayer, all the din of noisy London cannot stop the prayer from reaching the ear of God!

You know, Mothers, how quick you are at night to hear your children if they are ill. If you had a nurse, she might slumber on—but as for you, with little Jane upstairs sick—if you fall asleep, the faintest noise wakes you. Yet you are not one-half so wakeful as God is! For He neither slumbers nor sleeps. When your heart begins to say, “My God, my God, I would be reconciled! My Lord, I would be cleansed,” the Lord is waiting to be gracious. Before you call, God hears you, for He is a God ready to pardon.

Observe that God heard all that Ephraim had to say. I do not know that anybody else cared to do so, and so, if you have not a Christian friend, although I am sorry for you, I would say never mind—God is enough for you without a friend! No one else might have understood Ephraim if they had heard him, but God knew all about him and He understood him well. If you cannot utter your prayer in good English, never mind. Breathe it out anyway—God can understand it. Broken prayers are the best prayers. Do not suppose that you require fine words and elegant phrases in order to affect the Lord. Your tearful eyes shall be more mighty than trope or metaphor, and your heavy sighs shall be more eloquent than the polished period and lofty climax of the orator.

Only prostrate your soul before God with humble heart and downcast eyes and your Father will accept you. What man among you can stand against his children’s tears? When King Henry II in the ages gone by was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son, being near unto death, desired to see his father and confess his wrongdoing. But the stern old sire refused to look the rebel in the face. The young man, being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, “I am dying. Take me from my bed and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father.”

Thus he died, and when the tidings came to the old man outside the walls that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth like another David, and said, “Would God I had died for him!” The thought of his boy’s broken heart touched the heart of the father. If you, being evil, are overcome by your children’s tears, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven find in your bemoaning and confession an argument for the display of His pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord?

This is the eloquence which God delights in—the broken heart, and the contrite spirit! He heard and He understood all that Ephraim said, and He was moved by it. Did you note that word, “I have surely heard Ephraim”? As if nothing were more sure! If God should not hear the music of Heaven, He would hear the prayers of penitents! If the booming of the storm and the roar of the tempest, when the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies—if the clapping of the thousand hands of the roaring sea when it rejoices in its strength should not be heard by the Eternal ear—yet, surely, the bemoaning of a single sinner should be regarded!

The crash of thunder is to the Lord no more than the sound of the falling of a sere leaf on a still summer’s eve, but the cry of one of His children peals through Heaven, and moves the Infinite heart, so that swift on wings of love the God of mercy flies. Nor is it mere pity. God gives to us practical aid—He gave to Ephraim what Ephraim asked for. Our God is full of compassion. He is a terrible God when He has to deal with sin— thunderbolts are in his hands, and lightning flashes from His eyes of fire, “for our God is a consuming fire.” But when He has to deal with penitents His name is Love. He rides in a chariot of mercy and holds out a silver scepter of Divine Grace!

O seeking souls, Jehovah will hear you through the merits of His Son! Seek His face and you shall not seek in vain!  
III. Let us now turn to the third point and view THE LORD WORKING IN HIS EFFECTUAL GRACE. Beloved Friends, recollect that the only turning in the world that is saving and Divine is the turning of the heart. As for a mere change of notions—the turning of the head—many mistake it for conversion, but it is quite another matter. “Oh, yes!” says a man, “I used to be an Arminian, now I have become a Calvinist.” Or, “I used to be a Churchman, and now I have joined the Baptists.” Or, “I used to be a Papist, and I have become a Protestant.” Well, and what difference will that make if you have not a new nature?  
A thief is a thief, whatever name he may bear—no change of name will make him honest. You may be quite as bad in one denomination as in another, for hypocrisy and formalism are found among all sorts of professors. If you take a raven and put it in a brass cage, or a silver cage, or a golden cage—it is still a raven—and so, if you, join this Church or that Church, unless your nature is changed, you are an unsaved sinner! Let me add that thought is a useful thing to have the outward conversation changed, yet that is not enough. It is a great blessing when a drunkard becomes a teetotaler. It is a great blessing when the thief becomes honest. It is a great blessing when any vice is given up, and the opposite virtue is carried out—but that is not the matter. “You must be born again.”  
All the changes that you can ever work in yourselves will not avail for your entering Heaven. Go to St. Paul’s Cathedral and see the statues in white marble—they are not living men, and you cannot make them so. Wash them, clothe them, paint them! Do what you will with them, still they cannot join in the songs or prayers of living men, because they are marble and not alive. Even so is it with you, unregenerate ones. You have no spiritual life in you—we would have you washed, we would have you moralized, for that is a good thing—even a corpse should he clean! But all the washing and the cleaning will not make you live! You must have the Divine influence from on high. No turning is good for anything everlastingly except the renewing of the inward nature by a work of Divine Grace in the soul.  
How is this done? This is the work, this is the difficulty! I will show you God’s mode of working as briefly as I can. The Lord’s way of turning a man in the main is much as follows, but the exact method varies in each case. If a man is going on in any one road and you want to turn him, the first thing is to stop him. What would one of you think if tomorrow, as you were walking to your labor, you should suddenly see the earth open before you as though a volcano had split open the earth from its lowest depths? I warrant you would go no further in that way! You would stand with hair on end and gaze down in into the dread abyss, or fly back in alarm.  
This is exactly what happened to me when God turned me. I went on easy enough in my sins. I thought them pleasant, and that I should continue in them—till, by God’s Grace I came to feel that Hell was a real thing, and that I was on the brink of it! I saw clearly that if the brittle thread of my life were snapped, infinite misery would be my portion in the place where fiends forever bite their bonds of iron, unable to escape or to endure! Oh, how a distinct sight of wrath to come stops a man! How he pauses when he perceives in his own soul that the wages of sin are death! A sight of the everlasting burnings makes him cry “STOP!” and though, before, he went on gaily dancing to destruction, he now waits awhile, puts his finger to his brow, takes counsel with his cooler judgment, and says to himself, “Now what shall I do?”  
When a man is awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel that Hell is his just desert, it is no wonder that his mind is turned from the love of sin to a perfect horror of it. “Oh,” he says, “if Hell is kindled by my sin, how can I love the sin which prepared such wrath for me?” The old naturalist, Ulysses Androvaldus, tells us that a dove is so afraid of a hawk that she will be frightened at the sight of one of its feathers. Whether it is so or not, I cannot tell. But this I do know, that when a man has had a thorough shaking over the jaws of Hell he will be so afraid of sin that even one of the feathers of it, any one sin, will alarm and send fear through his soul! This is a part of the way by which the Lord turns us when we are, indeed, turned.  
Furthermore, the awakened conscience is led to see the real nature of sin. We have all seen bears in a pit, and lions in stone, and have seen them without alarm. But I can readily imagine that if a lion were suddenly to leap from my platform into the midst of this throng you would regard it with a very different eye! A wild beast let loose among you would be a very different thing from what it is in a picture or a statue. Now sin, as the preacher talks of it, is to most of you like a painted lion. But when a man feels it in his own soul as an evil full of mischief, it is a very different thing. We are like the man in the fable who warmed a frozen viper in his bosom—when it came to life he knew its poisonous nature, for he felt the venom in his veins.  
Men, before God quickens them, nurse the viper of sin in their bosom, and say, “Look at its azure scales. How fair it is to look upon! Do you suppose so harmless a creature could ever do me injury?” They put it in their bosom with much fondness. But when it bites them, and the hot poison runs through their veins and conscience is thoroughly awake, then they loathe it and cast it from them, or rather would do so if they could! But as Laocoon, in the old story tried in vain to tear the serpent’s coils from his limbs, so is it with them until Divine Grace comes to their aid. At any rate, a true sight of sin soon turns a man most thoroughly from his former love of it.  
There once lived a great religious impostor, of whom it is said— *“O’er his features hung  
The veil, the silver veil which he had flung In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light.”*When that veil was at last uplifted, the foulest leprosy was seen! So Sin comes to men covered with its silver veil, and it whispers with softest accents sweet as music, “Trust me, I cannot deceive you. I bring you richest joy. See how the cup sparkles, how the wine moves itself aright! How merry is the dance! How joyous is the chambering and the wantonness!” But ah, when once that silver veil comes off, and sin’s leprous brow is seen, then man, enlightened by his God, turns from it, crying,” Get you behind me, Satan.”  
As John said of Jezebel, “Throw her down,” so do men abhor the accursed thing that by her witchcrafts could lead their souls to destruction. A sight of Hell and a sense of sin are great means in the hands of God to turn the sinner from his ways. The grand turning point I have not come to yet—it is a sight of Christ on the Cross. If you ever, by the eyes of faith, see Jesus Christ dying for you, sin will never be sweet to you again. What was it slew our blessed Lord? It was our sin*—  
“ ‘Twere you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were!  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear.”*  
When we discover that our iniquities put our dearest and best Friend to death, we vow revenge against our iniquities, and from that day forth hate them with a perfect hatred. Let me illustrate this very simply. Here is a knife with a richly-carved ivory handle, a knife of excellent workmanship. Yonder woman, we will suppose, has had a dear child murdered by a cruel enemy. This knife is hers. She is pleased with it, and prizes it much. How can I make her throw that knife away? I can do it easily, for that is the knife with which her child was killed. Look at it. There is blood still upon the handle. She drops it as though it were a scorpion—she cannot bear it.  
“Put it away,” she says, “it killed my child! Oh, hateful thing!” Now, sin is such a thing—we play with it till we are told it was sin that killed the Lord Jesus, who died out of love to us—pure, disinterested love. Then we say, “Hateful thing, get you gone! How can I endure you?” Remember how Mark Anthony stirred up the Romans to a fury against Caesar’s murderers? Holding up the mantle of dead Caesar, he pointed to the tears and gashes in the garment—“In this place ran Cassius’ dagger through. Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed.” And thus he inflamed the multitude to such a pitch of fury that they snatched up the seats around them, and away they went to the houses of the conspirators to set them on a blaze.  
Ah, if my lips could speak as my heart bids them, I would cry, “See there the wounds of the Son of God! Behold the crimson stains which mark His blessed body! Mark the crown of thorns! Gaze upon the pierced hands! Weep over the nailed feet! See the deep gash which the lance made in His side! Sin did this cruel work, this bloody deed! Down with our sins! Drag them to the Cross! Slay them at Calvary! Let not one of them escape, for they are the murderers of Christ!” This is the way in which the Lord turns the sinner, and he is turned, indeed.  
Further, one of the most blessed ways by which God makes the sinner turn is this—He manifests His everlasting love to him. You remember the fable of the traveler going along wrapped up in his cloak, and the contest between the wind and the sun as to which should get his cloak from him? The wind blustered and blew with a cold driving rain but the traveler wrapped his cloak about him the more tightly, and went shivering on his journey. The wind could not tear away the garment. Then the genial sun burst forth, and shone full upon the traveler’s face. It dried his garments and cheered him with its warmth. By-and-by the traveler loosed his cloak and at last threw it off—the sun’s kindness had won the day.  
Now, when God’s Law blusters about a sinner, it sometimes happens that he says, “I will go on in my sins.” But when God’s love comes, who can stand against it? “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” says God to the sinner. “Is it so?” cries the renewed heart. “Then, Lord, I cannot be Your enemy any longer.” Oh, if some of you did but know that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world! If you did but know that you are His darlings, His favorites—that He gave His own Son to die for you! Oh, if you did but know that your name, your worthless name, is written upon the hands of Christ—would you not love Him then?  
I pray that He may reveal that love to you today, and, if He does, you will sing*—  
“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart, Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart. Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground, And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

When this sense of love has done its work, new loves and new desires fill the soul and the man is a new man. Some worldlings cannot make out why Christians abstain from certain pleasures. “Why,” they say, “I am not going to deny myself of every pleasure!” Do not you know, my dear Friends, that it is no denial to us to go without sin? It is no denial to the sheep to live without licking blood, because the sheep would dread the sight of blood! It desires the sweet green grass, but does not care for carnage. So when God gives us new hearts and right spirits, we do not find it a denial to renounce sin—our tastes are changed—our new loves and our new desires are not those of our former estate!

There may be a gentleman here who has risen in the world. He was once a farmer’s boy, but now he rides in his carriage. When he was a farmer’s boy, he used to think what a grand thing it would be to be a king and swing on a gate and eat bacon all day long. But now I will be bound to say he does not want to swing on a gate, and has little relish for the rustic dainty of which he was once so fond. He has reached a different rank of society, and his tastes and habits are all different.

So is it with the Christian. God makes a king of him, and how can he go back to play with beggars? God has put a heavenly nature into him, and he abhors to grovel in the dust of sin. Dear Friends, I would to God that you might know your standing in Christ—sons of God, heirs with Christ, joint heirs with Him—and when you do it will turn you away from the base things of sin and you will be turned, indeed!

Once more, and I shall not detain you. There is something which binds the Christian very fast to holiness and restrains him from sin, and that is the prospect of yon bright world to which he is wending his way. This week I had my faith much strengthened in visiting a sick woman. I would gladly change places with her. Glad enough should I be to lie upon that sick bed and die in her room, for though she has been long on the borders of the grave, and knows it—knows that each hour may probably be the last—her joy is so great, her bliss is so abundant, that you have only to speak with her and her joy overflows!

She told me, “I prayed that if God would spare me, He would give me one soul, and He has given me five converts while I have been on this bed!” And I did not wonder at it, as I saw the five dear friends sitting in the room. I did not wonder at it—it was enough to make one a Christian to see her joy and her peace, and hear her talk so confidently about the time when she should see her Lord and be in His embrace forever! “Ah,” says the devil to the Christian, “I will give you so much if you sin.” Our reply is, “What could you give me compared with our inheritance? O Fiend, you bring me counterfeit riches, but I can count down ten thousand times as much in real solid gold!

“You proffer me your paste gems, but here are diamonds and pearls of the first water and of the rarest value! Away with you, you tempter! You know not how to tempt a Christian! For his gains are greater than anything you can give him.” Surely this would turn your hearts, my Hearers, if you could but know and feel the glory of our inheritance! If you had a vision of the land of the hereafter, where the birds of Paradise forever sing, and the sun forever shines, and the day is never ended, surely sin would no longer enchant you. “We are on our journey home,” say the host of the elect. The city which has foundations has turned their stops from sin, and they are turned, indeed, so that they never can be turned back again.

Now I have done, but I do not like to send you away without making again the personal enquiry. Are you bemoaning yourself? Do you desire to be turned? Would you have these gracious motives operating upon you? Then do not put it off, but this moment breathe the silent prayer, “Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned.” I have a great desire in my heart. I should like to tell you of it—it is that there should be more converted in this place than ever were converted at one time in any place since the world was—for never before was such an audience gathered to hear one man! Whether that desire shall be granted I do not know, but if we have faith enough for it, it may come, and it will come! Why should it not?

Oh, that some great sinners might be saved, for they always make the best saints! Oh, that the Lord might take some of the ringleaders in the devil’s army and make them lieutenants in His service! None so brave for Christ as those who were brave for sin! You great sinners—may great mercy meet with you! Remember the way of salvation is this—Trust Jesus and you shall be saved! Look to Him I have pictured just now bleeding, groaning, dying on the tree! Look, look, and live! Only depend upon Him! Only give your heart to Him, and rest in Him, and it is not possible that one should perish who comes to Jesus and puts his trust in Him!

Brethren, pray for us! If you, the members of this Church, do not pray for me, I feel I shall have much to lay to your charge. Never was anyone called to so great a work as this. I have, this morning, 20,000 claims upon your prayers! I beseech you by the living God pray for me! It were better for me that I never were born than to have this responsibility upon me if I have not your prayers! Who can tell?—the service of this morning may, when it is thought over and remembered by the hearers—bring forth fruit a hundred-fold, and God shall have the glory! Do pray for me! And, Sinner, unconverted Sinner, do pray for yourself, and may God hear you for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION  
NO. 2104

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn You me and I  
shall be turned. For You are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke  
against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My heart is troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” Jeremiah 31:18-20.**

THERE are turning points in most lives. We go on in a straight line for a certain distance but suddenly we come to a place where we must make a choice of roads. All the rest of our journey may depend upon what we do at those particular points. Character often hinges on a day’s resolve. Every now and then we meet with a man who has seemed hopeful enough till he has taken a wrong turn. And ever since then we have heard it said of him that “he has gone bad.” That is a common and expressive phrase for going in the wrong direction openly and boldly. The man was not right before, but now he is wrong in conduct—heart and life rush together down a steep place into the sea of ruin.

On the other hand, the world may not often notice it, but the lovers of the souls of men observe, with great gladness, that men and women are suddenly pulled up and caused to turn in the right direction. I meet with many who were once gay and frivolous, who are now, “much tumbled up and down in their thoughts,” as Master Bunyan would have said. And I mark their regret, their hope, their trust, their brave resolve, their deliverance by the help of God, and their firm choice of that right road which they, from now on, follow earnestly. Their way is now upward, ever upward—a toilsome and rugged way it may be—but a safe and a right way, which leads them to, “glory and honor and immortality.”

There are many turning points and places of deliberation in the pilgrimage of life. To some, those turning points come very early in youth— while they are yet boys and girls they are visited in conscience and impressed in spirit. And blessed are they if they then and there seek the Lord. For they shall find Him, to the joy of their whole lives. To young men and maidens there are stations on the line of life where they are called upon to decide as to their future road. Again and again the warning voice is heard, “Change here for holiness and eternal life.”

The lad is to be bound apprentice, or he is to take his first situation, or for some other reason he is, for the first time, to leave his father’s roof—let him look upon this occasion as one of the most important seasons of his life. The night before he goes away will be, to that youth, if he is wisely led, a time for especially committing himself to God. When, for the first time, facing public life, the youth may well hear a voice saying to him,

“Choose this day whom you will serve.” The whole of his future may depend upon how he begins in the house of business—the first step may influence every other.

When men and women are about to be married, how much of life then trembles in the balances! Upon the choice of a partner in life the fashion of that life may depend. Whether self or Christ—the world or God—shall be the master motive of the household, may be decided by the finger which wears the plain gold ring. Too often is marriage entered on frivolously. And yet, if one could see all the bearings of it, for good or for evil, one would judge the fullest consideration and the most prayerful thought to be nothing more than the demand of common sense on such a subject.

Changes in business, removals of residence, promotion to higher positions, or serious losses—all make new starting points. Birthdays, new years, graves wet with tears, or strange events in personal history have all become turning points in life’s ways. Fierce temptations have also brought the lives of men to pauses and then to onrushes, which have continued to give force to all the rest of their existence. To yield at a certain moment has meant slavery for life. To overcome has meant eternal triumph.

Joseph’s career was determined by that grave moment in which he fled from the allurement of sin and left his garment in the tempter’s hands. By that flight he prepared his way to become the savior of Egypt and the benefactor of his father’s house. Take heed, my Brother, when you are tempted. For the next minute may be the pivot of your life. An interesting book has been written upon “Turning Points in Life,” and it is capable of indefinite extension. According to a man’s station and disposition, those turning points take place at different periods. But whenever they are before us, they call for special prayer and trust in God.

There is, however, one turning point, and one only, which will secure salvation and eternal life. And that is what we call conversion, which is the first apparent result of regeneration, or the new birth. The man being renewed, the current of his life is turned—he is converted. Of this turning point I desire to speak this morning, so far as pain and weakness will permit.

The text tells us a great deal about this turning—it is wonderful how clearly it describes it. The Bible must have been written by our Creator, for nobody but the Lord who created men could know so much about them. This volume reveals the secrets of all hearts. It unveils our private thoughts. “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” And that conversion which it works, it describes as none else can. Every touch is true to nature and marks the hand of One who is within us as well as round about us. As you listen, may the Holy Spirit teach many of you what salvation means—may He turn you—and you will be turned.

In our text we have man at the turning points as God observes him. “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.” Then we have man just after the turning point, when he says, “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.” And then, thirdly, we have God viewing man at that turning point, crying with holy joy, “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.”

I pray that I may be enabled, in plain and simple language, to describe that inner and vital experience with which many of you are well acquainted but which may, to others, still seem a strange thing.

I. First, here is MAN AT THE TURNING POINT AS GOD OBSERVES HIM. Is not that a wonderful Word of the Lord—“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself”? Of a certainty the Lord hears all the sorrowful voices of men. It may be that nobody else has heard you—you would be very sorry that they should. But the Lord says, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.” You did not speak, you could not put your feelings into words—your utterance was a moan, a piteous noise, such as an animal might give forth—a moaning like that of a cow in pain.

The word here used, if you pronounce it deliberately, conveys its own meaning by its sound. The Lord hears “surely”—that is to say, He hears the sense and meaning of our wordless moans—He puts into language that which no words of ours could express. The Lord understands us better than we understand ourselves. Concerning the man here described, we note that he is in a state of great sorrow about himself. He is not bemoaning the dead but he is bemoaning himself. His moans are not about his lost money or estate—he may be poor, but this is not his present grief.

His moans are not about his bodily pains—he may be sickly but his distress is in his spirit rather than in his flesh. His moans are not now about the bitterness of his lot, the weariness of his daily toil, or the oppression of the proud. No, he bemoans himself, himself only. This is sorrow, indeed. The grief is within. All the water outside the ship is of small account. It is when the leak admits the water to the hold that there is danger. “Let not your heart be troubled”—it matters something if your country or your house is troubled. But to you, the trying matter is if your heart is troubled.

We read that David’s heart smote him—that is an ugly blow, against which there is no shield. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity. But a wounded spirit, who can bear?” This is what the Lord tenderly notes about the sinner at the turning point, that he bemoans himself. His first and deepest grief is that he himself is in an evil case. He moans his own sad plight. Ah me, nothing is such a bitter fountain to myself as myself! My Soul, you are in some respects my sole misery! You are my very self. And if you are wrong, all is wrong. My Soul, how is it with you? What am I? Where am I? And where am I going? Lost! Lost! What have you lost? Alas, I have lost myself! Thus the Lord, “heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.”

This bemoaning was addressed to his God. This is a very hopeful point about it—he cried to Jehovah, “You have chastised me and I was chastised.” His deep trouble is poured out unto his God. It is a blessed thing when a man in his distress turns to his God and not from him. It is well when the troubled heart cries, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments.”

Is it so with any of you here present? Have you given up running to your neighbor? Is yours a grief with which no neighbor could understand? Does it afford you some relief to look God-ward? Does even your despair turn its almost stone-blind eyes in the direction of the sun? When you cry and moan, are those cries and moans unto God? Do you sit alone and keep silent to all else? And do you speak to God in secret? Then let me assure you that there is hope. I am glad, dear Friend, because I perceive that whatever bitterness may be in your heart, there will come a sweet ending to it.

If the vessel’s head is toward the Lord, no storm will ever sink it. You have come to a blessed turning point in your life when you are driven to address your sore complaints unto the Lord God. It is no work of mere nature when the heart talks with God. Look at the multitudes of prayers which unconverted men daily repeat. What dead formalities they are! They do not speak to God! They repeat a certain set of fine words to the air, or to the skies. But God is not there. A mouthful of words every morning and night, uttered without thought of the living God—to what end are these?

True prayer sees God present and speaks to Him as to a living, listening Person. Hear how Ephraim spreads his case before God! Come, Heart, be of good cheer, some great good is coming to you, now that you are coming to God! If you are speaking to the Lord, though it is only in sighs and moans, He hears you, and He will answer you, and speak comfortably unto you.

Notice how Ephraim in the text has spied out his God as having long ago dealt with him. He tells the Lord that He has chastised him—“You have chastised me and I was chastised.” The man had not before observed the hand of God in his suffering—but he does now. He lost his wife—he did not see God in this stroke chastening him. His children were taken from him—he did not see the hand of God even in that affliction. I see the suffering man before me—he has been brought low by sickness. But he has not considered who it is that has weakened his strength in the way and shortened his days.

His spirits sink, his mind is wretched. He has not yet felt that it is the hand of the Lord which is heavy upon him. It is a mark that the careless heart has come to a change, when the man who had not God in all his thoughts now sees Him in his life and cries, “You have chastised me.” I have hope of that man who sees God’s hand, even though he sees only a rod in it.

In this case, “You have chastised me and I was chastised,” would seem to mean that it was a very sore punishment—he was indeed, chastised— there was no mistaking the smart. Our heavenly Father does not play with the rod. When He deals the blow, He means that it shall be felt. “You have chastised me and I was chastised—I felt it and I bemoan myself because of it.” I may be speaking to some here who are smarting, even now, under the afflicting hand of God. Let them acknowledge that hand—turn to Him that smites them and kiss the hand which inflicts the blow—so shall the rod of the Lord be turned away from them, and they shall know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted them.

But the mourner in our text means more than this by his moans—he owns that the chastening had not set him right. “You have chastised me, and I was chastised.” And that was all. He had smarted but he had not submitted. He had not obeyed but had still further rebelled. He was “as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” He was like the unbroken calf, which cannot bear the yoke and will not work in the furrow—which, being goaded—kicks back at the driver and thus hurts itself all the more with the goad.

Human nature is restive under the yoke of the Law. Its shoulder will not endure the pressure of the command. When sin brings sorrow as its wage, the proud spirit of man is angered and he resents that which God justly lays on him. In the time of his affliction many a man sins more and more. Now it may happen that I am speaking to a person here whose portrait is photographed in this verse. God has chastised you, but all that has come of it is that you have been chastised—you have not yielded, you have not repented, you have not made confession of sin. You have not asked for mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a very sad and dangerous state of things. Every chastisement which ends in chastisement—and produces no salutary fruit—not only involves solemn responsibility but it casts a sevenfold blackness over future guilt. He that goes astray over the thorn-hedge of affliction is not likely to return. May God save us from unsanctified chastisements, for they are full often the outriders of destruction! “He, that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Ephraim feels this and fears the result of having been thus obstinate towards God. Was there not grave reason for fear? If the fire will not separate the dross from the lump of ore, what is to be done with it, but to cast it away as reprobate? What is the Lord to say to those whom He has chastised in vain but this—“Ephraim is joined unto his idols: let him alone”? If the rampant young bullock will not bear the yoke, bring forth the axe. That which will not bend shall break—that which cannot be mended must be thrown away.

Yet there is something better than this. The mourner in our text despairs of all but God. He cannot turn himself and chastisement will not turn him. He has no hope left but for God Himself to interpose. “Turn You me and I shall be turned.” Lord, You did send a fever—it has burnt me but it has not melted me! Let Your love do what Your furnace could not! Lord Jesus, come Yourself and melt this iron heart! Lord, You have sent death and he has frightened me, but he has not changed me!

Come Yourself and do by Your life what the fear of death could not! Lord, I have been subjected to pains and plagues that might have broken the pride of a Pharaoh, but I have been exceedingly obstinate and have wickedly stood out against You. Come Yourself, with Your own almighty Grace and conquer even me! Turn You me and I shall be turned. But I despair of any other power ever working conversion in me.

Surely, it does not need that I speak with any powerful language to my dear hearers this morning when I beseech you to make your personal appeal to the Lord Himself. If you have not yet yielded to the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and if outward means have up to now failed—if even the sadness of your life has not been the means of bringing thought

into your heart and repentance into your soul, then cry to the Lord God and entreat Him by His Holy Spirit to deal with you. You are driven into a corner—nothing can save you now but the Lord God Himself. Cry to Him, for you have no other hope.

Pray, “Turn You me, O Lord, for You only can turn me. O Lord, place Your hand upon the helm of my ship and turn it as You will! Come into my vessel, O Lord Jesus, for my ship is driven with winds and tossed with waves! Come You and take supreme command, and be both Captain and Pilot to me! Turn You me and I shall be turned.”

Holy Scripture plainly teaches us that although man is a free agent, yet the Lord can control his will without destroying it. He can turn the will and heart by forces which act in perfect harmony with the laws of the human mind. He can make us as freely turn as if there were no constraint. And yet the glory of every holy movement and turn shall be due unto the Lord, alone. My Hearer, you may rightly and wisely pray at this hour—“Lord, if Your judgments fail, let Your Grace prevail. If afflictions are too feeble, set Your Omnipotent Grace to work. Turn me and I shall be turned.”

To all this confession, poor bemoaning Ephraim adds another word, whereby he submits to the supreme sway of Jehovah his God—“For You are the Lord, my God.” Happy is that heart which, in its despair, throws itself at the feet of its covenant God, crying, “You are the Lord, my God”! He does as good as say—Man cannot help me. I cannot help myself. Even Your chastenings have not availed to turn me. Lord, I appeal to You, Yourself! You are Jehovah—You can do all things. You are my God, for You have made me. And therefore you can make me new. I pray You, therefore, exercise Your own power and renew Your poor broken and deified creature. Fashion me according to Your mind, that I may answer to Your purposes.”

Beloved Friends, I do not feel that I can preach, but I wish my heart could get at your hearts. I cannot do this—but may the mystic finger of the Holy Spirit now touch the hearts of any who are awakened and aroused but not decided. And may they be led to take the blessed step of casting themselves upon God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, humbly saying, “You are the Lord, my God”!

Thus I have dimly described the man at the turning point. And it only remains to note that all this was done and felt, not in pretense, but indeed, and of a truth. The Lord says, “I have surely heard Ephraim.” What was said was truly said, so that God surely heard it. That experience which is not real and not really worked in the soul will prove to be nothing better than the painted pageantry of a dead soul—a disguise to go to Hell in. Pretend to no feeling which is not real. Profess no emotion which is not deeply and truly felt. In all things be sincere, and most of all be accurate when describing your inner condition before the heart-searching Jehovah.

II. Secondly, let us hear MAN AFTER THE TURNING POINT. Here you have the description in the nineteenth verse. It begins with “Surely.” Is it not very remarkable that each of these verses should be stamped with the hallmark, and each one bear the word, “surely”? The Lord said He had “surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.” And here Ephraim says, “Surely after that I was turned, I repented.”

See, before us, prayer mixed with faith soon answered. Not many moments after Ephraim had said, “You are the Lord, my God,” he felt that he was turned. He treats it as a matter of fact and speaks of “after that I was turned.” There is a sacred moment in the life of the chosen of God in which he is turned. I do not think that every man can tell when that turning took place. But it did take place in the case of every saved one.

Looking back, he has to look for the fruit of the turning. And that may be very perceptible, though the secret mystic work may in itself be hidden. In quickening the soul from its death in sin, there must be a moment in which the sinner is dead and another in which he lives. The actual transition from death to life must be instantaneous, though the signs of it may be gradual. “A point of time, a moment’s space,” works the inner transformation. Quick as a lightning flash is the implantation of the Divine life. The dead man lives at once—the condemned is in an instant pardoned.

A man must be either condemned or forgiven, and this is a great change. The Divine life itself must either be there or not be there. And so there must be a true line over which the man passes, once and for all, when he proceeds from darkness into light, from death into life. “I was turned,” says he. Many others of us can say, “I was turned.” My Friend, do you remember when you were turned? Do you know your spiritual birthday and the spot of ground where Jesus unveiled His face to you? Some of us do, although others do not.

The main point is to be turned. To know the place and time is a secondary matter. Yet I say some of us know when we were turned. And here is one reason why we remember it, for repentance came with turning. “After that I was turned, I repented.” The man, when awakened, cried, “Break! Break! Break, O heart!” But it would not break. He said to himself, “I long to feel,” but he could not feel—his heart seemed to be as an adamant stone. If he did, for a moment, experience a melting emotion, it passed away and his goodness was as the morning cloud, or as the early dew.

But now, after he was turned, repentance came easily. No effort was required. The heart of stone had turned to flesh and the rock smitten by the Divine rod gushed with floods of penitential grief. “I repented,” says he, meaning, I changed my mind about a thousand things—I loved what I had hated, I hated what I had loved. I loathed what had been called my pleasure. I longed for what I had despised as being dull and dreary. “I repented”—I felt deep sorrow for sin and I quit it to follow after obedience and holiness.

Repentance is a sweet and sure evidence of a Divine conversion. He that is truly turned, turns his face to the wall to weep and pray. You can not make yourself repent. But when God has changed your heart, you will repent as naturally as the brook flows down the valley when once its bands of ice are thawed. “After that I was turned, I repented.”

Deep sorrow followed upon farther instruction. The Holy Spirit does not leave the convert but gives him further instruction. And out of that comes a sorer regret, a more complete self-abasement. “I smote upon my thigh,” says Ephraim, even as the publican smote upon his breast. Do you not hear him cry, “Ah me, what have I done? What have I done?” His conviction was deeper, after he was instructed, than it had been before. God takes us into His school and He begins to show us the evil of sin—the great iniquity of rebelling against a God so good, so kind—against a Law so just, so righteous.

And then we begin to abhor ourselves. Especially does the Holy Spirit instruct us as to the Person, and work, and love, and Divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this makes us loathe ourselves still more. We begin to see that there is salvation in none other, but only in the Lord—and that His salvation by Christ Jesus is to be had for nothing—a free gift of Sovereign Grace. And that it is given at once to all who seek the Lord, believing in Christ Jesus, however great their guilt may be. Nothing makes a man smite upon his breast with a deep sorrow for sin like knowing the Grace of God as it is revealed in the suffering and death of the incarnate God.

As a man knows more of himself, more of Christ, more of God, and more of the hereafter, he becomes indignant with himself and deals heavy blows at himself. “After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.” Want of knowledge tends to make men hardened, unfeeling, selfcomplacent, and proud. But when they are instructed by the Divine Spirit, then they are ready to inflict wounds upon themselves as worthy of buffetings and blows. “God be merciful to me a sinner” is a fit prayer for the instructed—and the lowliest posture well becomes such a one.

To this deep sorrow there followed shame. Ephraim says, “I was ashamed, yes, even confounded.” This man knew everything before. Now he knows nothing, but is confounded. Once he could dispute and dispute and dispute. But now he stands silent before his Judge. He formerly felt himself quite able to defend his own cause, but now he stands ashamed. Before he was turned, he might have raised objections to the Gospel—yes, raised them by the mile. And if you had answered a legion of them, he would have summoned another legion to his help.

But now he proposes no defense, the blush mantles his cheek and he pleads guilty. It is very difficult to bring the sinner where he has nothing to say. But in this case the man is muddled, confused, ashamed, silenced—and has neither excuse nor extenuation to offer. He stands like a convicted felon, who, when he is asked by the judge if he has anything to say in stay of sentence, lays his hand on his mouth, and, blushing scarlet, confesses by his silence that he deserves to die. This is the man with whom Mercy can work her will.

“Well,” says one, “you are not painting a very pretty picture.” No, I am not. But I am painting a truthful one. When God the Holy Spirit brings a man to the great turning point, He empties him, strips him and lays him low. One of the very first feelings of the new-born life is amazement, dismay, self-abhorrence, self-despair. Truth requires that such as we are by nature should be ashamed. It is no mock modesty. We ought to be ashamed, for we have acted shamefully. The Holy Spirit makes a man see this.

What the man could once boast of, he could not now mention without disgust. He could formerly come forth, wearing a brazen forehead, but now he seeks holes and corners where he may hide his guilty face. He hangs his head and judges himself worse than the worst. He even wishes that he had never been born, or that he had been made a dog or a toad, rather than have been a man. God often brings men down to this condition in order that they may be on ground whereon He can meet them in the way of Divine Grace.

Lastly on this point, memory now comes in and revives the reproach of youth. Memory is a very terrible torture to a guilty heart. “Son, remember!” is one of the voices heard in Hell. “I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” The formerly forgetful man now recollects what he used to be in years gone by. How convenient it is to forget. But how damnable! Forgotten sin steels the heart and blinds the conscience—and so destroys the soul.

Ephraim had forgotten his green and foolish years when he was in the first fury of his sinful madness. Do you say to me, “I was sowing my wild oats then”? I answer, “You were sowing and soon will come the time for reaping.” Go down, now, to the field and see what has come of your random life! Wild oats are seldom barren. I have known them grow up into a harvest of unquenchable flames! God has not forgotten your youthful provocation.

Ah, when memory is awake, it piles huge piles of firewood upon the fires of remorse and the flame rises to the heavens. It is a great reproach to a man to have been a rebel in his youth—it shows how ingrained a traitor he is. I can only compare the sinner with a quickened memory to one who is traveling across the plains of Russia dreaming in his carriage and all of a sudden he is aroused by the sharp bark of a wolf behind him. And this is followed up by a thousand cruel voices of brutes, hungry and gaunt and grim, all eager for his blood.

Listen to the patter of those eager feet! The howls of those hungry demons! From where did they come? You thought that your sins were dead long ago and quite forgotten. See, they have left their tombs! They are on your track. Like wolves, your old sins are pursuing you. They rest not day nor night. They prepare their teeth to tear you apart. Where will you flee? How can you escape the consequences of the past? They are upon you, these monsters—their hot breath is in your face—who can now save you?

Only a miracle can rescue you from the reproach of your youth—will that miracle be worked? May we dare to look for it? We have something better than a mere hope to set before you. Jesus meets these packs of wolfish sins. He interposes between us and them. He drives them back! He scatters them! There is not one of them left! For our sakes He has borne reproach. He gave His back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair—He hid not His face from shame and spitting. And by this substitution of Himself, He has set His people free. But till this is seen and known by faith, the man is in a hopeless state—neither is any in a more horrible condition. He is ashamed, confounded and crushed with reproach. All this is working a true and deep work in his soul. Better things are coming.

III. Now we will turn and HEAR GOD AT THIS TURNING POINT. Picture the poor guilty creature, confounded, covered with reproach, unable to defend himself in the least degree. And then the God whom he has so

greatly offended comes in and cries, “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child?” Does this look like a question? The answer has been already given in the ninth verse of this same chapter—“I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born.”

The gracious Lord sees Ephraim sore with chastisement, spent with weeping, pale with shame, and moaning with agony. And then his sonship is acknowledged. He bends over the crushed one and cries, “This is My son. This is My dear child.” How gracious on God’s part to acknowledge the guilty rebel as a son! What did the father do in the parable, when he saw his son a great way off? He knew him to be his son and he had compassion and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

God is eager to receive returning prodigals. The Lord as good as says, “He is My dear son. He is a pleasant child”! The sinner that despairs of self-salvation is “my dear son”! The sinner who bemoans himself for his transgressions is “a pleasant child”! How can it be? The heart of the Father in Heaven has great depths in it, unfathomable by our poor limited natures. We are told, sometimes, that there is joy in the hearts of angels over sinners that repent. I do not doubt the fact. But that is not the truth which the Bible tries to tell us. Holy Scripture says—“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”

In whose Presence do the angels dwell? Why, in the Presence of God! The joy described in the parable of the finding of the lost sheep is the joy of God Himself over a repenting sinner! When a sinner is smiting upon his thigh, the Lord God is smiling on him. When he is ashamed and confounded, God is ready to own him as His dear Son. Oh, the heights and depths of sin-forgiving, sin-forgetting Grace! See, Beloved, here is love acknowledging the object of its choice—love confessing its near relationship to one most unworthy and most sorrowful.

Then behold the same love well-pleased. The Lord does not merely say, “Ephraim is My son; yes, he is My child.” But He calls him, “My dear son, a pleasant child.” A pleasant child! Why, he has been full of rebellion from his birth! Yes. But he confesses it and mourns it. And he is a pleasant child when so much holy sorrow is seen in him. He is polluted with sin— his sins have ruined his beauty and diseased his soul! Yes, but he cried, “Turn me,” and he has been turned—and now, by God’s Grace, he is a pleasant child.

What a marvel that the thrice holy Lord should ever take pleasure in a sinner! Yet a sinner on his knees is a delight to the heart of the AllMerciful. A sinner with his eye on the Cross, believing in the Lord Jesus, is very dear to the Father. I do believe that the great Lord would rather turn His eyes away from angels than fail to look upon a weeping pleader, crying, “God be merciful to me.” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.” O you kings and princes, with all your pomp and glory—you may knock at the door of Heaven and wait for notice!

O you peers of the realm, you may go your ways and seek great things of God, but He will no more regard you than the servants at your doors! But if there is a poor, foul castaway—weeping and bemoaning himself—let him know that the Lord waits to be gracious unto him. When a son, a pleasant child, is before the Father, in sorrow and reproach, the Father’s heart and eyes are both with him to bless him. He is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. He takes him to His bosom, not because of his goodness, but because of his relationship.

Let me imagine a scene, such as our London homes have often seen. One of you has a little girl and she has behaved very badly during the day. Mother has threatened her with punishment for her continued ill-conduct. The child, in her bad temper, has run away. The evening comes on and where is Jane? Her brothers and sisters do not know. It is getting late. Where can she be? Has anybody seen her? No, she is not hidden away at home—every room has been searched.

In alarm, someone is sent to the police station. Have you seen a little girl? No, they have not seen a little girl. It gets to be ten o’clock at night and the matter is very serious. Eleven strikes, like a knell. “Why don’t you go to bed, dear Mother?” “Go to bed! Why, I am her mother!” and she breaks out with, “My child! My dear child!” Surely a little while ago she might have been called a good-for-nothing little chit—one might have been glad to miss the worrying little troubler. But now Mother cries, “My child! My dear child!”

The clock strikes twelve. The small hours grow into great ages of grief. Father is troubled—he has been up and down the streets and searched everywhere. You meet him and you say, “Well, she was, after all, a very commonplace child and most obnoxious in disposition.” “Ah, you do not know her. Oh, she was such a pretty girl! She had her peculiarities. But it makes me angry to hear a word against the dear child.” Mother felt that she never knew before how much she loved that child!

What is that? What? Is the wanderer found? What joy beams from every face! Could you have imagined that one naughty child could have made such a stir and caused such delight? Sinner, this is just what happens about you! Thus does the great God think of His wanderers and rejoice when He sees them returning home. When you cry, “Father!” He answers with, “Is he not My dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?” Love takes delight in repenting sinners.

Notice, in this case, love in earnest. The Lord says, “Since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still.” Think of that, “I do earnestly remember him still”! God in earnest—that is a great conception! God in earnest over one moaning sinner! God earnest in thoughts of love, even when He bids the preacher tell the offender of the wrath to come. He says, Go and thunder at him and let loose the lightning of the Law upon him— and yet I earnestly remember him with thoughts of love! Tell him he will be driven into everlasting fire if he repents not. And yet, in thus threatening him, I do earnestly remember him still.

Go, Providence, and frustrate his designs! Go, Death, and take away his child! Yet in all this, there are earnest thoughts of love towards him. “Since I spoke against him,” says God, “I do earnestly remember him still.” These are charming words to me. They thrill my soul. I fear to handle them lest I brush off their bloom. God is never more in earnest to save a soul than when He is dealing roughly with it.

How I wish I could put my thoughts into your hearts at once—instead of having to dilute them by my own words—and then see their strength watered down as they pass through your ears and your understanding and at last filter in drops into your hearts! May the Lord put His own thoughts into your souls by His holy Spirit, that you may know, in some measure, what His earnest remembrance means!

Notice, next, love in sympathy. Ephraim is bemoaning himself and what is the Lord doing? He says, “My heart is troubled for him.” God’s heart is wounded when our hearts are broken! The tenderness of God is at work— His very life is stirred when a soul is crying to Him, “Turn me and I shall be turned”—Jehovah is in sympathy with Ephraim! When the rebel is moved with repentance, the forgiving Lord is moved with pity! God Himself repents of the evil with which He chastised the sinner when the sinner repents of the evil with which he grieved his God. Those are words which will bear much thinking on—“My heart is troubled for him.”

Then comes love in action—“I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” I am so glad to think that the “surely” is found again in this place. “Surely” God heard Ephraim bemoaning. “Surely” he said that he was turned, and now God says, “Surely I will have mercy upon him.” The Lord God puts His hand and seal to it. Sinner, He assuredly forgives you. As surely as you have been ashamed, so surely does He put away your reproach. Come to Him by Christ and He forgives you now. The bill of your debts is receipted—the handwriting which was against you is blotted out. The weight of your iniquity was laid on Christ Jesus of old and He Himself carried it away and hurled it into the abyss, so that it shall never be mentioned against you any more.

“I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” What great mercy, what full mercy, what eternal  
mercy, is this! Yield, then, your stubborn hearts to this immeasurable love. Be captives in the embrace of compassion. Can you resist the charms of goodness? When God comes forth with nothing in His heart but love and kindness, mercy and pardon, flee no longer from Him! Turn at His reproof.

And may this day, even this very moment, be the day of salvation, the beginning of days to you! Then will we bid them ring the bells of Heaven, for there is joy today. May the Lord Himself have joy of you! May He, concerning you, rest in His love and rejoice over you with singing! O Lord, grant me the joy of leading many to Yourself by this sermon, through your Son, Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit! Amen. Amen. Amen.

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GOD, THE HUSBAND OF HIS PEOPLE  
NO. 3419

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1914.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1869.

**“Although I was a Husband unto them, says the Lord.” Jeremiah 31:32.**

SIN is greatly aggravated by the mercy of God, of which the sinner has been a partaker. Sin in a child of God is peculiarly sinful. Instead of its being a trifle, as some men seem to think, it is a very solemn matter, indeed. To have had deep draughts of Divine Love and then to deeply offend against that love is no light thing. This seems to have been the crying part of Israel’s sin. “Although I was a Husband unto them.”

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God’s ancient people, Israel, seem to have lived and passed across the page of history on purpose that they might remain forever the picture of ourselves. Whenever you read of their backsliding, of their idolatries, of their provoking of God’s Spirit, you may shut the book and say, “Within my heart there is all this and my life is as like to this as in a glass, face answers to face.” We must not be slow to condemn their sin, but we must always remember that there are two culprits at the bar—and that when we condemn them we also condemn ourselves!

Now, at this time, we shall first of all, spend a few minutes in considering the indictment which God brought against His people Israel—they had sinned—“although,” He said, “I was a Husband unto them.” Secondly, we shall have to plead guilty to the indictment for ourselves. And then, thirdly, we shall offer some suggestions of amendment that should arise out of the painful and penitent reflections of this evening. First, then, let us consider very earnestly and humbly—

I. THE INDICTMENT WHICH GOD BROUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL. Their sin was aggravated because God was a Husband unto them. How was this? He was a Husband to them in that He set His special love upon them as a husband does upon his bride. He found them, as He says, in a desert land, in a howling wilderness. He found them, as we know, literally, in the land of Egypt, in the house of bondage where their lives were made bitter in the cruel slavery of making bricks for their tyrant masters. But He so loved them that with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He redeemed them. All His plagues He brought on Pharaoh and upon the fields of Zoan. He magnified His power, even on the tribes of Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea He glorified Himself by the destruction of all the hosts of Egypt. But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hands of Moses and Aaron. A husband, having loved his bride, and finding her in slavery, would never cease until the utmost that could be done had been done for her liberty and happiness! And God was thus a Husband unto His people. He says, “I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.”  
He was a Husband unto them, further, in that He made them and them, only, to be His special people. As the husband turns not his eyes to others, but sets his heart upon the one peculiar one, so did the Lord towards His people, Israel. And what people were like unto them—what people to whom God manifested Himself so clearly? There were other nations greater than they, but God did not send His Truth unto them, but they lived and perished in darkness. But God, in His Sovereign Grace, set His heart on Israel—Israel He loved—and Israel, alone!  
He was a Husband unto them, in the next place, in that He remained faithful to them. He had taken them, as it were, for better or for worse— and worse, it was, with terrible preponderance! They grieved His Spirit and provoked Him to anger, yet He cast not away His people. Even to this day He is still a Husband unto Israel, and the day shall come when the scattered and the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered with all their brethren into their own land. And where they sat down and wept, and mourned over the desolation of their cities, they shall once again wake the harp with joy and gladness! God has been a Husband to that people in the faithfulness which He exhibited towards them.  
He was their Husband, too, in this sense, that He communed with them most lovingly. There were divers appearances which the Lord made to His people by His Prophets and He did great wonders and worked many signs and miracles. Besides that, He revealed Himself in the Tabernacle and in the Temple—in the sacrifice and in the offerings. True, in not so clear a light as He has revealed Himself to us, but still, with marvelous brightness as compared with the darkness in which the whole world was lying. As a husband reveals himself in love with his spouse, so did the Lord as a Husband unto His ancient Church.  
In addition to this, He took care to provide for His people, Israel, as a husband does, when with all his worldly goods he does endow her whom he has chosen. What people were like they—who ate angels’ food? Yes, they ate manna to the fullest. If they needed water, the Rock furnished it to them! He brought oil out of the flinty rock when they needed it. All that they needed in the wilderness was supplied bounteously to them. Their garments grew not old, neither were their feet sore by the space of 40 years, though they passed through that howling wilderness where no supplies could be drawn! No people were ever better provided for than they, for even their luxury was sometimes at least gratified—when they asked for flesh, the quails descended and they were fattened thereon.  
In addition to that, the God who had become their Husband protected them as the husband does his wife. He chased the Amalekites before them! He allowed no people to withstand them when they went forth to battle—and the Lord led the van. Though He chastened them before their enemies for their sins, yet when they returned, He made one of them to smite a thousand and to put ten thousand to flight. Marvelous were the deliverances which the Lord worked for His people. Time would fail us to tell of Gideon and of Barak, of Sampson and of Jephtha and of all that the Lord, the Husband of Israel, did in the deliverance of His spouse!  
Nor did He rest until He had brought His people, Israel, into that quiet and settled state which is the expectation of those who enter into the marriage relationship. Under their own vines and their own fig trees He made them to sit down and rest. He brought them to land that flowed with milk and honey, out of whose hills they could dig brass. He drove out the heathen before them, and gave them their land for an heritage, even an heritage forever for His people, Israel, and there the spouse of God might long have enjoyed her rest and her peace, had it not been that she broke her Covenant although He had been a Husband unto her.  
Now, Beloved, just think, before we turn away from this, what a wonderful picture this is of how the Lord has dealt with such of us as are His believing people. Think of His love to us when He brought us out of Egypt. We remember well, some of us, the days of our bondage, for the iron entered into our soul. We can never forget those deep convictions, those terrible lashes of the Law and our own endeavors to make bricks without straw, that we might save ourselves by our works. How gloriously He brought us forth! How He made us to eat of the paschal lamb, and how the blood-mark was put upon the lintel and the two side posts! And we learned what it was for God to look upon the blood and to pass over us. And what a triumphant day that was when all our sins were drowned in the shoreless flood of the Savior’s Atonement! What a shout went up from our hearts that day—louder and sweeter than even that of the daughters of Israel when they followed Miriam with their tabrets and timbrels to the dance! We did say then and in recollection of it, we will say it again, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!” As for our sins, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left! Those Egyptians, whom we saw through our tears, we shall see no more forever!  
From that day, how God has been pleased to prove that He is a Husband to us, by His special love to us! We never can doubt that Doctrine of His special love. I hate to see a contracted mind that will not tolerate the thought that God has a benevolence towards all His creatures. His tender mercies are over all His works, but do let us never in the thought of that forget that there is also a peculiar and special affection which He has towards His own chosen whom He brings to Christ! He loves not the world as He loves His spouse! God has no affection towards the ungodly such as He has towards those whom He has united unto Himself and made to be His, as the spouse is to her husband, in a vital, affectionate, intense, eternal union!  
God has been a Husband to us certainly in that not only has He chosen us specially in His love, but also in that He has been marvelously faithful in that love. I can scarcely speak to you without feeling the tears well up in my eyes when I think of my own unfaithfulness to Him who loved me before the earth was. Oh, which is the stranger of the two—that He should love us or that we should treat Him so unfaithfully?— *“Yet, though I have Him oft forgot,  
His loving kindness changes not.”*  
Precious Truth of God! He has been a Husband unto us. He has never thought of divorce. Is it not written that “He hates putting away”? And so He does and He has not put us away, but we are as dear to Him, now, as we were of old, and as we shall be when we stand before His face without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!  
Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, also, in thinking over how God has been a Husband to us, as He was to Israel, that He has been pleased to provide for us as He did for Israel. Providentially, in temporal matters, we have been provided for. Perhaps some of you could not tell how you have been led in a very intricate pathway. There have been times when you have been on the verge of need, and periods, certainly, when you had nothing to spare. And yet, up to this moment, He that feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies has not let you starve, and you can sing to the praise of His faithfulness that bread has been given you and your waters have been sure. But it has been specially so in spiritual things. Do you ever know what it is to be drained right out in spirituals—to come right to the very bottom—lower than the poor widow when she had but a handful of meal to make one cake and then die? Alas, some of us know what it is to be brought to extreme spiritual poverty and a sense of nothingness in ourselves that well-nigh breaks us to pieces and lowers us into the abyss of despair! But though the tide has ebbed out fearfully, there has always been enough water for every galley of Grace to float— and though the night has been very dark, there has always been light enough for the soul to find its way somehow! And though at times the tempest has howled terribly through the gloom, yet there has always been a harbor, so that we have been enabled to outride the hurricane— and so we shall yet outride all the storms we encounter until we reach the port of bliss! He has well provided for us and, therein, has He been a Husband unto us.  
And equally well has He protected us. We little know how much we owe to the protection of Providence. We sometimes forget our dangers. I was amused to hear of a sailor when he was out in the Channel. You would think he was in great danger, saying, “What a dreadful thing it must be, to be on land in such an hour, with chimney-pots flying about and tiles falling off the houses. Who knows who may be killed if they are not safe at sea in such a storm!” We do not always reckon upon these immunities from danger which God gives us, or know how much they cost. Indeed, if Providence goes very smoothly with us, we do not seem to notice it at all! A father and a son, living at some distance from each other, agreed to meet half-way on a certain day. The son, after he had saluted his father, said, “I have met with a most remarkable Providence on the road! My horse fell three times, and yet I was not at all hurt.” “Ah,” said the father, “I have had an equally remarkable Providence! I rode my horse all the way and he did not even stumble.” We do not often notice the hand of Providence in that kind of thing as we ought to do. The preservations of our life—oh we do not know how many there are! Now and then we have a surprising one which we can observe—and we jot that down in our diary—but we have many more which are not noticed by us. And as for spiritual preservations, my Brothers and Sisters, incessantly in danger as we are from temptations from within and corruptions from within, from our circumstances, from the world, from the flesh, from the devil—God has, indeed, been a Husband to us and a wall of fire round about us, protecting us, else we had not been here among His people tonight—but we would have been numbered among the castaways who have gone back into perdition!  
So I might continue, for I think we may add that last point. God has given to many of us just that settled rest which He gave to His people Israel when they came to Canaan. He has been a Husband to us and as Naomi said to Ruth, “My daughter, you shall find rest in the house of your husband,” so have we found rest in Jesus Christ—a peace of God which passes all understanding! And we have come to a land that flows with milk and honey. We have crossed the Jordan of doubts and fears, and though we have not driven out the Canaanites of daily temptation, yet we still possess the land, for we that have believed do enter into rest.  
This, then is the indictment against us, that although He has been a Husband unto us, we have not acted towards Him as such a Husband’s love deserves. So we turn now to the next great thought, which is this—  
II. WE HAVE TO PLEAD GUILTY

TO THE INDICTMENT AGAINST OURSELVES.  
Dear Brothers and Sisters, I desire not to speak so much to you as to myself. And I pray of you that my voice may be accepted as your own voice to yourselves and if anything comes home to the conscience, open the door to it—let it wound you and let it grieve you—and let it awaken you to something nobler. God grant that it may.  
What have been the peculiar sins that we, as Christian people, have committed against the love of God who has been as a Husband to us? Well, first, it is a very grievous offense against the marriage state when the heart of the bride wanders—when she is not sure, after all, that her husband is the man of her choice, and the man whom, above all others, she esteems. Now— I am afraid we have commonly committed such an offense against our union with God. Our thoughts have often wandered— wandered from our God. Our dearest earthly friends have sometimes tempted our hearts away. Verily I perceive that we often idolize children—but even worse—for in a certain sense it is worse that more sordid idolatry, the love of gold, the desire to be rich, has led many a soul astray from its chaste, simple, ardent affection to the God of Love. Our very books and our studies may decoy us from our God. Yes, our own ministers, whom we love, and even what we hear from them, may stand between us and God! The man that will be an idolater will make a god of anything, as the poor Hottentots do with a bit of rag which they will call a god, and worship it! We may make a god of anything, and how quick we are to do it! Oh, our God, our God, our God! Do You condescend to make Yourself a Husband to us? Oh, can there be anything compared to You? What shall we even think of as second to You? You are fullness of joy! You are infinity of good! What fools, what madmen, what sinners of a scarlet dye are we when we let our heart even wink its eye, as it were, to anything else, much less go astray and miss the love which we ought to give to God alone! That is the first sin of which we may stand convicted— wandering in heart from God, although He has been a Husband unto us.  
Our second sin, probably, is that we have been negligent in His service. It is the wife’s joy to please her husband and unkindness or negligence from her becomes a grievous mischief in the household circle. Now, if God becomes a Husband unto us, what ought we to do for Him? I think He might come tonight and say, “I have something against you,” and He might look us in the face and say, “I have not wearied you with sacrifice, but you have wearied Me with your sins. You have brought Me no sweet canes, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices.” Much that we might have done for our Lord’s Glory we have negligently left undone. Many and many a fair opportunity of speaking well of His great name has slipped by, unused. Brothers and Sisters, is it not so? I read once in a letter from a Brother that he had attained unto perfect sanctification for 20 years! Oh, if it were true, what would I give if I could say the same! I do not believe it, or that any one of us has for 20 minutes done all that he could for his Master, much less for 20 years! There must have been sins of omission, at least! I dare not look back upon a single sermon without feeling that I ought to have preached it better, nor ever rise from my knees in prayer without feeling that I ought to have prayed more earnestly and to have come nearer to God. Everything seems marred and spoiled. We will strive after perfection, but who among us has attained it? Have we not been negligent in the loving kindness which we ought to have manifested toward Him who has been a Husband to us?  
Further than that, Brothers and Sisters, have we not been very much to blame in the slackness of our communion? The wife desires to see her husband. She says—  
*“There is nae luck about the house,  
When the gude man’s awe!”*  
She cannot be satisfied without his presence! She says there is music in the sound of his footstep when she hears it on the stairs. She loves to meet him when he comes home from his daily labor. It is her joy to be in his company. Has it been so with us? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you have come up, sometimes, to this Tabernacle and you have listened to me, but you have not had any desire to get near to God, or if you have, it has been a very faint desire—and you have gone away without seeing Him! And day after day will pass with some professors without a word with the Master—without a single glimpse of the Savior! They seem to be content when the great good Lord, who is a Husband to them is far away. It must not be so anymore! Let us confess the sin. I fear it is so with most of us.  
A further sin against God, our Husband, is this, that I fear we have often been loose in our trust in Him. It would be a sad thing if the wife did not believe her husband’s word and if she could not trust her husband’s heart. Now, it has been so between us and God sometimes. He cannot lie! Moreover, He has given us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us in the Gospel. He has never broken a promise yet—if we never doubted God till God gave us cause to doubt Him—doubting would be unknown! And yet have we not been base enough, when some new trial has come, to sit down and say, “Shall I get through this? Will the promise be fulfilled now? Will not the Lord, after all, leave His servant to perish?” Shame on us! Shame on us! Shame on us! The Lord forgive us our unbelief, and strengthen our faith!  
Once more, is there not this sin very common among professors—that even the idea of this relationship of God has not crossed some professors’ minds? This is a sweeping charge to bring, but the Doctrine of the Union of the Believer with Christ, and of the marriage of the Believer to Christ, is not even thought of by many professing Christians. They are Believers in Christ and they look to the precious blood, but they have not entered into that which is within the veil. They have not sought to know those choicer and deeper things. Well, but is this right, that God should be a Husband unto us, and yet that we should not recognize the relation? Married, and not know it? God, your Husband, and you never think of Him? Does this blessed fact never tone your life, nor give a color to your actions, never check your hand, nor nerve it for a holy deed? Is this all put away, as if there were nothing in it, but perhaps a pretty fancy, or a word or two that might be listened to, but might as well be forgotten? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is sin, indeed, and I am sure that there are few of us that are not guilty, probably none of us, for oftentimes we have forgotten this union, though we have known and understood it! We have walked towards God as if we were strangers to Him and there were no relationship by blood between us and our God through Jesus Christ!  
Thus have I read the indictment, and thus would I plead guilty. Thus would I weigh, and thus would I ask each professing Christian here to weigh the charges as they come against himself, and say how far they concern him. And now to close. A few words by way of—  
III. SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT.  
It is idle to be always regretting, but never reforming—to be forever confessing, but never making an advance in the right direction. Now, first, dear Brothers and Sisters—sitting here tonight while Gods’ gracious rain is falling on the earth, may His rain fall on our hearts—let us admire the condescension of God that He should say, “I have been a Husband unto you.” It is a depth of Grace that He who made the Heaven and the earth and who is infinitely great and glorious, should condescend to come into anything like such a relation as this with His poor creatures whom He has made and whose breath is in their nostrils. Oh, what a stoop—from the highest loftiness of Glory—to call Himself a Husband to a worm!  
Adore next, I pray you, the faithfulness with which hitherto God has carried out this relationship. I have asked you to remember it. Now, adoringly bow your hearts at the thought of it. Oh, God, we bless You, You have not left us. We praise Your name that You have continued so truly a Husband to our souls and that notwithstanding all our sin, and care, and woe!  
Let us, Brothers and Sisters, from henceforth seek to love the Lord foremost. A great man, taking his wife with him to a noble entertainment that was given by Cyrus, was asked by her husband on his return what she thought of Darius, and she replied, “I never thought of Darius. I never thought of anybody but my Husband.” And oh, were it not a grand thing if our hearts chiefly thought of God? Other things must, of course, come across the mind and, for a while, engross it, but the first free thought of the Believer should be of the Glorious One who loved him from before the world—and will love him when the world has passed away!  
And as we set God first in our love, so, next, let us try tonight that we set Him first in all our actions. “Seek you first—first—the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Let the supreme aim of life be not business, not the family, not personal pleasure, but our God! Let all be secondary and subordinate to Him. Set Him on high in your spirit and let everything contribute to His service and Kingdom.  
And that being done, let us seek to dwell with our God. This is the true and effective way of reforming. Instead of having breaks of communion, little periods of it now and then, like oases in the desert, we should seek to have constant communion with Him. What a delightful hymn that is— *“Son of my soul, You Savior dear!”*  
We often sing it. I wish we could practice it and that it were ours always, to abide with Him, because without Him we could not live and without Him we dare not die. May we learn the art of fellowship with God in the turmoil of business. To have fellowship with God in the closet, in the study, or in the chamber is not always easy, but to have fellowship with Him in the noise of busy life is difficult—but to this we ought to attain. May we be able to attain to it, so that we may never leave the society of Christ, go where we may.  
And, Brothers and Sisters, if there is anything that we have not done for Christ, anything that we could do now, tonight, anything that we feel we ought to do tomorrow, let us do it! Let us not be saying that we have left undone these things, but let us set to work to do them. The wife gives to her husband her whole self—let us give to our loving God our whole spirit, soul and body! Be it our prayer that there may not be an unconsecrated hair upon our heads, not a single heaving of the lungs, nor a circulation of the blood, but what in the whole shall be acknowledged. We would not desire to keep even a little spot for the flesh, or make provision for the lusts thereof. Pray that God would sanctify us wholly. Oh, God, do this! And it will be best for us to turn the whole subject into an earnest, loving, longing prayer. Oh, You who are a Husband to my soul, come to me, visit me! I know I have offended You, but Your mercy is great. Reveal Yourself to me! I am cold and dead, and like a clod of earth, but Lord, You can make the clod a star, to burn as fire and shine as gloriously as the sun! Only Your Presence I want, and my sins will flee, and my weakness be swallowed up in strength. If I am unholy, Your Presence though Jesus Christ shall put my sins away. If I am dead, Your Presence would be my life! Oh come, Lord, come to me for Jesus’ sake!  
Now, I know that to some here all this seems like an idle tale. Well, well dear Friends, I wish it were not so! But you must be born-again and until you are born-again you will not understand this. But if you do not understand this simple talk which Believers have with one another, depend upon it, you will never be able to enter where they sing in nobler notes before the Throne of God! May God convince you of your need of a Savior and bring you to put your trust in Jesus, for there is life in Him, and in Him, alone! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ISAIAH 55; JEREMIAH 30:1-11.**

It is the language of Infinite Mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, poor and miserable through sin and, God, instead of driving us from His Presence, comes loaded with mercy— and thus He speaks to us.

Verse 1. Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. See the freeness of Divine love? See how God, who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the Water of Life and, as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely! Yes, He stands like the salesman crying in the market, and cries, “Ho! Ho! Everyone that thirsts!” But, mark, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for ourselves— for He says, “He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” All that you need, dear Friend, God is ready to give you! Yes, He invites you to come and receive it! He presses upon you the good things of the Covenant of Grace. Why do you stand back? Do you want these good things? Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come.

2. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?

2. Hearken diligently unto Me and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. God has real food for your soul— something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it if you will but come and have it! You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!

3. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live— Then who would not hear—who would not give attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

3. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Will God enter into Covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will! “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

4. Behold, I have given Him—That is, the Son of David, Jesus the Christ, “I have given Him.”  
4. For a Witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. If you need anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the Witness to the Character of God! Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has given His Son to be such a Leader to you! Oh, who would not enlist beneath His banner?  
5. Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You. Here God speaks to Jesus, whom He has made a Commander, and He tells Him that He shall not be without a people, for those who never knew Him shall come to Him. There are some in this house tonight who have not yet yielded themselves to Christ—some of whom He will say, “Tonight I must abide in your house”—and when that Voice of power is heard, their hearts will yield and they will become the disciples of Jesus!  
6. Seek you the LORD while He may be found. And that is tonight, for the promise of finding is still given to everyone who seeks.  
6. Call you upon Him while He is near. And He is near, for in all places where His name is recorded, there He has promised to be. Wherever the Gospel is preached, we have Christ’s word for it—“Lo, I am with you always.” So, then, call upon Him while He is near.  
7-9. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. Oh, that we could rise to God’s thoughts—that we could speak His thoughts of love—that we could really believe that He is ready, now, to receive and forgive us, and could, therefore, fly into His arms without hesitancy or delay! God help us to do it!  
10-11. For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me, void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Trust, then, in the Gospel, which is the Word of God, for it cannot fail you! Rest yourselves in the Divine promise of pardon, for it cannot drop to the ground. It must accomplish the Divine Will!  
12. For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. “For,” if you do this—if you forsake your sins—if you turn unto God—God can make such joy in the heart that all the world shall be full of joy! When a man feels that his sins are forgiven, then Nature seems replete with ditty and the hills, rocks and trees all proclaim the Presence of a gracious God! Until then, when the heart is heavy, Nature seems dull and dreary—but oh, may the Grace of God so light up our hearts that all the world may be lit up for us.  
13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

**JEREMIAH 30:1-11.**  
Verses 1, 2. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book. Too good to be lost! The Prophets said much when they did not write, but this particular Chapter and the next were to be carefully written down. God here begins to deal with His guilty people in a way of love and mercy. It is a very strange Chapter, one of the richest, one of the most cheering in the whole of God’s Word! Therefore, write it in a book.

3. For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. Souls get into captivity. God has ways of restoring them. Tonight I expect, and believe, that many captives will be restored by the Grace of God to rest and comfort! Will you be one of them? Poor Mourner, pray now that you may be! Ask God that tonight He may give you freedom from your captivity.

4, 5. And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. “Why” you say, “I thought you began to read words of comfort. Now there is a drop!” Yes, there always is. Whenever God is going to comfort a man, He first makes him see his need of comfort. There is always stripping before there is clothing! On God’s part there is always emptying before there is filling.

6. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Everywhere, when the time of mercy came, it was a bad time, a dark time—a time of inward throbs, throes and travail.

7. Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble: but he shall be saved out of it. But he shall be saved out of it! What a flash of lightning across the black face of the cloud. “He shall be saved out of it.”

8, 9. For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. See how the Chapter has gotten back to the comforting strain again? After the bass notes, we run up the scale. We have come to comfort again! I should not wonder if we have to go back, however, for so it is—God’s mercy is a checkered work, black and white, sorrow and salvation.

10, 11. Therefore fear you not, O My servant, Jacob, says the LORD, neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. What a beautiful collection of words for a troubled heart! And they are not beautiful words only, but there is a deep, true meaning in them—“Shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” I pray God that many here who are much afraid, and cannot be quiet, but are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, may get into this blissful state tonight!

11. For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you. God may destroy the wicked, and He will—but not His people, His own beloved—His heart goes after them. “I will not make a full end of you.”

11. Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished. You will have to smart for it. If you are God’s child, you will have to be brought home with many a tear and many a sigh. Your sorrow, tonight, is a part of a heavenly discipline by which you shall be saved!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1687 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART  
NO. 1687

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

**After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Jeremiah 31:33.**

LAST Lord’s-Day morning [GOD’S NON-REMEMBRANCE OF SIN—NO. 1685] we spoke of the first great blessing of the Covenant of Grace, namely, the full forgiveness of sins. Then we dilated with delight upon that wonderful promise, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,” I hope our consciences were pacified and our hearts filled with wonder as we thought of God’s casting behind His back all the sins of His people, so that we could sing with David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities.”

This great blessing of pardoned sin is always connected with the renewal of the heart. It is not given because of the change of heart, but it is always given with the change of heart. If God takes away the guilt of sin, He is sure, at the same time, to remove the power of sin. If He puts away our offenses against His Law, He also makes us desire, in the future, to obey the Law of God. In our text we observe the excellence and dignity of the Law of God. The Gospel has not come into the world to set aside the Law. Salvation by Grace does not erase a single precept of the Law, nor lower the standard of justice in the smallest degree—on the contrary, as Paul says—we do not make void the Law through faith, but we establish the Law.

The Law is never honored by fallen man till he comes from under its condemning rule, walks by faith and lives under the Covenant of Grace. When we were under the Covenant of Works, we dishonored the Law, but now we venerate it as a perfect display of moral rectitude. Our Lord Jesus has shown to an assembled universe that the Law is not to be trifled with and that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward, since the sin which He bore on our account brought upon Him, as our innocent Substitute, the doom of suffering and death. Our Lord Jesus has testified, by His death, that even if sin is pardoned, yet it is not put away without an expiatory Sacrifice. The death of Christ rendered more honor to the Law than all the obedience of all who were ever under it could have rendered! And it was a more forcible vindication of eternal justice than if all the redeemed had been cast into Hell.

When the Holy One smites His own Son, His wrath against sin is evident to all. But this is not enough. The Law is, in the Gospel, not only vindicated by the Sacrifice of Christ, but it is honored by the work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men. Whereas under the Old Covenant, the commands of the Law excited our evil natures to rebellion—under the Covenant of Grace we consent unto the Law, that it is good, and our prayer is, “Teach me to do Your will, O Lord.” What the Law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, the Gospel has done through the Spirit of God! Thus the Law is held in honor among Believers and though they are no more under it as a Covenant of Works, they are, in a measure, conformed to it as they see it in the life of Christ Jesus, and they delight in it after the inward man.

Things required by the Law are bestowed by the Gospel. God demands obedience under the Law—God works obedience under the Gospel. Holiness is asked of us by the Law—holiness is worked in us by the Gospel so that the difference between the economics of Law and Gospel is not to be found in any diminution of the demands of the Law, but in the actual giving unto the redeemed that which the Law exacted of them—and in the working in them that which the Law required. Notice, beloved Friends, that under the Old Covenant, the Law of God was given in a most aweinspiring manner and yet it did not secure loyal obedience. God came to Sinai and the mountain was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire—and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace—the whole mountain quaked greatly!

So terrible was the sight of God manifesting Himself on Sinai that even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Out of the thick darkness which covered the sublime summit, there came forth the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceedingly loud and long, and a Voice proclaimed, one by one, the 10 great statutes and ordinances of the moral Law. I think I see the people at a distance, with bounds set about the mountain, crouching with abject fear and, at last, entreating that these words might not be spoken to them any more! So terrible was the sound of Jehovah’s voice, even when He was not declaring vengeance, but simply expounding righteousness, that the people could not endure it any longer—and yet no permanent impression was left upon their minds—no obedience was shown in their lives!

Men may be cowed by power, but they can only be converted by love. The sword of justice has less power over human hearts than the scepter of mercy. Further to preserve that Law, God Himself inscribed it upon two tables of stone and He gave these tablets into the hands of Moses. What a treasure! Surely no particles of matter had ever been so honored as these slabs which had been touched by the finger of God and bore on them the legible impression of His mind! But these Laws on stone were not kept— neither the stones nor the Laws were reverenced. Moses had not long gone up into the mountain before the once awe-struck people were bowing before the golden calf, forgetful of Sinai and its solemn Voice—and making for themselves the likeness of an ox that eats grass—and bowing before it as the symbol of the Godhead!

When Moses came down from the hill with those priceless tablets in His hands, He saw the people wholly given up to base idolatry and, in his indignation, he dashed the tablets to the ground and broke them in pieces, as well he might when he saw how the people had spiritually broken them and violated every Word of the Most High! From all this I gather that the Law is never really obeyed as the result of servile fear. You may preach up the anger of God and the terrors of the world to come, but these do not melt the heart to loyal obedience. It is necessary, for other ends, that man should know of God’s resolve to punish sin, but the heart is not, by that fact, won to virtue. Man revolts yet more and more—so stubborn is he that the more he is commanded, the more he rebels!

The Decalogue upon your Church walls and in your daily service has its ends, but it can never be operative upon men’s lives until it is also written on their hearts. Tables of stone are hard and men count obedience to God’s Law to be a hard thing—the Commands are judged to be stony while the heart is stony—and men harden themselves because the way of the precept is hard to their cold minds. Stones are proverbially cold and the Law seems a cold, chill thing, for which we have no love as long as the appeal is to our fears. Tablets of stone, though apparently durable, can readily enough be broken and so can God’s Commandments—and so they are, indeed, broken every day by us. Those who have the clearest knowledge of the will of God, nevertheless offend against Him. As long as they have nothing to keep them in check but a servile dread of punishment, or a selfish hope of reward, they yield no loyal homage to the statutes of the Lord!

At this time I have to show you the way in which God secures to Himself obedience to His Law in quite another fashion—not by thundering it out from Sinai, nor by engraving it upon tablets of stone—but by coming in gentleness and infinite compassion into the hearts of men and there, upon fleshy tables, inscribing the Commands of His Law in such a manner that they are joyfully obeyed and men become the willing servants of God! This is the second great privilege of the Covenant—not second in value, but in order—“who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases.” It is thus described by Ezekiel—“And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.”

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have it in another form and we read it thus—“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My Covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.”

This is so inestimably precious that you who know the Lord are longing for it and it is your great delight that it is to be worked in you by the Sovereign Grace of God! We shall, first of all, look at the tablets— “I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” Secondly, at the writing. Thirdly, at the Writer and, fourthly, at the results which come of this wondrous writing. O that the Spirit who has promised to lead us into all the Truths of God may now illuminate us!

I. First, I invite your attention to THE TABLETS upon which God writes His Law— “I will put My Law in their inward parts.” Just as once He put the two tables into the ark of gopher wood, so He will put His holy Law into our inward nature and enclose it in our thoughts and minds and memories and affections, as a jewel in a case. Then He adds, “And I will write it in their hearts.” Just as the Holy Words were engraved upon stone, so shall they now be written in the heart, in the handwriting of the Lord, Himself. Mark that the Law is written not on the heart, but in the heart, in the very texture and constitution of it, so that into the center and core of the soul, obedience shall be infused as a vital principle!

Thus, you see, the Lord has selected for His tablets that which is the seat of life. It is in the heart that life is to be found, a wound, there, is fatal. Where the seat of life is, there the seat of obedience shall be. In the heart, life has its permanent palace and perpetual abode—and God says that, instead of writing His Holy Law on stones which may be left at a distance—He will write it on the heart, which must always be within us. Instead of placing the Law upon phylacteries which can be bound between the eyes but may easily be taken off, He will write it in the heart, where it must always remain. He has bid His people write His Laws upon the posts of their doors and upon their gates, but in those conspicuous places they might become so familiar as to be unnoticed. The Lord, Himself, now writes them where they must always be noted and always produce effect.

If men have the precepts written in the abode of their life, they live with the Law and cannot live without it. It is a wonderful thing that God should do this. It displays infinitely greater wisdom than if the Law had been inscribed on slabs of granite or engraved on plates of gold. What wisdom is this, which operates upon the original spring of life, so that all that flows forth from man shall come from a sanctified fountainhead! Observe next, that not only is the heart the seat of life, but it is the governing power. It is from the heart, as from a royal metropolis, that the imperial commands of the man are issued by which hand and foot, eye and tongue and all the members are ordered. If the heart is right, then the other powers must yield submission to its sway and become right, too.

If God writes His Law upon the heart, then the eyes will purify their glances, the tongue will speak according to rule, the hands will move and the feet will travel as God ordains. When the heart is fully influenced by God’s Spirit, then the will and the intellect, the memory and the imagination and everything else which makes up the inward man, comes under cheerful allegiance to the King of Kings! God Himself says, “Give me your heart,” for the heart is the key of the entire position. Hence the supreme wisdom of the Lord in setting up His Law where it becomes operative upon the entire man. But before God can write upon a man’s heart, it must be prepared. It is most unfit to be a writing tablet for the Lord until it is renewed. The heart must, first of all, undergo erasures.

What is written on the heart, already, some of us know to our deep regret. Original sin has cut deep lines, Satan has scored his horrible handwriting in black letters and our evil habits have left their impressions. How can the Lord write there? No one would expect the Holy God to inscribe His Holy Law upon an unholy mind! The former things must be taken away, that there may be clear space upon which new and better things may be engraved. But who can erase these lines? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also, do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” The God who can take away the spots from the leopard and the blackness from the Ethiopian, can also remove the evil lines which now deface the heart!

As the heart must undergo erasure, it must also experience a thorough cleansing, not of the surface only, but of its entire fabric. Truly, Brothers and Sisters, it was far easier for Hercules to purge the Augean stables than for our hearts to be purged, for the sin that lies within us is not an accumulation of external defilement, but an inward, all-pervading corruption! The taint of secret and spiritual evil is in man’s natural life. Every pulse of his soul is disordered by it. The eggs of all crimes are within our being—the accursed virus, from whose deadly venom every foul design will come—is present in the soul. Not only tendency to sin, but sin, itself, has taken possession of the soul and blackened and polluted it through and through till there is not a fiber of the heart unstained with iniquity! God cannot write His Law in our inward parts till, with water and with blood, He has purged us.

Tablets on which the Lord shall write must be clean, therefore the heart on which God is to engrave His Law must be a cleansed heart. It is a great joy to perceive that from the Person of our Lord, heart-cleansing blood and water flowed so that the provision is equal to the necessity! Blessed be the name of our gracious God! He knows how to erase the evil and to cleanse the soul through His Holy Spirit’s applying the work of Jesus to us! In addition to this, the heart needs to be softened, for the heart is naturally hard and, in some men, it has become harder than an adamant stone! They have resisted God’s love till they are impervious to it—they have stood out obstinately against God’s will till they have become desperately set on mischief and nothing can affect them.

God must melt the heart, must transform it from granite into flesh— and He has the power to do it! Blessed be His name, according to the Covenant of Grace, He has promised to work this wonder and He will! Nor would the softening be enough, for there are some who have a tenderness of the most deceiving kind. They receive the Word of God with joy. They feel every expression of it, but they speedily go their way and forget what manner of men they are. They are as impressible as the water, but the impression is as soon removed, so that another change is needed, namely, to make them retentive of that which is good—otherwise you might engrave and re-engrave—but, like an inscription upon wax, it would be gone in a moment if exposed to heat.

The devil, the world and the temptations of life would soon erase out of the heart all that God had written there if He did not create it anew with the faculty of holding fast that which is good. In a word, the heart of man needs to be totally changed, even as Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” Dear Hearers, we preach to you that whoever believes in Christ has everlasting life and we speak neither more, nor less, than the Truth of God when we say so! But yet, believe us, there must be as great a change in the heart as if a man were slain and made alive again! There must be a new creation, a resurrection from the dead—old things must pass away—and all things must become new. God’s Law can never be written upon the old natural heart—there must be a new and spiritual nature given—and then, upon the center of that new life, upon the throne of that new power within our life, God will set up the proclamation of His blessed will and what He commands shall be done.

So, then, you see these tablets are not so easily written upon, as perhaps we first thought. If God is to write the Law upon the heart, the heart must be prepared, and in order to being prepared, it must be entirely renewed by a miracle of mercy, such as can only be worked by that Omnipotent hand which made both Heaven and earth.

II. Secondly, let us pass on to notice THE WRITING. “I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” What is this writing? First, the matter of it is the Law of God. God writes upon the hearts of His people that which is already revealed. He inscribes there nothing novel and unrevealed, but His own will which He has already given us in the Book of the Law. He writes upon the heart, by gracious operation, that which He has already written in the Bible by gracious Revelation. He writes not philosophy, nor imagination, nor superstition nor fanaticism, nor idle fancies. If any man says to me, “God has written such-and-such a thing on my heart,” I reply, “ Show it to me in the Bible,” for if it is not according to the other Scriptures, it is not a Scripture of God!

A fancy as to a man’s being a Prophet, or a prince, or an angel may be on a man’s heart, but God did not write it there, for His own declaration is, “I will write My Law in their hearts,” and He speaks not of anything beyond. The nonsense of modern pretenders to prophecy is no writing of God—it would be a dishonor to a sane man to ascribe it to Him! How can it be of the Lord? He here promises to write His own Law on the heart, but nothing else. Be content to have the Law written on your soul and wander not into vain imaginings lest you receive a strong delusion to believe a lie. Observe, however, that God says He will write His whole Law on the heart—this is included in the words, “My Law.”

God’s work is complete in all its parts and beautifully harmonious. He will not write one command and leave out the rest as so many do in their reforms. They become indignant in their virtue against a particular sin, but they riot in other evils. Drunkenness is to them the most damnable of all transgressions, but covetousness and uncleanness they wink at! They denounce theft and yet defraud! They cry out against pride and yet indulge envy! Thus they are partial and do the work of the Lord deceitfully. It must not be so! God does not set before us a partial holiness, but the whole moral Law! “I will write My Law in their hearts.” Human reforms are generally lopsided, but the Lord’s work of Grace is balanced and proportionate. The Lord writes the perfect Law in the hearts of men because He intends to produce perfect men.

Mark, again, that on the heart there is written not the Law toned down and altered, but, “My Law”—that very same Law which was, at first, written on the heart of unfallen man. Paul says of natural men, that “they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.” There is enough of the Light of God left on the conscience to condemn men for most of their iniquities. The original record of the Law upon man’s heart at his creation has been injured and almost obliterated by man’s fall and his subsequent transgressions, but the Lord, in renewing the heart, makes the writing fresh and vivid, even the writing of the first principles of righteousness and truth.

But to come a little closer to the matter—what does the Scripture mean by writing the Law of God in the heart? The writing, itself, includes a great many things. A man who has the Law of God written in his heart, first of all, knows it. He is instructed in the ordinances and statutes of the Lord. He is an illuminated person and no longer one of those who knows not the Law and is cursed. God’s Spirit has taught him what is right and what is wrong. He knows this by heart and, therefore, can no longer put darkness for light, and light for darkness. This Law, next, abides upon his memory. When he had it only upon a tablet, he must necessarily go into his house to look at it, but now he carries it about with him in his heart, and knows, at once, what will be right and what will be wrong. God has given him a touchstone by which he tries things.

He finds that “all is not gold that glitters,” and all is not holy which pretends to that character. He separates the precious from the vile and does this habitually, for his knowledge of God’s Law and his memory of it are attended by a discernment of spirit which God has worked in him, so that he quickly discerns what is according to the mind of God and what is not. Now this is a great point, for some things are commonly done by men which they will even defend and say that there is no wrong in them. But, according to the Divine rule, they are utterly unjust. God’s people judge these things and take no pleasure in them. A sacred instinct warns the Believer of the approach of sin. Long before public sentiment has proclaimed a hue and cry against questionable practices, the Christian man, even if deluded, for a while, by current custom, yet feels a trembling and an uneasiness. Even if he consents outwardly—being overborne by general opinion—a something within protests and leads him to consider whether the matter can be defended. As soon as he detects the evil, he shrinks from it. It is a grand thing to possess a universal detector, so that, go where you may, you are not dependent upon the judgment of others and, therefore, are not deceived as multitudes are. This, however, is only a part of the matter, and a very small part comparatively.

The Law is written on a man’s heart, further than this, when he consents unto the Law that it is good. It is when his conscience, being restored, cries, “Yes, that is so, and ought to be so! That command by which God has forbidden a certain course is a proper and prudent command—it ought to be enjoined.” It is a hopeful sign when a man no longer wishes that the Divine commands were other than they are, but confirms them by the verdict of his judgment. Are there not men who in their anger wish that killing were not murder? Are there not others who do not steal, but yet wish they might take their neighbors’ goods? Are there not many who wish that fornication and adultery were not vices? This proves that their hearts are depraved!

But it is not so with the regenerate, they would not have the Law altered for any reason! Their vote is with the Law. They regard it as the guardian of society, the basis on which the peace of the universe can, alone, be built, for only by righteousness can any order of things be established. If we could possess the wisdom of God, we would make just that Law which God has made, for the Law is holy, just, good and promotes man’s highest advantage! It is a great thing when a man gets as far as that. But, furthermore, there is worked in the heart, by God, a love to the Law as well as a consent to it—such a love that the man thanks God that He has given him such a fair and lovely representation of what perfect holiness should be—that He has given such measuring lines by which he knows how a house is to be built in which God can dwell. Thus thanking the Lord, his prayer, desire, longing, hungering and thirsting are after righteousness, that he may, in all things, be according to the mind of God.

It is a glorious thing when the heart delights itself in the Law of the Lord and finds, therein, its solace and pleasure. The Law is fully written on the heart when a man takes pleasure in holiness and feels a deep pain whenever sin approaches him. Oh, my dear Friend, the Lord has done great things for you when every evil thing is obnoxious to you! Even though you fall into sin through the infirmity of your flesh, yet if it causes you intense agony and sorrow, it is because God has written His Law in your heart! Even though you cannot be as holy as you want to be, yet if the ways of holiness are your pleasure—if they are the very element in which you live as much as the fish lives in the sea—then you are the subject of a very wonderful change of heart!

It is not so much what you do, as what you delight to do, which becomes the clearest test of your character. Many strictly religious people who go to and fro to Church and Chapel would be uncommonly glad if they did not feel bound to do so. Is not their public worship a dead formality? A great many people have family prayers and private prayers who wish they could be rid of the nuisance. Is there any religion in bodily exercises which are burdensome to the heart? Nothing is acceptable to God until it is acceptable to yourself—God will not receive your sacrifice unless you offer it willingly! How contrary this is to the notion of many, for they say, “You see I deny myself by going so many times to a place of worship and by private prayer, therefore I must be truly religious.” The very reverse is far nearer the truth! When it becomes a misery to serve God, then, indeed, the heart is far away from spiritual health, for when the heart is renewed, it delights to worship and serve the Lord!

Instead of saying, “I would omit prayer if I could,” the regenerate mind cries, “I wish I could be always praying.” Instead of saying, “I would keep away from the assembly of God’s people if I could,” the newborn nature wishes, like David, to dwell in the House of the Lord forever! This is a great evidence of the writing of the Law upon the heart, when holiness becomes a pleasure and sin becomes a sorrow. When this is done, what great things God has done for us! The main point of the whole, is this, that whereas our nature was once contrary to the Law of God so that whatever God forbade we at once desired, and whatever God commanded we, therefore, began to dislike, the Holy Spirit comes and changes our nature and makes it congruous to the Law—so that, now, whatever God forbids we forbid and whatever God commands, our will commands!

How much better to have the Law written upon the heart than upon tablets of stone! If anybody should enquire how the Lord keeps the writing upon the heart, legible, I should like to spend a minute or two in showing the process. How the Holy Spirit first writes the Law on the heart, I cannot tell. The outward means are the preaching of the Word and the reading of it. But how the Holy Spirit directly operates on the soul, we do not know— it is one of the great mysteries of Grace. This much we know within ourselves, that whereas we were blind, now we see and, whereas we abhorred the Law of God, we now feel an intense delight in it! We also know that the Holy Spirit worked this change, but how He did it remains unknown. That part of His holy office which we can discern is done according to the usual laws of mental operation. He enlightens by knowledge, convinces by argument, leads by persuasion, strengthens by instruction and so forth.

So far, also, we know that one way by which the Law is kept written upon a Christian’s heart is this—a sense of God’s Presence. The Believer feels that he could not sin with God looking on. It would need a brazen face for a man to play the traitor in the presence of a king—such things are done “under the rose,” as men word it—but not before the monarch’s face! So the Christian feels that he dwells in God’s sight and this forbids him to disobey. The eye of the Heavenly Father is the best monitor of the child of God. Next, the Christian has a lively sense within him of the degradation which sin once brought upon him. If there is one thing I never can forget, personally, it is the horror of my heart while I was yet under sin. God revealed my state to me. Ah, Friends, the old proverb that a burnt child dreads the fire has an intensity of truth about it in the case of one who has ever been burnt by sin so as to be driven to despair by it! He hates it with a perfect hatred and, by that means, God writes the Law upon his heart.

But a sense of love is a yet more powerful factor. Let a man know that God loves him, let him feel sure that God always did love him from before the foundations of the world, and he must try to please God. Let him be assured that the Father loved him so much as to give His only-begotten Son to die that he might live through Him and he must love God and hate evil. A sense of pardon, of adoption and of God’s sweet favor, both in Providence and in Grace must sanctify a man. He cannot willfully offend against such love! On the contrary, he feels himself bound to obey God in return for such unsearchable Grace and thus, by a sense of love, does God write His Law upon the hearts of His people!

Another very powerful pen with which the Lord writes is to be found in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus spit upon, scourged and crucified, we feel that we must hate sin with all the intensity of our nature. Can you count the purple drops of His redeeming blood and then go back to live in the iniquity which cost the Lord so dear? Impossible! The death of Christ writes the Law of God very deeply upon the central heart of man. The Cross is the crucifier of sin. Besides that, God actually establishes His holy Law in the throne of the heart by giving us a new and heavenly life. There is, within a Christian, an immortal principle which cannot sin because it is born of God and cannot die! It is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! In regeneration there is imparted to us a something altogether foreign to our corrupt nature—a Divine principle is dropped into the soul which can neither be corrupted nor made to die—and by this means the Law is written on the heart. I do not pretend to explain the process of regeneration, but for certain, it involves a Divine life implanted by the Holy Spirit.

Once more, the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells in Believers. I pray you, never forget this marvelous doctrine, that as truly as ever God dwelt in human flesh in the Person of the God-Man Mediator, so truly does the Holy Spirit dwell in the bodies of all redeemed men and women who have been born again! And by the force of that indwelling, He keeps the mind forever permeated with holiness, forever subservient to the will of the Most High!

III. Now we turn, for just a minute, to think of THE WRITER. Who is it that writes the Law in the heart? It is God, Himself! “I will do it,” He says. Note, first, that He has a right to write His Law in the heart. He made the heart—it is His tablet—let Him write there whatever He wills. As clay in the hands of the potter, so are we in His hands. Note, next, that He, alone, can write the Law in the heart. It will never be written there by any other hand. The Law of God is not to be written in the heart by human power. Alas, how often have I expounded the Law of God and the Gospel of God, but I have got no further than the ears—only the living God can write in the living heart! This is noble work, angels, themselves, cannot attain to it! “This is the finger of God.”

As God, alone, can write there, and must write there, so He, alone, shall have the Glory of that writing when once it is perfected. When God writes, He writes perfectly. You and I make blots and errors—there needs to be a list of itemized errors at the end of every human piece of writing! But when God writes, blots or mistakes are out of the question! No holiness can excel the holiness produced by the Holy Spirit when His inward work is fully completed! Moreover, He writes indelibly. I defy the devil to get a single letter of the Law of God out of a man’s heart when God has written it there! When the Holy Spirit has come with all the power of His Divinity and rested on our nature—and stamped into it the life of holiness—then the devil may come with his black wings and all his unhallowed craftiness, but he can never erase the eternal lines!

We bear in our hearts the marks of the Lord God Eternal and we shall bear them eternally! Written rocks bear their inscriptions long, but written hearts bear them forever and ever! Does not the Lord say, “I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me”? Blessed be God for those immortal principles which forbid the child of God to sin!

IV. I wish to finish by noticing THE RESULTS of the Law being thus written in the heart. I hope while I have been preaching about it, many of you have been saying, “I hope that the Law will be written in my heart.” Remember that this is a gift and privilege of the Covenant of Grace and not a work of man. Dear Friends, if any of you have said, “I do not find anything good in me, therefore I cannot come to Christ,” you talk foolishly! The absence of good is the reason why you should come to Christ to have your needs supplied. “Oh, but if I could write God’s Law in my heart I would come to Christ.” Would you? What would you need Christ for? But if the Law is not written on your heart, then come to Jesus to have it so written!

The New Covenant says, “I will put My Law in their inward parts and will write My Law in their hearts.” Come, then, to have the Law thus inscribed within! Come just as you are, before a single line has been inscribed. The Lord Jesus loves to prepare His own tablets and write every letter of His own Epistles—come to Him just as you are, that He may do all things for you! What are the results of the Law being written in the hearts of men? Frequently the first result is great sorrow. If I have God’s Law written in my heart, then I say to myself, “Ah me, that I should have lived a lawbreaker so long! This blessed Law, this lovely Law, why I have not even thought of it, or if I have thought of it, it has provoked me to disobedience! Sin revived and I died when the Commandment came.” We wring our hands and cry, “How could we be so wicked as to break so just a Law? How could we be so willful as to go against our own interests? Knew we not that a breach of the Commandment is an injury to ourselves?” Thus we are in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for the death of his first-born. I do not believe God has ever written His Law on your hearts if you have not mourned over sin. One of the earliest signs of Grace is a dew upon the eyes because of sin.

The next effect of it is there comes upon the man a strong and stern resolve that he will not break that Law again, but will keep it with all his might. He cries out with David, “I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.” His whole heart says, when reading the precepts of the Lord—“Yes, that is what I ought to be, that is what I wish to be and that is what I will be, according to the will of God.” That strong resolve soon leads to a fierce conflict, for another law lifts up its head, a law in our members—and that other law cries, “Not so quick, there! Your new Law which has come into your soul to rule you shall not be obeyed! I will be master!”

He who is born within us to be our king finds the old Herod ready to slay the young child. The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh—the pride of life—each one of these swears warfare against the new Monarch and the fresh power that is come into the heart. Some of you know what this struggle means. It is a very hard fight, with some, to keep from actual sin. Have you not, when troubled with a quick temper, had to put your hand to your mouth to stop yourself from saying what you used to say, but what you never wish to say again? Have you not often gone upstairs to get alone, feeling that you would soon slip if the Lord did not hold you up? How wise to get alone with God and cry to Him for help! How prudent to watch day and night against evil!

Certain braggers talk about having got beyond all that. I should be glad to think that there are such Brethren—but I should need to keep them in a glass case to show them round, or in an iron safe where thieves could not get at them! I conceive it to be a snare of the devil to imagine that you are beyond the need of daily watchfulness! For my own part, I have not passed beyond conflict and struggle. I bear testimony that the battle grows more stern every day! Those of God’s people with whom I associate, I still find fighting and wrestling. Sometimes I know the devil does not roar, but I am more afraid of him when he is quiet than when he rages. Of the two, I would sooner he would roar, for a roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil. Whenever he gives way, he only gives an inch to take a mile—and whenever you begin to say to yourself, “My corruptions are all dead. I now have no tendencies to sin,” you are in awful peril!

Poor Soul, you do not know what you are talking about! God send you to school and give you a little of His Light and you will sing another tune, I am sure, before long! These are the incidental results—when the Lord writes the Law in the heart, strifes and struggles are common within the man—for holiness strives for the mastery. But does not something better than this come of the Divine heart-writing? Oh, yes! There comes actual obedience. The man not only consents to the Law, that it is good, but he obeys it! And if there is anything which Christ commands, no matter what it is, the man seeks to do it—not only wishes to do it, but actually does it! And if there is anything that is wrong, he not only wishes to abstain from it, but he does abstain from it. God helping him, he becomes upright, righteous, sober, godly, loving and Christ-like—for this it is which the Spirit of God works in him! He would be perfect were it not for the old lusts of the flesh which linger, even in the hearts of the regenerate.

Now the Believer feels intense pleasure in everything that is good. If there is anything right and true in the world, he is on the side of it. If there are defeats to the Truth of God, he is defeated. But if the Truth of God marches on, conquering and to conquer, he conquers and takes and divides the spoil with joy! Now he is on God’s side; now he is on Christ’s side; now he is on truth’s side; now he is on holiness’ side and a man cannot be that without being a happy man! With all his struggles, all his weeping and all his confessions, he is a happy man because he is on the happy side. God is with him and he, by God’s Grace, is with God—and so he must be blessed!

As this proceeds, the man becomes more and more prepared to dwell in Heaven. He is changed into God’s image from Glory to Glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Our fitness for Heaven is not a thing that will be clapped upon us in the last few minutes of our life, just as we are going to die, but the children of God have a meetness for Heaven as soon as ever they are saved—and that meetness grows and increases till they are ripe and then, like ripe fruit, they drop from the tree and find themselves in the bosom of their Father God! God will never keep a soul out of Heaven half a minute after it is fully prepared to go there and so, when God has fitted us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in His Light, we shall enter at once into the joy of our Lord.

My Brothers and Sisters, I feel I have talked feebly about one of the most blessed subjects that ever occupied the thoughts of man—how God’s Law shall be kept, how it shall be honored, how holiness shall come into the world—and we shall no longer be rebellious. Herein let us trust in our Lord Jesus, who is to us the Surety of that Covenant of which this is one great promise—“I will put My Law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it.” God do so to us, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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GOD’S WRITING UPON MAN’S HEART  
NO. 2992

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1864.

**“I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.” Jeremiah 31:33.**

THIS is not the language of the Old Covenant, but of the New Covenant. The prospects of life held out in the Law have all dissolved into a ministration of death as the penalty of disobedience. Its voice might have once captivated hearts that knew not their own weakness. How did it speak? “Do this, and live; keep My commandments, and you shall receive in return for your obedience singular blessings upon earth and rest in Heaven.” But that Old Covenant, since the Fall, no man has kept, or can keep. Surely if any persons could have kept it, those to whom it was originally given were the most likely to do so. They were a separated people. They were removed into the wilderness, far from evil associations. They were miraculously fed out of the granaries of Heaven. They received their drink in an equally marvelous manner out of the smitten Rock. They had God, Himself, in the midst of them. They had His pillar of cloud to cover them by day and His pillar of fire to lead them by night. In all their difficulties they could appeal to Moses. If there had been an inadvertence or mistake, they could turn to Aaron and he, by the offering of the appointed sacrifice, could set them right again. They were placed where they had not the trials and the temptations of the rest of mankind. They were so cut off and separated that I may well compare them to—

*“A garden walled around,*

*Chosen and made peculiar ground.”*  
And yet, even in that favored soil, which was so well tilled and so well kept by God, it was utterly impossible that perfect holiness could grow and, therefore, the Law of God was broken. Even the seed of Israel, circumcised and blessed with covenants and promises—and having the immediate Presence of God in their sanctuary could not keep the Law—a clear lesson to us that “by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified.” You cannot perfectly obey God! You cannot work out a righteousness of your own! You cannot do that which God commands you to do. Look to the flames which Moses saw—and sink, and tremble, and despair if you wish to be saved by your own works!

Now that Old Covenant has passed away with regard to the Lord’s people. As many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are now under a New Covenant which is of quite a different kind. It does not say, “Do this, and live.” It says, on God’s part, “I will give you a new heart; I will forgive your sins; I will bless you with My Presence. I will make you holy. I will keep you holy. I will preserve you in My ways; I will bring you to Myself at the last.” And all this is vouchsafed without any conditions that render the fulfillment precarious, for whatever conditions there were, devolved not upon the sinner, but upon the sinner’s Substitute—as though God had said, “I will do this if My only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, will give His blood for the remission of your sins and work out a perfect righteousness for your acceptance.” That has been done and now, as far as you and I are concerned, the Covenant of Grace is one of promise, pure promise, nothing but promise! And all that we have to do, as poor, guilty, helpless, needy souls, is to sit down at the feet of our gracious God and receive from Him these wondrous blessings which the Covenant has secured to all the faithful—

*“Firm as the lasting hills,  
This Covenant shall endure,  
Whose potent shalls and wills  
Make every blessing sure!  
When ruin shakes all nature’s frame,  
Its jots and tittles stand the same.  
Here when your feet shall fall,  
Believer, you shall see  
Grace to restore your soul,  
And pardon full and free!  
You with delight shall God behold  
Sheep restored to Zion’s fold.  
And when through Jordan’s flood  
Your God shall bid you go,  
His arm shall you defend,  
And vanquish every foe!  
And in this Covenant you shall view  
Sufficient strength to bear you through.”*

One of the blessings of this New Covenant is heart-writing—“I will put My Law in their minds, and write it on their hearts.” It is of that I am going to talk tonight. And instead of having different heads to the sermon, I will just offer a few observations, which have, I think, a very intimate connection with this point of writing upon the fleshy tablets of the heart.

My first observation is that WITH THE TABLETS OF STONE, CHRISTIANS HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO.  
Do not be staggered or astonished at this remark. I know that there are certain places of worship where these two tablets of the Law stand right over the Communion Table, but they have no business there, for we can never have any communion with God upon the footing of the Law. If there must be anything there. If there must be any symbol at all there, then the Roman Catholic is right when he puts there the Cross, or a picture of the crucifixion. We put away all symbols lest they should become a source of idolatry. But, if there must be anything over the Communion Table, the Cross is the proper thing—not the two tablets of the Law, for, on the footing of the Law, God never had communion with man—and He never can have, since man has fallen. With the two tablets of the Law as they are written upon the stone, the Christian has nothing whatever to do.  
You know me too well to suspect me of being an Antinomian, yet I will not try to detract from the force of the expression which the Holy Spirit has taught us, “You are not under the Law, but under Grace.” All the Ten Commandments the Christian loves. They are his rule of life and he decides to keep every single word that God has ever commanded to the sons of men. But, as they stand on those tablets of hard, cold rock, I have nothing whatever to do with them! Moses dashed them from his hands in holy rage and, surely, as I see their cracked fragments there, I can only say that I have done precisely what Moses did—and have broken those tablets to pieces, too! Even Moses could not carry these tablets in his hands without breaking them, nor can I do any better than he did. God rules His people, not by Law, but by love. They do not walk in holiness because they must, but because they wish to do so. The rule which governs them is not, “Do this, and live; do that, and perish,” but this—“I have loved you with an everlasting love; what will you do for Me?” To quote two good lines of old Master Quarles, which just give me the sense I want to convey to you—  
*“Leave you the stony tablets for your Savior’s part. Keep you the law that’s written in your heart.”*As for the Laws written on the stone tablets, Christ has kept them and fulfilled them! Therefore they have lost their force to crush you. The tablet on your heart is your rule, your guidance and your law. See to it that you be not disobedient to the Revelation of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”  
There are many of my hearers, tonight, who are always dealing with the tablets of the Law. You are trying to get to Heaven by what you can do. O my dear Friend, you cannot keep the Law—why do you try to do it? It is too high, too heavenly, too broad, too spiritual for you. It affects you in your imaginations, your thoughts, your words, your actions. Why, you break it every moment! You have broken it since you have been in this House of God. Think not, then, to do an impossibility! And even if you could keep it in the future, it would do you no good, for you have already broken it and to try to preserve what you have already broken is most absurd! If you had an alabaster box in your hand, and you had broken it to slivers, however careful you might be of the broken fragments, you could not put them together again. You have most effectually cut the throat of all your hopes of ever being saved by the Law of God! O Man, why do you try to do this when Christ has kept the Law for all who trust Him? Do you think that Christ would have come all the way from Heaven to keep the Law for you if you could keep it for yourself? If you could be your own Savior, what need was there for Him to be stretched upon the Cross and to bleed, and agonize, and die? Does Christ do that which is not necessary? O proud soul, proud soul to think to do what only a Savior can accomplish! Come now and leave your doings—for all your righteousnesses are but as filthy rags! Come now and leave your virtues and all your boasted deeds, and look away to where He hangs who has woven a garment without seam from the top throughout and has dyed it in the crimson of His own blood! Put this on and you wear Heaven’s court-dress, and you shall one day stand among the peers of Paradise! But without this, you are naked, poor and miserable! I counsel you, therefore, to buy of Him fair raiment—the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints!  
With the Law as engraved on stone, then, the Believer has nothing to do—his business is with the Law as written with the Spirit of the living God upon his heart!  
My next observation is that THE OLD HEART IS NOT FIT FOR GOD TO WRITE HIS LAW UPON.  
Somebody said once that the human heart, in infancy at least, was like a piece of white paper, and that there might be anything written on it which we pleased. Little did that person know—little had he even guessed the truth concerning a human heart—for the heart is blotted, blurred, blacked, smeared, smudged, fouled, stained through and through even at the very beginning! Everyone can say with David, “Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” There is no such thing as a white surface upon the natural heart— and God never tried to write a sentence on the natural heart yet—and He never will because He knows right well that that heart is not a fit place for His holy Law to be written. If it should be possible for Him to put it upon that black heart, I think He would not do it, for it is an impure thing and God will never write His perfect Law upon an imperfect parchment like a depraved heart. It is too vile, too abominable for God to touch. All that can be done with the old, natural, human heart, is for God to mortify it, to pierce it through and through with the spear which pierced the side of Christ! “Death to the old Adam! Death to the old Adam!” is the cry of the Gospel. But as for modifying him, it never tries to do it, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor can the leopard change its spots. The old nature is looked upon as hopeless and is given up to die—and the sooner it dies, the better for you and for me! God will not write His Law upon it, for it is foul, and blotted, and too abominable for Him to touch.  
Equally impossible is it for God to write upon the old heart because it is stony. He did write once on stone and the tablets were broken—He will not write on stone a second time. The first tablets of stone were broken and, as to the second tablets of stone, I know not where they are, they are lost—as if the very thought of goodness had been lost to man by nature. And if God should write upon a stony heart, this would be the result—that the heart with the Law written upon it must soon be broken and destroyed. What? Shall He write on such an unstable, treacherous, deceitful thing as an unrenewed heart? As well might you write upon the sand! Or, still worse, go write your name upon the treacherous billow and expect to find it handed down to fame! But God writes not on water. He will not take His great pen into His hand to write on such a medium as the heart which “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” “You must be born-again.” God’s promise is, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Let that prayer be breathed by you as you realize the unfitness of the old heart for God to write upon!  
The old heart, then, being put out of the question, there is a new heart produced by the Holy Spirit. Transcending the greatest wonders in Nature is this bestowment of a new heart! You know, dear Friends, that a tree, if it has had some of its branches cut off, may grow new branches and there are some crustaceous animals which, when they lose a claw or a foot, grow fresh ones—but you never heard of an animal losing its heart and then having a new one! The thing is impossible in Nature, but this wonder of wonders God works in us! He gives a new core to our very being, a fresh life-fountain to the whole of our existence!  
Well, when this new heart comes unto us, it must have something written on it. A heart with nothing on it would be too preposterous for imagination. Look at all God’s works—they all have something written on them. Even the black brow of tempest has God’s name of terror written upon it in letters of lightning. Do not the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of Armies? Is not the Eternal, Himself, mirrored in tempest upon the bosom of the stormy sea? Even the fields, whether they are white with winter’s snows or golden with autumn’s crown of glory, still bear the impression, either of Divine Power or of Divine Love. God has written the whole world over—there is not a slab in the great palace of creation which is left unsculptured. Everywhere there are great hieroglyphs which skillful men and initiated spirits love to read. And shall there be nothing on the heart, when God has taken the trouble to make it twice over, when He has made that heart new? If there were nothing on the heart, it would be no heart! A heart without something in it is just a dull, dead vacuum and not a fit heart for such a creature as man. What was the new heart made for—to what end and to what purpose—if it were not to bear some Divine inscription? The devil would soon attempt to write on it if God did not write. Is it not the very best way to keep a man from filling a bushel with chaff, to first fill it full of wheat? So, for God to write on the new heart—is not this the safest method to keep that heart pure for Himself, so that no word of the language of Hell shall be written there? If that heart were left empty, what would happen? Is it not written concerning the man’s house that was swept and garnished, that the evil spirit came back to it? Why? Because it was empty! If there had been a tenant in it—if the armed strong man had kept the house—the old tenant could not have gone back. And so, when God has thoroughly written out this whole of His Law upon the tablet of a sanctified heart, there will be no possibility that sin shall ever be written there! I know it is an incorruptible seed that cannot sin, because it is born of God, but that very thing which makes it an incorruptible seed—the very life that is in it—makes it swell, and grow, and germinate. As the heart is God’s heart, and a renewed heart, there must be God’s writing upon it. God does not send books into the world which are but blank paper. He does not produce as His Epistles that are to be known and read of all men, mere empty sheets! No, there must be upon the new heart some of the handwriting of God!  
Pray the Lord to give you new heart, poor Soul. Or if you have it already, ask Him to write upon it now. Say, in the words of that verse— *“There shall His sacred Spirit dwell,  
And deep engrave His Law—  
And every motion of our souls  
To swift obedience draw.”*  
NEXT, IS NOT THE NEW HEART THE VERY BEST PLACE IN WHICH TO WRITE THE LAW OF THE LORD?  
I cannot conceive of a better place to put it than in the new heart. A certain minister, preaching from the text, “Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You,” had three heads to his sermon. First the best thing, “Your Word.” Secondly, “in the best place—“have I hid in my heart.” Thirdly, for the best of purposes—“that I might not sin against You.” That is as a well-divided sermon! The heart is the best place, because, you know it is in his heart that a man carries his jewels. When Little-Faith was met down Dead Man’s Lane by those three villains, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but they did not steal his jewels. The reason was because he carried them in the casket of his heart. Some men wear their religion as men wear their hats—where it can be snatched by a thief, or be blown away by the winds of temptation, or be laid aside to suit their own convenience when they get into the devil’s drawing room. But the true Christian carries his religion in his heart. And as his heart is always safe in the very center of his being, so is his religion. Fair weather or foul weather, good company or bad company—it is all the same. In closing markets or the winning market— whether men cry, “Hallelujah” and, “Hosanna”—or whether they cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” the man is still the same because he has his principles in his heart, which is the best place for God’s Law.  
Putting the Law of the Lord into the heart signifies that it is put where it will be loved and where it will control the whole man. If you can put a thing into a man’s heart, you have put it at the very center of his being. We have heard of a certain shepherd who had a flock of sheep in a meadow. A stream of water that ran through the meadow was very foul and muddy, so the shepherd dug some new channels. But after he had dug them, the water was still not very clear. He cleared out the channels again and again, but still, after a little while, the water was again impure. It was better than it had been before, when flowing through the muddy channel, but still it was not such as he wished it to be. At last, someone said to him, “Why do you not clear the water up upon the hill? There is a mass of mud and filth there and the water comes down the hillside laden with all this impurity. Purify it there, purify it near the fountainhead.” So, when man gets purified at the fountain—when he gets the Law of the Lord in his heart—then it is that he is sure to be all right as to the streams of his actions. You cannot put the Law of God, then, in a better place than in the heart, because there it will be preserved—and there it will influence the entire man. Lord, grant to me and to mine, that we may have Your Law thus safely locked up in the golden casket of a renewed heart.  
Still, it must be admitted that IT IS VERY HARD TO WRITE ON HEARTS.  
That same old poet whom I quoted just now, Quarles—pictures God as saying—  
*“What I indite  
‘Tis I alone can write  
And write in books that I Myself have made. ‘Tis not an easy trade  
To read or write in hearts.  
They that are skillful in all other arts  
When they take this in hand  
Are at a stand.”*  
It is not easy to read hearts and it is still harder work to write on hearts. We can sometimes write on people’s heads—that is comparatively easy. You may get a thing into the intellect. you may get it into the brains by sheer dunning and argument—but to get things into the heart is not so very easy—  
*“He that’s convinced against his will  
Is of the same opinion still”—*  
and, though convinced, he still goes on in the same path, pursuing the thing which he knows to be his own worst enemy. There are no slaves like those who serve their enemies and those are the greatest slaves who are slaves to their own soul-destroying lusts. It is not an easy thing to write on hearts. When there are many conversions, certain simpletons are apt to think that there is something in the preacher to account for them. Suppose someone had gone to that ancient battlefield and had picked up the stone with which David smote Goliath’s head, and said, “Well, it must be a very wonderful stone that could have killed a giant”? And then, after turning it round, and looking at

it a little while, he would say that it was very much like any other smooth stone that might be put in a sling. And very likely he would throw it down in contempt and think nothing of it.  
Well, that is how some people do with God’s ministers. They first say, “Well, there are so many conversions. The preacher must be a very wonderful man.” And then they find him wonderfully like any other common-place talker and so they think nothing of him. Ah, simpleton! Do you not know that it is not the stone, but the sling, and not even the sling, but the God who directs the stone to the giant’s brow? And so it is not the man, but the man’s Master—and it is the Spirit of God that makes the Word effectual. But what would you think if that stone should talk thus, “Oh, what a fine stone am I! I killed you, Goliath! What a fine stone am I! The daughters of Jerusalem ought to rejoice over me in the dance, and they ought to ‘sound the loud timbrel’ and say, ‘Glory be unto you’, O Stone, for you have smitten the giant’s brow”? What would the Angel of Wisdom say but, “O foolish pebble of the brook! Son of the dirt and of the dark and miry sea! There is nothing in you any more than in your fellow stones that slept with you in the flowing crystal! Had David picked any other stone, the work would have been done just as well and, inasmuch as he chose you, boast not of yourself as though there were anything in you.”  
Beloved, when you and I are privileged to do anything for Christ, let us remember that we are only like the poor stone out of the brook—that there is nothing in it—and that unto God must be all the glory. This writing upon hearts is hard work. I confess that I never could—and I never expect to be able to write God’s holy Law on a human heart. No, Beloved, the heart is locked up too tightly for us to get at it. But God has the key and He opens it as a man would do his own writing desk. And He knows how to open the sheets, one after another, and begin to write with His own pen the blessed Commandments of His new and perfect Law. Jesus is the great Writer, for Jesus knows hearts! He is Divine and Omniscient and, therefore, He knows hearts. And He is a Man—every pang that rends the heart has rent His heart. He had a pierced heart and there was a terrible writing upon His heart when the spear wrote there this great word—“WRATH”—“the wrath of God on account of sin.” He knows what heart-writing means. Deep on His heart are inscribed His people’s names. He understands heart-writing and He can do for His disciples what has been done in Him. He has such a gentle hand, such loving fingers, such a great heart to move that hand, that He is the great Heart-Writer and there is none that can match Him in writing upon human hearts!  
Further, WHEN GOD WRITES UPON THE HEART, HE WRITES BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT AND USES HIS WORD AS THE PEN.  
There are several pens that God uses and one is His Written Word. This is a gold pen with a diamond point. It is marvelous how God can sometimes write on the heart with a text of Scripture, a promise, a threat, a word of doctrine, of exhortation, or of rebuke. When He writes with that diamond pen, there is never any mistake, never any scratching or catching in the paper—all is well written!  
Then He sometimes writes on human hearts by His ministers. Mr. John Berridge once preached a sermon upon a different text from mine, but I may quote from his sermon. He says that ministers are like pens. There are some University ministers, he says, and they try to make them the same as people make steel pens nowadays—they make them by the gross! And though they have their excellences and many of them are highly educated men, yet they also have their deficiencies. John Berridge compared himself to an old goose quill. He said that he could not make such fine lady-like up-strokes as the University steel pens could, but he thought that God often made heavier down-strokes on the heart by him than He ever did by the University gentlemen. And that is the case with some of us. We have to be nibbled several times before we are fit to write with at all—and when we do write, we sometimes make a sorry blotch of it—yet the Lord does help us, rough and ready as we are, to make some heavy down-strokes on the sinner’s conscience. And if this is done, it is a reason for thankfulness and we will bless the Lord for it! Pens, however, must sometimes be sharpened—and so ministers must sometimes feel the sharp knife of affliction so as to make them more fit to preach God’s Word.  
Need I remind you, Beloved, that a pen cannot write of itself? Just take that pen and lay it down on the paper. Can that pen write, “Paradise Lost?” Why, it cannot even stir! It cannot write a single letter of the alphabet, much less can it write a poem! And so is it with the minister— he can write no Truths of God in the sinner’s heart and conscience unless his Master holds him in His hands—but when the Master begins to write, oh, then, how well it is done, and how the white paper of the new heart receives the Divine handwriting and it remains indelibly there!  
Neither would it be any use for writing even if it were the best pen in the world—without ink. And the analogy in this case is with the Holy Spirit. The minister must be dipped in this ink. He must have the Holy Spirit with him, or else it is no matter what he may be—he may be a goose-quill, or he may be the polished steel. He may have been wellsharpened, he may have written much in his time, but he can write nothing without the ink. Mr. Joseph Irons used to pray, as he went to his pulpit, “Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for an unction from on high!” And I think this may be the preacher’s prayer whenever he goes to preach, “Oh, for an unction from on high! Oh, for much of this Divine ink—much of the Holy Spirit!”  
Surely we may praise and bless the Lord whenever we see His Law written upon a human heart because it is God’s Law, because it is God who wrote it and because it is the Spirit of God who is the Agent, through the Word, by whom that writing is put there! Let us join in hearty thanksgiving to Father, Son and Spirit, the Covenant-keeping God who writes His Law in our hearts!  
And it may be well to make a special note of this fact—IT IS GOD’S LAW WHICH IS WRITTEN UPON THE NEW HEART.  
I do not think it is the Law as it stands in the letter, either in Exodus or in Deuteronomy, but it is the spirit of the Law that is written upon the Christian’s heart. With regard to the Law as a letter, we may say, “The letter kills.” It is the spirit, the essence of the Law, which the Christian is to mind and which is written on his heart. Under the old Law, the Jew was often put to much inconvenience. For instance, the Law of the Sabbath, as it then stood, was, “In it you shall do no manner of work.” Now, some Christians read it in that way even to this day—but when the Savior was on earth, His disciples rubbed the ears of corn together in the fields and ate thereof, on the Sabbath. The Pharisees complained of this, but the Savior replied to them that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was never meant to be a fixed and tight bond to crush us and make us feel like slaves during the time it lasted. It was made for our use, to be devoted to the best and highest of purposes. The Pharisees would never have healed anybody on the Sabbath—that, they thought, was dreadfully wicked! But Jesus Christ hallowed the Sabbath by acts of mercy. And now He gives to the Christian a day of rest, not, indeed, such a day of rest as it was to the Jew, but He gives us this that we may perform works of mercy, works of piety and works for necessary uses. These we do perform and when we do, there are some who cry out that such-and-such a Christian is not a Sabbatarian! No, and the Christian has no need to be! His Law of the Sabbath is not the old Law, as he finds it in Deuteronomy or Exodus, but the Law of the Sabbath as he finds it according to Christ—which is this— that the day is a day of rest and holy pleasure. A day in which we are to serve God with all our might and any kind of work which is wholly God’s work—and in which we can serve God—is a work which we are permitted—no, which we are enjoined to perform!  
So it is with all the Law. The Christian does not go back to the Law of Moses and say, “I feel very angry. I should like to know whether I may kill my brother.” No, he has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to kill anybody. He knows that he that is angry with his brother is a murderer, so he turns around and says, “I forgive you. I forgive you freely.” Sometimes persons come and ask us questions which involve some degree of lust, but a Christian has the Law of God in his heart and he does not want to know whether this and that may be permitted as a sin of the flesh, but he remembers that, “whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” and so he spurns the sin. The Law written on his heart is enough for him and he delights in the Law of God after the inward plan, without needing to go to the letter, the killing letter—and reading in that the condemnation of offenses rather than the promptings of holy motives! The Law of God is perfect! Let us say nothing against it. But it is not so glorious as the Law which Christ has brought in and which He exhibited in His own Person. The glory of the Law was great, but the glory of Christ’s Gospel is far greater! Remember, Christian, that there is to be written on your heart the whole of God’s Law, but it is the spirit of that Law—not the letter of it—which is to be written there. And what that spirit is, you know, for our great Teacher epitomized it in one word, and that one word is “LOVE.” Love that furnishes the impulse while it prescribes the duty.  
The man who has God’s Law written in his heart will go right without a book—he will go right without having somebody at his elbow to nudge him. And why will he go right? Why does the steam engine go? Because it has steam within it and the proper machinery—so it must go. You do not see 20 horses dragging a steam engine along, do you? There are some folks who want to make laws to make other people good. That is not the way in which Scripture goes to work. Scripture just alters the man’s heart, puts new machinery in him and the heavenly steam—and then he cannot help going right! You are not to have a Law with 20 policemen behind it to drag a man to do right—that is not the thing to do. The man must be renewed by Divine Grace and made a new creature in Christ Jesus—and then, by the force and strength of that new nature, the Law being written in his heart—he hates that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. Some people cannot understand this. They know that they will not, themselves, do what is right unless they are flogged to it—while they do what is wrong at every opportunity from an evil bias. But the Christian is different! He has been born-again and now he would need flogging to do evil! And even then he would not do it. But he needs no driving to that which is good, for the ways of God are his pleasure and the pleasures of sin he hates. May we all in this sense have the Law written on our hearts! And what will that Law be? Why, this word, “LOVE.” Love is the Law of the Gospel! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself.” This is the Law of the Christian, and this is the Law which is written on his heart! This is the sum and substance, the distilled essence of all the Ten Commandants. You may forget those Ten Commandments, O Believer, if you will but remember this new Law which is written on your heart, “Love, love, love!”  
Last of all, THE WRITING PRESERVES THE HEART AND THE HEART PRESERVES THE WRITING.  
Some of us who have a large correspondence sometimes have a grand burning. There are a lot of letters on my table, very possibly written by some of you, which will never get answered. But if people will write ten times as many as anybody can answer, they must not expect to get replies. Still, there they are, and sometimes there comes to be a general blaze—and while we are burning the letters up, every now and then we say, “Ah, I’ll keep that!” Why? Well, it is in the handwriting of somebody we loved, but who is now dead. And we say, “Yes, I’ll keep that. Just put that away in one of the pigeon-holes and there let it lie among the interesting letters.” So, when God comes at last to look at all the writing of the universe, there will be a general burning—but He will come to one heart, and He will say, “Yes, keep that, that has my Law written on it— and wherever I see my Law, I see my dear Son’s handwriting. He Himself died upon the Cross that this heart should not be burned. I will keep that.” If you have God’s Law written on your hearts, it will preserve you.  
So, too, the heart preserves the writing. The Pharaohs have written wonderful inscriptions in Egypt upon their stone tombs, yet some of these have become defaced through the lapse of years—  
*“Time has a mighty tooth,  
And bites the granite through.”*  
But when a thing is written upon an immortal heart, no time can change it! The heart that had God’s Law written on it years ago, still has it written there in the last expiring moments, as the Believer talks with his God upon his dying bed. The flesh has been committed to the grave, but the handwriting is not gone, for the heart on which it was written has soared aloft, and now it is before the eternal Throne of God! And when the sun has grown dim with age and the moon has waned never to wax again, and the stars have quenched their tiny lamps, when— *“The great globe itself,  
Yes, all which it inherits, shall dissolve  
And like this insubstantial pageant faded Leave not a rack behind”—*  
just as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever—when all the universe that God has made, except the Heaven which is to exist forever, shall have passed away, then the handwriting of God upon that heart will be as clear and as legible as it is now! Yes, and if you can fly on seraph’s wings far, far away, till time seems a spot too small to be discerned by the keenest eye. If you have sped on till God has made and destroyed as many worlds as there are grains of sand by the seashore. Till He has piled up and dashed to pieces, again, as many mighty universes as there are drops in the ocean—changeless even then—the imperishable writing of the Divine hand shall still glitter on the immortal, eternal hearts that God has made and quickened—that they might be the pillars on which He might write the memorial of His love and holiness! Oh, that my heart might have His writing on it! Brothers and Sisters, I pray that it may be the case with you and with all of us!  
But, remember, the old heart must be broken—and the place to get a new heart is at the foot of the Cross. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Whoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed.” He that trusts in Jesus builds upon a rock! He builds for eternity and his happiness shall be secure.  
The Lord send you away with His own blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #93 New Park Street Pulpit

GOD IN THE COVENANT  
NO. 93

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“I will be their God.”  
Jeremiah 31:33.**

WHAT a glorious Covenant the Second Covenant is! Well might it be called a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). It is so glorious that the very thought of it is enough to overwhelm the soul when it discerns the amazing condescension and Infinite Love of God in having framed a covenant for such unworthy creatures, for such glorious purposes, with such disinterested motives! It is better than the other covenant, the Covenant of Works, which was made with Adam. Or that covenant which is said to have been made with Israel, on the day when they came out of Egypt. It is better, for it is founded upon a better principle. The old covenant was founded on the principle of merit. It was, “Serve God and you shall be rewarded for it. If you walk perfectly in the fear of the Lord, God will walk well towards you and all the blessings of Mount Gerizim shall come upon you and you shall be exceedingly blessed in this world, and the world which is to come.” But that covenant fell to the ground, because, although it was just that man should be rewarded for his good works, or punished for his evil ones, yet man, being sure to sin, and since the Fall infallibly tending towards iniquity, the covenant was not suitable for his happiness, nor could it promote his eternal welfare. But the new covenant is not founded on works at all. It is a covenant of pure unmingled Grace. You may read it from its first word to its last and there is not a solitary syllable as to anything to be done by us! The whole Covenant is a covenant, not so much between man and his Maker, as between Jehovah and man’s Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. The human side of the covenant has been already fulfilled by Jesus, and there remains nothing, now, but the covenant of giving, not the covenant of requirements. The whole covenant with regard to us, the people of God, now stands thus—“I will give this, I will bestow that. I will fulfill this promise. I will grant that favor.” And there is nothing for us to do! He will work all our works in us. And the very Graces that are sometimes represented as being stipulations of the Covenant, are promised to us—He gives us faith. He promises to give us the Law in our inward parts, and to write it on our hearts. It is a glorious Covenant, I say, because it is founded on simple mercy and unmixed Grace—quite irrespective of creature-doings, or anything that is to be performed by man—and hence this Covenant surpasses the other in stability. Where there is anything of man, there is always a degree of mutability. Where you have anything to do with creatures, there you have something to do with change. For creatures and change, and uncertainty always go together. But since this New Covenant has now nothing whatever to do with the creature, so far as the creature has to do anything, but only so far as he is to receive—the idea of change is utterly and entirely gone. It is God’s Covenant and, therefore, it is an unchanging Covenant. If there is something which I am to do in the Covenant, then is the covenant insecure. And although happy as Adam, I may yet become miserable as Satan! But if the Covenant is all on God’s part, then if my name is in that Covenant, my soul is as secure as if I were now walking the golden streets! And if any blessing is in the Covenant, I am as certain to receive that blessing as if I already grasped it in my hands—for the promise of God is sure to be followed by fulfillment! The promise never fails. It always brings with it the whole of that which it is intended to convey and the moment I receive it by faith, I am sure of the blessing, itself! Oh, how infinitely superior is this Covenant to the other in its manifest security! It is beyond the risk or hazard of the least uncertainty!

But I have been thinking for the last two or three days, that the Covenant of Grace excels the other Covenant most marvelously in the mighty blessings which it confers. What does the Covenant of Grace convey? I had thought, this morning, of preaching a sermon upon, “The Covenant of Grace. What are the blessings it gives to God’s children?” But when I began to think of it, there was so much in the Covenant, that if I had only read a catalog of the great and glorious blessings wrapped up within its folds, I would have needed to occupy nearly the whole of the day in making a few simple observations upon each of them! Consider the great things God has given in the Covenant of Grace. He sums them up by saying He has given “all things.” He has given you eternal life in Christ Jesus. He has given Christ Jesus to be yours. He has made Christ heir of all things and He has made you joint-heir with Him. And hence He has given you everything! Were I to sum up that mighty mass of unutterable treasure which God has conveyed to every elect soul by that glorious Covenant, time would fail me! I therefore commence with one great blessing conveyed to us by the Covenant of Grace and then, on other Sabbaths, I will, by Divine permission, consider separately, one by one, sundry other things which the Covenant conveys.

We commence, then, by the first thing, which is enough to startle us by its immense value! In fact, unless it had been written in God’s Word, we could never have dreamed that such a blessing could have been ours! God, Himself, by the Covenant of Grace, becomes the Believer’s own portion and inheritance—“I will be their God.”

And now we shall begin with this subject in this way. We shall show you, first, that this is a special blessing. God is the special possession of the elect, whose names are in the Covenant of Grace. Secondly, for a moment or two we shall speak of this as being an exceedingly precious blessing—“I will be their God.” Thirdly, we shall dwell upon the security of this blessing—“I will be their God.” And fourthly we shall endeavor to stir you up to make good use of this blessing, so freely and liberally conveyed to you by the Everlasting Covenant of Grace—“I will be their God.”

Stop just one moment and think it over before we start. In the Covenant of Grace, God, Himself, conveys Himself to you and becomes yours. Understand it—God—all that is meant by that word—eternity, infinity, Omnipotence, Omniscience, perfect justice, Infallible rectitude, Immutable Love—all that is meant by God—Creator, Guardian, Preserver, Governor, Judge—all that, that great word, “GOD,” can mean—all of goodness and of love, all of bounty and of Grace—all that, this Covenant of Grace gives you, to be your absolute property as much as anything you can call your own—“I will be their God.” We say, pause over that thought. If I should not preach at all, there is enough in that, if opened up and applied by the all-glorious Spirit, to excite your joy during the whole of the Sabbath—“I will be their God.”

*“My God! How cheerful is the sound!  
How pleasant to repeat!  
Well may that heart with pleasure bound, Where God has fixed His seat.”*

I. HOW IS GOD ESPECIALLY THE GOD OF HIS OWN CHILDREN? For God is the God of all men, of all creatures. He is the God of the worm, of the flying eagle, of the star and of the cloud. He is God everywhere. How, then, is He more my God and your God than He is God of all created things? We answer, that in some things God is the God of all His creatures. But even there, there is a special relationship existing between Himself and His chosen creatures, whom He has loved with an everlasting love. And in the next place, there are certain relationships in which God does not exist towards the rest of His creatures, but only towards His own children.

1. First then, God is the God of all His creatures, seeing that He has the right to decree to do with them as He pleases. He is the Creator of us all—He is the Potter, and has power over the clay, to make of the same lump, one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. However men may sin against God, He is still their God in that sense—that their destiny is immovably in His hands—that He can do with them exactly as He chooses. However they may resent His will, or spurn His good pleasure, yet He can make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder of that wrath He can restrain! He is the God of all creatures, absolutely so in the matter of Predestination, seeing that He is their Creator and has an absolute right to do with them as He wills. But here again He has a special regard to His children and He is their God even in that sense. For to them, while He exercises the same Sovereignty, He exercises it in the way of Grace and Grace, only. He makes them the vessels of mercy, who shall be to His honor forever. He chooses them out of the ruins of the Fall and makes them heirs of everlasting life, while He allows the rest of the world to continue in sin and to consummate their guilt by well-deserved punishment. And thus, while His relationship is the same, as far as His Sovereignty is concerned and His right of decree, there is something special in its loving aspect towards His people. And in that sense He is their God.

Again—He is the God of all His creatures in the sense that He has a right to command obedience of all. He is the God of every man that was ever born into this earth, in the sense that they are bound to obey Him. God can command the homage of all His creatures because He is their Creator, Governor and Preserver. And all men are, by the fact of their creation, so placed in subjection to Him, that they cannot escape the obligation of submission to His laws. But even here, there is something special in regard to the child of God. Though God is the ruler of all men, yet His rule is special towards His children, for He lays aside the sword of His rulership and in His hand He grasps the rod for His child, not the sword of punitive vengeance! While He gives the world a Law upon stone, He gives to His child a law in his heart. God is my Governor and yours, but if you are unregenerate, He is your governor in a different sense from what He is mine. He has ten times as much claim to my obedience as He has to yours. Seeing that He has done more for me, I am bound to do more for Him! Seeing that He has loved me more, I am bound to love Him more! But should I disobey, the vengeance on my head shall not fall so heavily as on yours, if you are out of Christ, for that vengeance incurred by me has already fallen upon Christ, my Substitute. Only the chastisement shall remain for me—so that there, again, you see where the relationship to all men is universal, there is something special in it in reference to God’s children.

Again—God has a universal power over all His creatures in the character of a Judge. He will “judge the world in righteousness and His people with equity.” He will judge all men with equity, it is true, but as if His people were not of the world, it is added afterwards, “His people with equity.” God is the God of all creatures, we repeat, in the sense that He is their Judge. He will summon them all before His bar and condemn or acquit them all, but even there, there is something peculiar with regard to His children. For to them, the condemnation sentence shall never come, but only the acquittal. While He is Judge of all, He especially is their Judge—because He is the Judge whom they love to reverence, the Judge whom they long to approach because they know His lips will confirm that which their hearts have already felt—the sentence of their full acquittal through the merits of their glorious Savior! Our loving God is the Judge who shall acquit our souls, and in that respect we can say He is our God! So, then, whether as Sovereign, or as Governor enforcing law, or as Judge punishing sin—although God is, in some sense, the God of all men, yet in this matter there is something special towards His people, so that they can say, “He is our God, even in those relationships.”

2. But now, Beloved, there are points to which the rest of God’s creatures cannot come—and here the great center of the matter lies—here the very soul of this glorious promise dwells! God is our God in a sense with which the unregenerate, the unconverted, the unholy, can have no acquaintance—in which they have no share whatever! We have just considered other points with regard to what God is to man, generally. Let us now consider what He is to us, as He is to none other.

First then, God is my God, seeing that he is the God of my election. If I am His child, then has He loved me from before all worlds and His Infinite Mind has been exercised with plans for my salvation! If He is my God, He has seen me when I have wandered far from Him and when I have rebelled. His mind has determined when I shall be arrested—when I shall be turned from the error of my ways. He has been providing the means of Grace for me. He has applied those means of Grace in due time, but His everlasting purpose has been the basis and the foundation of it all! And thus He is my God as He is the God of none else beside His own children! He is My glorious, gracious God in eternal Election, for He thought of me and chose me from before the foundation of the world, that I should be without blame before Him in love! Looking back, then, I see Election’s God, and Election’s God is my God if I am in Election. But if I fear not God, neither regard Him, then He is another man’s God and not mine. If I have no claim and participation in Election, then I am compelled to look upon Him as being, in that sense, the God of a great body of men whom He has chosen, but not my God. But if I can look back and see my name in life’s fair book set down, then, indeed, He is my God in Election!

Furthermore, the Christian can call God His God from the fact of his Justification. A sinner can call God, God, but he must always put in an adjective and speak of God as an angry God, an incensed God, or an offended God. But the Christian can say, “my God,” without putting in any adjective except it is a sweet one wherewith to extol Him, for now we, who were sometime afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ. We who were enemies to God by wicked works are His friends and, looking up to Him, we can say, “my God,” for He is my Friend, and I am His friend. Enoch could say, “my God,” for he walked with Him. Adam could not say, “my God,” when he hid himself beneath the trees of the garden. So that while I, a sinner, run from God, I cannot call Him mine. But when I have peace with God and am brought near to Him, by His Grace, then, indeed, is He my God and my Friend!

Again—He is the Believer’s God by Adoption, and in that the sinner has no part. I have heard people represent God as the Father of the whole universe. It surprises me that any reader of the Bible should so talk. Paul once quoted a heathen poet who said that we are His offspring. And it is true, in some sense, that we are, as having been created by Him. But in the high sense in which the term, “childhood,” is used in the Scripture to express the holy relationship of a regenerate child towards his Father—in that sense none can say, “Our father,” but those who have the, “Abba, Father,” printed on their hearts by the Spirit of Adoption. Well, by this Spirit of Adoption, God becomes my God, as He is not the God of others. The Christian has a special claim to God, because God is his Father, as He is not the Father of anyone else save his Brethren. Yes, Beloved, these three things are quite enough to show you that God is, in a special sense, the God of His own people. But I must leave that to your own thoughts, which will suggest 20 different ways in which God is especially the God of His own children, more than He is of the rest of His creatures. “God,” say the wicked, but, “my God,” say God’s children! If, then, God is so especially your God, let your clothing be according to your feeding. Be clothed with the Sun—put on the Lord Jesus! The king’s daughter is (and so let all the king’s sons, be) all glorious within. Let their clothing be of worked gold. Be clothed with humility, put on love, a hear of compassion, gentleness, meekness. Put on the garments of salvation! Let your company and conversation be according to your clothing. Live among the excellent, amongst the generation of the just. Get up to the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, to that innumerable company of angels and the spirits of the just men made perfect. Live in the courts of the great King, behold His face, wait at His Throne, bear His name, show forth His virtues! Set forth His praises, advance His honor, uphold His interest. Let vile persons and vile ways be condemned in your eyes—be of more noble spirits than to be companions with them! Regard not their societies, nor their scorns, their flatteries or their frowns. Rejoice not with their joys, fear not their fears, care not their care, feed not on their dainties—get up from among them to your country, your city, where no unclean thing can enter or annoy! Live by faith, in the power of the Spirit, in the beauty of holiness, in the hope of the Gospel, in the joy of your God, in the magnificence and yet the humility of the children of the great King!

II. Now, for a moment, let us consider THE EXCEEDING PRECIOUSNESS OF HIS GREAT MERCY, “I will be their God.” I conceive that God Himself could say no more than that. I do not think if the Infinite were to stretch His powers and magnify His Grace by some stupendous promise which could outdo every other—I do not believe that it could exceed in glory this promise, “I will be their God.” Oh, Christian, do but consider what it is to have God to be your own! Consider what it is, compared with anything else—

*“Jacob’s portion is the Lord!  
What can Jacob more require?  
What can Heaven more afford —  
Or a creature more desire?”*

Compare this portion with the lot of your fellow men ! Some of them have their portion in the field. They are rich and increased in goods and their yellow harvests are, even now, ripening in the sun. But what are harvests compared with your God, the God of Harvests? Or, what are granaries compared with Him who is your Husbandman and feeds you with the Bread of Heaven? Some have their portion in the city—their wealth is superabundant and in constant streams it flows to them until they become a very reservoir of gold! But what is gold compared with your God? You could not live on it—your spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Apply it to your aching head and would it afford you any ease? Put it on a troubled conscience—could your gold relive its pangs? Put it on your desponding heart and see if it could stop a solitary groan, or give you one less grief? But you have GOD—and in Him you have more than gold or riches ever could buy, more than heaps of brilliant ore could ever purchase for you! Some have their portion in this world, in that which most men love—applause and fame—but ask yourself, is not your God more to you than that? What if a thousand trumpets should blow your praises and if a myriad clarions should be loud with your applause? What would it all be to you if you had lost your God? Would this relieve the turmoil of a soul ill at ease with itself? Would this prepare you to pass the Jordan and to breast those stormy waves which, before long, must be forded by every man, when he is called from this world to lands unknown? Would a puff of wind serve you, then, or the clapping of the hands of your fellow creatures bless you on your dying bed? No, there are griefs, here, with which men cannot intermeddle—and there are griefs to come with which men cannot interfere to alleviate the pangs, pains, agonies and dying strife! But when you have this—“I will be your God”—you have as much as all other men can have put together! How little we ought to estimate the treasures of this world, compared with God, when we consider that God frequently gives the most riches to the worst of His creatures! As Luther said, “God gives food to His children, and husks to His swine”—and who are the swine that get the husks? It is not often that God’s people get the riches of this world—and that does but prove that riches are little worth, otherwise God would give them to us! Abraham gave the sons of Keturah a portion and sent them away. Let me be Isaac and have my Father—and the world may take all the rest! Oh, Christian, ask for nothing in this world but that you may live on this and that you may die on this—“I will be their God. This exceeds all the world has to offer!

But compare this with what you require, Christian . What do you require? Is there not here all that you require? To make you happy, you wanted something that would satisfy you. And come, I ask you, is not this enough? Will not this fill your pitcher to its very brim, yes, till it runs over? If you can put this promise inside your cup, will you not be forced to say, with David, “My cup runs over. I have more than heart can wish”? When this is fulfilled, “I am your God,” let your cup be ever so empty of earthly things—suppose you have not one solitary drop of creature joy— yet is not this enough to fill it until your unsteady hand cannot hold the cup by reason of its fullness? I ask you if you are not complete when God is yours? Do you need anything but God? If you think you do, it were well for you to still need, for all you need, without God, is but to gratify your lust. Oh, Christian, is not this enough to satisfy you if all else should fail?

But you want more than quiet satisfaction, you sometimes desire rapturous delight. Come, Soul, is there not enough here to delight you? Put this promise to your lips—did you ever drink wine one-half as sweet as this, “I will be their God”? Did ever harp or violin sound half as sweetly as this, “I will be their God”? Not all the music blown from sweet instruments, or drawn from living strings could ever give such melody as this sweet promise, “I will be their God.” Oh, here is a very sea of bliss, a very ocean of delight! Come, bathe your spirit in it—you may swim, yes, to eternity—and never find a shore! You may dive to the very Infinite and never find the bottom. “I will be their God.” Oh, if this does not make your eyes sparkle, if this does not makes your feet dance for joy and your heart beat high with bliss, then, assuredly, your soul is not in a healthy state!

But then you want something more than present delights, something concerning which you may exercise hope. And what more do you ever hope to get than the fulfillment of this great promise, “I will be their God”? Oh, Hope, you are a great-handed thing! You lay hold of mighty things which even Faith has not power to grasp. But though your hand may be large, this fills it, so that you can carry nothing else! I proclaim, before God, I have not a hope beyond this promise! “O,” you say, “you have a hope of Heaven.” Yes, I have a hope of Heaven, but this is Heaven—“I will be their God.” What is Heaven, but to be with God, to dwell with Him, to realize that God is mine, and I am His? I say I have not a hope beyond that, there is not a promise beyond that—for all promises are couched in this, all hopes are included in this, “I will be their God.” This is the masterpiece of all promises! It is the top stone of all the great and precious things which God has provided for His children, “I will be their God.” If we could really grasp it. If it could be applied to our soul and we could understand it, we might clap our hands and say, “Oh, the glory! Oh, the glory! Oh, the glory of that promise!” It makes a Heaven below and it must make a Heaven above, for nothing else will be needed but that, “I will be their God.”

III. Now, for a moment, dwell on the CERTAINTY OF THIS PROMISE. It does not say, “I may be their God,” but “I will be their God.” Nor does the text say, “Perhaps I shall be their God.” No, it says, “I will be their God.” There is a sinner who says he won’t have God for His God. He will have God to be his Preserver, to take care of him and keep him from accidents. He does not object to having God to feed him, to give him his bread and water and raiment. Nor does he mind making God somewhat of a show thing, that he may take out on Sunday and bow before it—but he will not have God for his God—he will not take Him to be his All! He makes his belly his god, gold his god, the world his god. How, then, is this promise to be fulfilled? There is one of God’s chosen people there. He does not know that he is chosen yet and he says he will not have God. How, then, is the promise to be carried out? “Oh,” say some, “if the man won’t have God, then, of course, God cannot get him.” And we have heard it preached, and we read it, frequently, that salvation entirely depends upon man’s will—that if man stands out and resists God’s Holy Spirit, the creature can be the conqueror of the Creator, and finite power can overcome the Infinite! Frequently I take up a book and I read, “Oh, Sinner, be willing, for unless you are, God cannot save you!” And sometimes we are asked, “How is it that such an one is not saved?” And the answer is, “he is not willing to be. God strived with him, but he would not be saved.” Yes, but suppose He had strived with him, as He did with those who are saved, would he have been saved, then? “No, he would have resisted.” No, we answer—it is not in man’s will, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood—but of the power of God! And we never can entertain such an absurd idea as man can conquer Omnipotence, that the might of man is greater than the Might of God! We believe, indeed, that certain usual influences of the Holy Spirit may be overcome. We believe that there are general operations of the Spirit in many men’s hearts which are resisted and rejected, but the effectual working of the Holy Spirit with the determination to save cannot be resisted—unless you suppose God overcome by His creatures and the purpose of Deity frustrated by the will of man—which were to suppose something akin to blasphemy! Beloved, God has power to fulfill the promise, “I will be their God.” “Oh,” cries the sinner, “I will not have You for a God!” “Will you not?” He says and He gives him over to the hand of Moses! Moses takes him a little and applies the club of the Law, drags him to Sinai, where the mountain totters over his head, the lightning flashes and thunders bellow—and then the sinner cries—“O God, save me!” “Ah! I thought you would not have Me for a God?” “O Lord, You shall be my God,” says the poor trembling sinner, “I have put away my ornaments from me. O Lord, what will You do to me? Save me! I will give myself to You. Oh, take me!” “Yes,” says the Lord, “I knew it. I said that I will be their God and I have made you willing in the day of My Power.” “I will be their God and they shall be My people.”

IV. Now, lastly, I said we would conclude by URGING YOU TO MAKE USE OF GOD, if He is yours. It is strange that spiritual blessings are our only possessions that we do not employ! We get a great spiritual blessing and we let the rust get on it for many a day. There is the Mercy Seat, for instance. Ah, my Friends, if you had the cash box as full of riches as that Mercy Seat is, you would go often to it! As often as your necessities require! But you do not go to the Mercy Seat half as often as you need to go. Most precious things God has given to us, but we never overuse them. The truth is, they cannot be overused! We cannot wear a promise thread-bare. We can never burn out the Incense of Grace. We can never use up the Infinite treasures of God’s loving kindness. But if the blessings God gives us are not used, perhaps God is the least used of all. Though He is our God, we apply ourselves less to Him than to any of His creatures, or any of His mercies, which He bestows upon us! Look at the poor heathen. They use their gods, though they are no gods. They put up a piece of wood or stone and call it, god—and how they use it! They need rain—the people assemble and ask for rain in the firm but foolish hope that their god can give it! There is a battle and their god is lifted up. He is brought out from the house, where he usually dwells, that he may go before them and lead them on to victory! But how seldom do we ask counsel at the hands of the Lord? How often do we go about our business without asking His guidance? In our troubles, how constantly do we strive to bear our burdens, instead of casting them upon the Lord, that He may sustain us? And this is not because we may not, for the Lord seems to say, “I am yours, Soul, come and make use of Me as you will. You may freely come to My store, and the oftener, the better. Welcome!”

Have you not a God lying by you to no Purpose? Let not your God be as other gods, serving only for a show. Have not God in name, only. Since He allows you—having such a Friend—use Him daily. My God shall supply all your needs—never need while you have a God. Never fear or faint while you have a God—go to your treasure and take whatever you need. There is bread and clothes, and health and life, and all that you need. O Christian, learn the Divine skill to make God all things—to make bread of your God, and water, and health, and friends, and ease. He can supply you with all these! Or what is better, He can be all these—your food, your clothing, your Friend, your Life. All this He has said to you in this one word, “I am your God.” And here you may say, as a Heaven-born saint once did, “I have no husband and yet I am no widow. My Maker is my Husband. I have no father or friend and yet I am neither fatherless nor friendless, my God is both my Father and my Friend. I have no child but is not He better to me than ten children? I have no house, but yet I have a home, I have made the Most High my habitation. I am left alone, but yet I am not alone, my God is good company for me. With Him I can walk. With Him I can take sweet counsel, find sweet repose. At my lying down, at my rising up, while I am in the house, or as I walk by the way, my God is always with me. With him I travel, I dwell, I lodge, I live and shall live forever.”

Oh, child of God, let me urge you to make use of your God! Make use of Him in prayer. I beseech you, go to Him often, because He is your God! If He were another man’s God, you might weary Him. But He is your God. If He were my God and not yours, you would have no right to approach Him, but He is your God! He has made Himself One to you, if we may use such an expression, (and we think we may). He has become the positive property of all His children, so that all He has and all He is, is theirs! O child, will you let your treasury lie idle, when you need it? Go! Go and draw from it by prayer—

*“To Him in every trouble flee,*

*Your best, your only Friend.”*  
Fly to Him, tell Him all your needs! Use Him constantly by faith, at all times. Oh, I beseech you, if some dark Providence has come over you, use your God as a sun, for He is a Sun! If some strong enemy has come out against you, use your God for a shield, for He is a Shield to protect you! If you have lost your way in the mazes of life, use Him as a Guide, for the great Jehovah will direct you! If you are in storms, use Him for the God who stills the raging of the sea and says unto the waves, “Be still.” If you are a poor thing, knowing not which way to turn, use Him for a Shepherd, for the Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not want! Whatever you are, wherever you are, remember God is just what you need and He is just where you need. I beseech you, then, make use of your God! Do not forget Him in your trouble, but flee to Him in the midst of your distresses, and cry—

*“When all created streams are dried  
Your fullness is the same!  
May I with this be satisfied,  
And glory in Your name!  
No good in creatures can be found  
But may be found in Thee!  
I will have all things, and abound,  
While God is God to me!”*

Lastly, Christian, let me urge you again to use God to be your delight this day. It you have trial, or if you are free from it, I beseech you, make God your delight. Go from this House of Prayer and be happy this day in the Lord. Remember it is a commandment, “Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, rejoice.” Do not be content to be moderately happy—seek to soar to the heights of bliss and to enjoy a Heaven below! Get near to God and you will get near to Heaven! It is not as it is with the sun, here— the higher you go, the colder you find it—because on the mountain there is nothing to reflect the rays of the sun. But with God, the nearer you go to Him, the brighter He will shine upon you and when there are no other creatures to reflect His goodness, His light will be all the brighter! Go to God continually, importunately, confidently! “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord and He shall bring it to pass.” Commit your way unto the Lord, and He shall “guide you by His counsel and afterwards receive you to Glory.”

Here is the first thing of the Covenant of Grace. The second is like unto it. We will consider that another Sabbath. And now may God dismiss you with His blessing. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2006 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

KNOWING THE LORD THROUGH PARDONED SIN  
NO. 2006

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 29, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

**“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord;  
for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” Jeremiah 31:34.**

TRUE knowledge of God is a Covenant blessing. To know Jehovah as the only living and true God, to know Him personally and intimately, so as to say with David, “You are my God”—this is one of the choice blessings of the Covenant of Grace which grace bestows upon all the chosen. In this prophecy Jehovah declares that He will yet give this knowledge to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. And this is our hope for the long-wandering seed of Abraham, whom He will yet restore and save.

If we regard the passage before us as instructive in its order, the knowledge of God follows closely upon the application of the Law to the heart. Read, “After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. And will be their God and they shall be My people . . . and they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord.” The work of grace usually begins, so far as we can perceive it, by the Holy Spirit’s bringing the Law into contact with the inner man. The Law outside of a man is forgotten. He may profess a reverence for it but it does not affect his desires and thoughts.

But when the Holy Spirit begins to put the Law into the inward parts, the immediate result is the discovery of our shortcomings and transgressions. The more the man’s heart sees the perfect holiness of the Law of God the more he perceives his own unholiness and impurity. He sets his own conduct in contrast with the Divine righteousness and he is overwhelmed with shame, sorrow and dismay. He feels that if God should mark iniquities he could not stand in His presence—more—that if the Lord at once condemned him, He would be just. Law-work is grace-work in its darker dress. It is the axe which rough-hews the timber which grace goes on to fashion and smooth.

By the operation of the Law upon the conscience, convincing the man of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, the Holy Spirit works towards the transforming of the heart. He takes away the stone out of it and makes it to be a fleshy, tender, sensitive thing. Then with His own finger He writes the Divine Law upon the mind and the affections so that the

Divine commands become the center of the man’s life and the governing force of his action. The man now loves that Law which before he, at his very best, only feared—it becomes his will to do the will of God. By a miracle of Divine Grace his nature is changed so that its tendencies, which were all towards evil are corrected by new tendencies which are all towards good.

Now is the Law of God indeed glorious, for it rules by love. It was terrible when written on those tablets of stone which Moses dashed to pieces. But its radiance is like that of a pearl most precious when it gently influences our manhood from the central throne of the heart. It is now written on a tablet which will endure throughout eternity, for it is engraved upon an immortal spirit. As the Law is written on the heart, a manifestation is made of God Himself. The man is made to know himself, to know God’s Law and thus he is led to know the Lord. Now he acquaints himself with God and is at peace.

Of this gracious knowledge of the Lord I am going to speak this morning. This is to be our first head—the one essential knowledge—“They all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord.” The second head equally arises out of the text—it is the one grand means of obtaining this essential knowledge. The text tells us how this knowledge is imparted by the Lord—“For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” When we receive pardon from the hands of God, then we know Him, indeed. For, as Zacharias said in his song, our Lord Jesus has come “to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins.”

I. To begin with, then, we have here, first of all, THE ONE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE. It is a great Truth of God that, “This is life eternal, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” To know God is to live in the light. This knowledge brings with it trust, peace, love, holiness and acceptance. Do not read this passage as some do and tear it up by its roots and then use it as if it were a prophecy of the universal spread of religion. Do not dream of a day when we shall not need to teach our brother and our neighbor the great Truths of our holy faith—at any rate, the text before us says nothing of the kind.

This prophecy is to be read as it stands and in its own connection. In the first place, as we have already said, it relates to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. At the present time these have forgotten the Lord as to a true spiritual worship of Him. For they have rejected the Messiah, in whose face God’s glory is seen—this nation is to be brought back to its best estate. Both portions of it shall be converted and shall come under a new Covenant of a very different tenor from that which their fathers so wantonly broke. The Lord will gather the remnant of Israel under a Covenant of Grace by which He will work in them those things which under the old Covenant He justly required of them.

Under this Covenant of Grace they are to have their hearts inscribed with His Law. Jehovah is to be their God and they are to be His people. Then shall they in very deed know the Lord as their fathers knew Him in the days of Elijah when the fire fell from Heaven and they cried, “Jehovah, He is the God. Jehovah, He is the God.” Whatever else these converts shall not know, they shall know Jehovah, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”

Refer the passage to the spiritual Israel, as you justly may and you learn that when God deals with men in a way of Divine Grace and impresses obedience upon their nature, then they all know Him—from the least of them unto the greatest of them. The universality of the text extends to all those who come under the New Covenant and are renewed in heart. These, without exception, know the Lord and there is no need that they be instructed upon that important point. These people know the Lord and never can forget Him—henceforth they are no more strangers to Him but sojourners with Him.

Let us consider this knowledge, that we may see what it is. And to begin with, it is emphatically the knowledge of God—“They shall all know Me.” They may not know everything about God. Who could? Who knows the Lord in that sense but the Lord Himself? Only the infinite can comprehend the infinite. The intellectual comprehension of the attributes of God is beyond us. How, then, could we grasp His essence? The regenerate, however, know the Lord, though they do not and cannot understand His incomprehensible glories. They may not know a great many things which they would like to know—critical, scientific, historical, theological, spiritual and eternal—but these matters are not spoken of in this place. One form of knowledge is mentioned, and only one—“They shall all know Me, says Jehovah.”

Observe that the Prophet speaks not of knowing facts about God, nor truths as to what God is, or has done, or will do—it is knowing God Himself. Do you not perceive the difference? I may know and I do know a great deal about a certain renowned person—say, if you please, Prince Bismarck. I have read his biography and I think I have some sort of an idea of his personal character—thus I know something about him. But if you were to ask me, “Do you know him?” I should at once answer, “No, I have not even seen him, I have never spoken with him, nor written to him, nor held any other communication with him. And therefore I cannot say that I know him.”

Now, if this solemn question were passed round these pews—“Do you know God?”—how would you answer it? Many would reply, “We have read the Scriptures and so we know the attributes of God and we remember with great reverence all that God has done and promised to do—but still we cannot say that we know Him. Can anyone say as much as that?” Let me break up the question—Have you ever spoken with God? Did He ever speak with you? Believers can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father.” Can you say that? Were you ever conscious of the Presence of God?

Has He ever manifested Himself to you in any special way?

Alas, many a very knowing man must honestly confess that he does not know the Lord in the sense contained in my questions. Even among professing Christians this may be sadly true. Even as Paul said to the Corinthians—“Awake to righteousness and sin not. For some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.” The knowledge here spoken of is to know the Lord Himself—not to know that there is a God and that Jehovah, alone, is God and that He is to be had in reverence of them that are round about Him. But to know Him. We have such a tendency to run away from the Personality of God. Take an instance—godly people say, “I know in whom I have believed.” But this is not what Paul said. He declared, “I know whom I have believed.” He knew the Person He trusted. He was personally acquainted with Jesus Christ.

This is true godliness—personal acquaintance with a personal God. This is a grand support of faith. One said to a Christian lady that he did not believe in the Scriptures and she replied that she believed in them and delighted to read them. When asked her reason, she replied, “Perhaps it is because I know the Author.” Personal acquaintance with God turns faith into assurance. The knowledge of God is the basis of a faith of the surest and sweetest kind—we know and have believed the love which God has towards us. Knowing God, we believe in the Truth of His Words, the justice of His sentences, the goodness of His acts, the wisdom of His purposes—yes—and the love of His chastisements.

When a renewed heart truly knows God, it has no further quarrel with Him, or with anything that He does or says. The cry is, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” Thus to know God is eternal life. Let us return to the question—Do we know the Lord? Hearken, my Hearers. Has the Lord ever been so near you as to make you say, “How dreadful is this place”? Did your flesh ever tremble and your lips quiver at His voice? Do you know the feeling which overcame the Prophet Habakkuk when he trembled in himself? Then I know that you are sure, beyond all other certainty of your previous life, that God is and that He deals with men. Do you know the Lord in this way? I put this question to each one.

Have you ever spoken to Him? Is it your habit to open your heart to Him? Do you tell Him all your secrets? I mean by this nothing bordering on fanaticism or superstition. But in sober earnestness, I ask—Is God real to you? Is He as real to you as she that lies in your bosom, or as the friend who walks with you by the way? Is the invisible God as real to you as any person that you can see, as much an actual fact as any substance which you can feel? Has the Lord ever spoken to your soul? I will not put any special question about the medium of that speech. It may be He has spoken through this Book, or through His minister, or by “a still small voice” within your soul—but has the Eternal One ever spoken with you?

O my Hearers, are you on speaking terms with your God? If not, you cannot be said to know Him. And if you do not know Him, you are not among the renewed in heart. For of them the Lord says in this Scripture, “They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”

Note, dear Friends, in the next place, that it is a personal knowledge. Each renewed person knows the Lord for himself. You cannot know God except for yourself. If I am asked whether I know such a person, it would be idle to answer, “Well, my brother knows him.” That would be an admission that I did not myself know him. If the question were repeated, “Do you know him?” it would be folly to reply, “Well, I have a cousin who sometimes dines with him.” That is not the question. So with regard to God. No second-hand knowledge can be admitted here. You cannot know God through other people.

And why should you wish to do so? Is not personal knowledge the most to be desired? Did not Job rejoice that when he should rise from the dead he should behold his Redeemer? And this was the essence of his joy— “Whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another.” He would not have wished to see his Redeemer with another’s eyes, nor that the vision should be his only by proxy. It is for our own lips to drink at the fountainhead of love and for our own eyes to look unto the Lord. No imaginary reception of grace by a sponsor can save, or even satisfy. You cannot see God with another man’s eyes. You cannot know God through another man’s knowledge. O my Hearers, you must yourselves be born again! You must yourselves be made pure in heart, or you cannot see God. Personal religion and individual knowledge of God are indispensable. Come, my Hearer, what have you to say to this?

Next, this knowledge is one which is worked in us by the Spirit of the Lord. It is the duty of every Christian man to say to his neighbor and to his brother, “Know the Lord.” It is the instinct of a new-born child of God to try and convey what he knows. God uses this effort as His instrumentality for saving men. But the man who really knows the Lord does not know Him solely by such instruction. This may be the means used but the knowledge obtained comes from a higher source than brother or neighbor.

All Zion’s children are taught of the Lord. They know God by His revealing Himself to them. You may know what the preacher can tell you and yet you may know nothing aright. You may know what this Book can tell you and yet if the Holy Spirit has not quickened you to perceive the living Truth within the Book, you know nothing truly. We may stand and preach, dear Friends, until our tongues are worn away and this inspired page may lie open before you until the ink is blanched and yet you, Hearers and Readers, may never know the Lord. Yes, I am sure you never will unless the Spirit shall show Him unto you.

You cannot know a man by hearing and reading of him—you must deal with himself. God, through Himself, must each one of you know. There is no other way of truly knowing Him. When Peter confessed Christ, you remember how the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you.” You may know a great deal intellectually by the teaching of men. But heart-knowledge—the knowledge which is peculiar to God’s elect—you can never receive except by the

teaching of the Lord. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “He shall teach you all things.” Is not that a fulfillment of the old promise, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord”? Those whom God teaches are taught, indeed. But neither nature, nor art, nor the will of man can supply the place of this heavenly instruction.

Beloved, true Believers know God because God has revealed Himself to them. Let me assure you the receivers of this personal teaching cannot be bamboozled by the doubts and denials of men. False prophets would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. But it is not possible that the elect should be deceived. For they have internal evidence which carnal reason cannot shake. They commune with the Most High God and the secret of the Lord is with them and consequently their hearts are fixed. What we have heard and seen, we testify—and if men receive not our witness it is none the less sure to our own hearts.

It is not possible for our faith to be destroyed, if it is indeed the work of the Holy Spirit. For that which God does shall be forever. The faith your mother gave you, your stepmother may take away from you. The religion which you inherited from your father may be sold off with the old furniture of the house—that which man gives, man may take away. But that which the Holy Spirit implants in us, all the devils in Hell cannot pluck up. It is not possible for all the powers of darkness to erase the inscription of the Spirit of God upon that heart which He has turned into flesh. Knowledge given by the Spirit is clear, definite, personal, assured, positive, and therefore, precious. We grow more and more persuaded as our experience ripens.

The Truth of God which has been burned into us as with a red hot iron by the operations of the Spirit of God becomes a vital portion of ourselves. Note carefully that this knowledge of God becomes manifest knowledge. It is so manifest that the most earnest workers who desire the conversion of their fellowmen no longer say to such a man, “Know the Lord”—for they perceive most clearly that he already possesses that knowledge—so as to be beyond the need of instruction upon that point.

There are many Truths of God, beloved Brethren, which I feel always bound to teach to you so long as I am the pastor of this flock. But if I had a company gathered here only of regenerated men and women, I should not think of saying to you, “Know the Lord.” For I should be sure that you all knew Him, from the least even to the greatest. We assume the presence of this knowledge when we preach to God’s people—we take it for granted that they know the Lord, and therefore, we do not again lay this foundation. A godly man’s life is such that we perceive that he knows the Lord.

The absence of this becomes equally clear in many of the ungodly. When men commit a crime, the indictment often runs, “not having the fear of God before his eyes.” You can tell when a man has not the fear of God before his eyes and you can tell when a man has that fear of God. Brethren, if you watch him and especially if you live with him, you will perceive when a person has a knowledge of God. A mighty something operates upon him, checking or stimulating, cheering or calming him. Hear him as he wrestles in prayer. Stand outside the door and you will soon perceive that an invisible One is with him. This unseen Somebody is Everybody to this man and you can see it.

Mark him when he gets into trade. He might take an unfair advantage. But he scorns it. Does he not want money? Yes, badly. But he has respect to One whom others cannot see. By a word of falsehood he might profit largely. He will not speak it. Why? “So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.” All who have been renewed in spirit and have had God’s Law written upon the fleshy tablets of their heart manifest to a greater or less degree that they know the Lord—and therefore their Brethren perceive it and cease to teach them what they are sure they know.

Next, this knowledge of God is universal among the regenerate. It is not universal among the sons of Adam, for multitudes know not God and have no dealings with Him! But all those who are under the Covenant of Grace know the Lord. Brethren, it would be a doubtful child that did not know its own father. All the boys and girls at home differ in knowledge. The big boy is going to the university soon and the eldest girl has taken a degree at the Oxford Examination. But yonder little child who does not know his letters yet, still knows his father, does he not?

Oh, how glad he is when Father comes home in the evening! Yes and God’s children know their Father. Moreover, we all know the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. Whatever else I do not know, I can say—

*“Jesus, my God, I know His name;*

*His name is all my trust”*  
We know Jesus Himself and dwell in Him! We also know the Spirit of God. He has opened our eyes. He is our Comforter. He it is that brings us near to God. Thus we know, personally, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is no exception to this rule in all the family of love. The Prophet says they shall all know Him, from the least to the greatest. That is to say, from the new-born Believer up to the full-grown saint—they all know the Lord.

The descriptions given may relate to their littleness or greatness in grace. Or they may refer to their littleness or greatness in ability, position, or usefulness. But they all know the Lord. The regenerate man with one talent knows the Lord. The man with ten talents boasts not of them but rejoices that he knows the Lord. This is the distinguishing mark of the regenerate—that they know the Lord. Every grace that the Spirit has worked in them shows this. Faith is the special mark of God’s people. But how shall they believe in Him whom they do not know? “They that know Your name will put their trust in You”—thus their knowledge of God is the basis of their faith in Him.

All God’s people love Him supremely. But we cannot love a God whom we do not know. In proportion as our knowledge increases towards God, our love to Him burns more and more brightly. God is our hope, our confidence, our expectation—but we can have no hope in an unknown God.

The knowledge of God lies at the bottom of every virtue and grace. The Lord God is our Friend. We hold high conversation with Him every day. We walk with Him. We delight in Him. He is our exceeding joy. This, in a large degree, is true of all those with whom the grace of God has dealt to bring them under His Covenant and to give them new hearts and right spirits—they all know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest.

II. And this leads me to the second point, whereon I ask your earnest attention—THE ONE GRAND MEANS OF OBTAINING THIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Here it is—“For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” Do you get the idea? The clearest knowledge of God comes out of pardoned sin. The most distinct, vivid, assured knowledge of Jehovah comes to us when our iniquity is blotted out and our sin is covered.

Just think a little. Without the pardon of sin it is not possible for us to know the Lord. We run away from Him. We do not want to know Him. Like father Adam we hide away among the trees of the garden. We do not desire to see our Maker, for we have offended Him. The thought of God is distasteful to every guilty man. It would be good news to him if he could be informed, on sure authority, that there was no God at all. He cannot know God, because his whole heart and mind and spirit are in such a state that he is incapable of knowing and appreciating the Holy One of Israel. Darkness covers the mind because sin has blinded the soul to all that is best and holy. The lover of sin does not know God and does not want to know Him.

While sin lies at the door, there is a difficulty on God’s part, too. How can He admit into an intimate knowledge of Himself the guilty man, as long as he is enamored of evil? Shall the great king entertain rebels? Shall two walk together, except they be agreed? “God is angry with the wicked every day.” He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Hence the guilty man is—by reason of his own impurity of nature and by reason of the holy nature of God—shut out from all knowledge of God.

Beyond this, an awful dread comes over the guilty mind, even when it begins to be awakened. Conscience testifies that God must punish sin. It matters not what controversy may be raised over that question— conscience, which makes cowards of us all—assures us that sin cannot go unpunished. I have heard a great many arguments about the future of the impenitent but I am sure of this—that God has ingrained it in our nature to believe that He will not spare the guilty. Down deep in the soul of the most hardened unbeliever there is that conviction. You have only to let him lie long enough on a sickbed and gaze into eternity and he is forced to confess it—whether he likes to do so or not.

Now, while that dread is on a man he does not want to know God and he even becomes incapable of knowing Him. But as the prodigal best knew his father when he had been received in love, so does man best know God when his sin is put away. When sin is forgiven, communion is commenced—sin is the great stone which lies at the door, and when this is rolled away, we enter in and see God. Beloved, we now speak of a matter which we have proved by experience—in the pardon of sin there is made to the pardoned man a clear and unmistakable revelation of God to his own soul. I venture to say that there is a clearer revelation of God to the individual in the forgiveness of his sin than can be found anywhere else.

God is to be seen in nature. Who among us would wish to question it? Walk abroad and look around you and above you and behold your God! But while men are under the dominion of sin, nature does not reveal God to them. Their eyes are blinded and they will not perceive Him. The most eminent students of nature have some of them remained without the discovery of a God. The same is true of Providence. God comes very close to many men by preserving their lives from imminent peril, or by providing them with things necessary in the moment of great need.

And yet we have known men living in the center of wondrous Providences and they have only thought themselves lucky fellows—or clever persons and so have traced God’s mercy to chance or self. And let me go a little further. The revelation which God has made in this Holy Book— though it is an eminently clear and heavenly revelation—does not bring the personal assurance to men which comes by pardon of sin. Many have read the Book from their childhood and know large portions of it by heart and yet they have never seen God in His own Word.

But let me tell you—if you have ever felt the guilt and burden of sin and God has come to you and brought you to the Savior’s feet—and you have looked up and seen the great Sacrifice and put your trust in Him and the Spirit has borne witness with your spirit that your sins and your iniquities have been forgiven you—then you know the Lord with emphasis and beyond all doubt. In such a discovery of the Godhead there is a joyful conviction, an absolute certainty, a more than mathematical demonstration. The knowledge of God received by a distinct sense of pardoned sin is more certain than knowledge derived by the use of the senses in things pertaining to this life.

This personal manifestation has about it a singular glory of overwhelming self-evidence. Did you ever notice, when reading the Scripture, how sometimes God makes the pardon of sin the proof of His Deity? In the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah you will see how God, through the Prophet, laughs at the false gods. He makes sport of the wooden deities. “The smith with the tongs both works in the coals and fashions it with hammers and works it with the strength of his arms. The carpenter stretches out his rule—he marks it out with a line.” All this is sacred sarcasm against the false gods. But when Jehovah comes to prove that He is the true God, what does He say?

Read verse 22 of that same chapter—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and as a cloud your sins—return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.” Here He does not quote the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor the working of miracles of power. But to a sinful people He makes this the master proof—“I have blotted out your sins.” Did any of the gods of the heathen forgive sins? These things that are made of carved work and gilt by the carpenter and the goldsmith—did they ever blot out iniquity? Did they ever pretend to do so? Jehovah’s Godhead is proved by His forgiveness of sin. And it is so proved to all who receive that pardon.

Look again and see how God calls men to Himself to receive salvation because He is God. See Isaiah 45:22—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.” He alone is God, and therefore they are bid to look to Him for salvation. As He proved His Godhead by salvation, so now He proves salvation by His Godhead. The two are bound up in one bundle. Let the burdened sinner see how they are joined together.

In the thirty-third chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, beginning in verse 11, let me read to you concerning Manasseh, who had shed innocent blood very much—“Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.” When Jehovah pardoned him, then the great sinner knew that Jehovah was God. There is no evidence like it. Infinite mercy personally received is a demonstration of the Godhead.

The Church of God, when she was in her praiseful frame of mind and full of joy—what do you think was her song? Micah 7:18-19 gives it to us—“Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities. And You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Hallelujah! Who is a God like unto You? We wonder more at the God of pardons than at the God of thunders. There is a more vivid apprehension of the Godhead in obtaining mercy than in beholding works of power.

Beloved, you must bear with me a minute or two while I speak upon this delightful theme. I should just like a week in which to preach from this text and then I should need another month. How a man sees God when he comes to know in his own soul the fullness of pardon intended by this matchless Word, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”! Can this be so? Does the Lord make a clean sweep of all my sins? Can it be that the Lord has cast them all behind His back? Has He blotted out the record which accused me? Has He cast my sin into the depths of the sea?

Hallelujah! He is a God indeed. This is a God-like act. O Jehovah! Who is like unto You? When I know my sins to be forgiven, I need no one to say to me, “Know the Lord”—the fullness of His pardon has made Him known. Mark, also, how freely out of His mere love, the Lord forgives and herein displays His Godhead! No payment on our part, of suffering or service, is required. The Lord pardons for His own name’s sake. He blots out sin because He delights in mercy. This is like a God. I know Him, I rejoice in Him, since He has so freely pardoned me.

When the soul comes to think of the method of mercy, it has a further knowledge of God. There is a great point in this. Conscience inquires—“If God forgives me, can He do it justly? Can He forgive consistently with His Character and His position as the great moral Governor?” We see that He has set forth a Propitiation—that He has provided a great Sacrifice by which He can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. Herein is wisdom. We spell over the Revelation, even the word Substitution—Jesus was made a curse for us. Then we cry out, “Oh, the wisdom of God!”

In the extraordinary plan of salvation by grace through Christ Jesus all the Divine attributes are set in a glorious light and God is made known as never before. Oh, the splendor of redeeming love! Does not every soul that knows the mystery of the Cross know the Lord? Jesus says, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Brethren, do not forget the great love which, when the plan was struck out, provided the august Person for the working out of that plan! “He spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all.” When I think that the God who was offended by sin was Himself the Sufferer on its account, my thoughts of God are raised far above any height to which the interesting facts of science have elevated them. As I see God in nature, I reverence Him. As I see him in Providence, I adore Him. As I see Him in Christ Jesus, pardoning my sin, I know Him.

If you just turn my text over a little, you will perceive another Truth—“I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” To my mind, the immutability of Divine pardon is one of the most brilliant facets of the diamond. Some think that God forgives but afterwards punishes— that you may be justified today but condemned tomorrow. Such is not the teaching of our text. God does not play fast and loose with pardon in that fashion. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” He will not recollect one of them. They are gone clean out of the Divine memory.

Of course it is a figure of speech—since in a certain sense God cannot forget. But as He says that He will not remember, I am content to believe Him. The Lord looks upon the forgiven one as if he had never sinned. Our debts are so fully paid by our Lord Jesus that there is not an account upon the file of omniscience against any pardoned one. God Himself cannot recall His people’s sin. He vows that He will remember it no more. Remember how the Lord has said, “In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none.

And the sins of Judah and they shall not be found—for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

If you know this irreversible pardon, my Brethren, you know the Lord better than you will ever know Him through gazing at the stars, or cutting through the rocks to the center of the globe. This, to you, is a manifestation of God of a more powerful and effectual sort than all that you will ever read of or hear of from your fellowmen. If the Lord God this morning not only permits me to speak to you but if He Himself by His own Spirit applies the pardoning blood of Jesus to you so that you enjoy a sense of reconciliation—this will put all Gospel matters beyond the shadow of a doubt.

If you are made by the Spirit to know that you are accepted in the Beloved—if a sense of that acceptance comes streaming into your soul just as yonder sunshine pours through that window, you will say to yourself, I do indeed know the Lord. That heavenly joy, that “peace of God” will bring to you a full assurance which nothing can disturb. Arguments, words, reasons—these are all the froth of the pot. But real contact with God and conscious enjoyment of the peace-giving power of the Holy Spirit—these are solid food for souls. If God deals with you, my Brother and you know Him, this is sure knowledge.

Neither time with its lapse, nor suffering with its fret, nor doubt with its venom, nor death with its terrors can take from you that certainty of faith which comes with the pardon of sin. If you do not know the Lord by His personal manifestation of Himself in pardoning your sin, I do not wonder that you are easily turned about by every wind of doctrine. But if you do know the Lord by His appearing to you in Divine Grace, you are beyond the short-range guns of the enemy. Our memories must fail us and our senses must leave us before we can doubt the glorious Godhead of our Jehovah.

We may be beaten in argument by the sophistries of the new theologians. But we cling to the facts of our experience and cannot be parted from them. When the God of the Old Testament is decried, we glory in Him, saying, “He has pardoned my sin and thus He has proved Himself to be God, indeed.” Our opponents may turn round and say, “That is no argument to us.” We only reply, “We dare say it is not. But it is argument enough for us and we must leave you to judge for yourselves. If you will not believe our testimony, we are clear.”

May the Lord renew to our souls, from day to day, our sense of pardoned sin and we shall be happily established in His faith and fear, whatever others may have to say. Oh, how I desire that all my hearers may seek and find this sin-pardoning God in Christ Jesus! Look to your Savior hanging on the tree, bearing the curse that you might be blessed. Look, I say and you also shall know the Lord. The Lord help you—Amen and amen.

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SEALED AND OPEN EVIDENCES  
NO. 2297

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase, which is sealed, and this deed which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days.” Jeremiah 32:14.**

THE discourse of this evening is suggested by the transaction of Jeremiah with his uncle’s son in the purchase of a field at Anathoth which he conducted in a business-like and legal way. I will begin with just a few remarks upon the transaction itself.

Jeremiah was called to forego the comforts of the present for the blessings of the future. He was a poor man and he was shut up in prison. A little money must have been a very great thing to him at such a time—even food could not be purchased during the siege except at fabulous prices— and his allowance was very small. Yet he paid down 17 shekels of silver— not a great sum in itself, but very great to him in such circumstances—to buy the field which, as I said in the exposition, he could not go and see, for he was a prisoner, and which he could not have reached even if he had been free, for it was in the hand of the Chaldeans and laid desolate by the invading army. He was commanded by the Lord to buy a field which, speaking after the manner of men, was on the moon! It was what we call, “an estate in Spain,” which Jeremiah could not possibly visit, but because he had God’s orders to buy it, he did buy it and he paid the purchase money right cheerfully.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, this is exactly what we have to do—we have to pawn the present for the future! We must be satisfied to give up anything which Christ may require of us for the sake of that which is yet to come. Our inheritance is not on this side of Jordan. Our joy is yet to be revealed. I grant you that we have much thrown in, for the Lord is a good Paymaster, but on the road to Heaven He gives us only our spending money. Our inheritance is in the land of the hereafter, in the regions of the blessed—and we must not look for it here—this is not our rest! It is worth while to give up a great deal that belongs to the present for the eternal inheritance which is yet to be ours. “There remains a rest to the people of God.” And if ever it should come to this, that your present comfort, yes, and your present life, must be given up for the sake of the land of promise and the Covenant heritage, make no delay. Do not hesitate for a moment, but yield everything up, that the greater blessings of the future may be assuredly yours.

My second remark is that, when a man acts by faith, he ought still to act in a clear, business-like way. We who believe in God are no fools. Some may think that we are; but they would not find us to be so if they had to deal with us in matters requiring judgment and consideration. Jeremiah buys the field in the presence of witnesses, weighs the money, and has the purchase deed drawn up, and the counterpart of the deed, all after a legal manner, just as Abraham did when he bought the field of Machpelah from the sons of Heth. That passage in Genesis is an ancient legal document, containing just such words as you would find in an Oriental purchase deed of the present day. The man of God counts things, which to others are dreams, as realities, and he treats them as such.

Faith is sanctified commonsense. It believes in God—is that stupidity? It believes in God’s promises—is that foolishness? It believes that God will keep His Word—is that a folly? If so, we purpose to be more foolish, still, but, knowing that it is not folly, but truest wisdom, we act in this case as we act in other matters and we make sure as far as we can. “Fast bind, fast find,” says our proverb and, therefore, we exercise in the things of God that discretion and prudence which we use in the things of men. Faith is not folly—and the Believer must not, in anything, act like a fool!

Perhaps you might wonder why Jeremiah, whose business it was to prophesy, should be set to buy land? There is nothing like division of labor. Let the politician attend to politics, let the keeper of a theater supply amusement to the people who want it—and let the Christian minister keep to his preaching. Yes, but Jeremiah was commanded by God to do this because he was really preaching by what he did! The preacher must believe in what he preaches and it may be that he will be called to do something which will be, to his people, the best possible proof that he really does believe it. Jeremiah believes that the city, though it was to be destroyed, would afterwards be rebuilt and that land would be valuable, trade would be restored and agriculture would again flourish. He has said this—he has now to prove it. The few shekels that he has, he must invest in a bit of land which is worth nothing, today, but may be worth a good deal, if not to himself, yet to his heirs. He must buy the field to prove his sincerity!

Oh, Beloved, if we are called to preach, we must believe what we preach, or else we had better give it up! “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” is a text which should be written over every minister’s study door, and over his pulpit, too. What have we to say if we have a doubt about it? How can we move others if we have no fulcrum for our lever, if we are not, ourselves, sure and certain? If there is no element of dogmatism in our message because of our confidence concerning what we have to deliver, in God’s name, let us go to bed and hold our tongues until we believe it! The monk that shook the world owed his power, under God, to the fact that the world could not shake him! Martin Luther believed with an unshakable faith and, therefore, he had power over others. God called Jeremiah to effect the purchase of this little estate to prove to the people that he believed what he preached!

And now, leaving Jeremiah, I am going to make a parable, not to bring out what the text teaches, but to use it parable-wise. When he bought this piece of land, it was transferred to him by two documents. The first was a purchase deed, drawn up and signed by witnesses and then sealed up, not to be opened, anymore, unless required to settle a dispute. That was his real purchase or title deed. Then there was a counterpart of this transfer made and signed by witnesses. This was not rolled up and it was not sealed—but it was left open so that Jeremiah might refer to it and that, when desired, the open deed might be read and examined by others. It is not at all a bad custom and one which we, to a large extent, follow, that there should be two deeds of transfer, the one to be kept and laid up by itself, only to be opened in case of litigation, or absolute necessity—the other being the certified copy—the open deed or evidence for daily use if anybody wished to examine it and see how the property had been transferred.

Now, with regard to our redemption, our inheritance which Christ has bought for us at an immense price, we, too, have two sets of deeds or evidences. The one is sealed up from all eyes but our own. In part, too, I might say that it is sealed up from our own eyes. The other, the counterpart of that, equally valid, is open to ourselves and open to others. So I shall talk, first, about the sealed evidences of our faith. And, secondly, about the open evidences of our faith. And, then, thirdly, about the use of these two sets of evidences. May the Holy Spirit make us wise to speak things to edification and to heart searching, as He, alone, can!

I. First, then, I want you to think a little OF THE SEALED EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH, the evidences which are sealed, at least in a measure, from our fellow men.

And, first, I would say, among the sealed evidences is this— the Word of the Lord has come to us with power. If anyone asked himself, “Have I a right to the Covenant of Grace and to the ‘all things’ which are ours if we are in that Covenant? Have I a right to the purchased possession? Have I a right to the Lord Jesus Christ and all that comes to Believers in Him?” In part, the answer must be, “Has the Word of the Lord come to you with power, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God?” Some of my hearers will not understand what I am now saying. I noticed, in one of the daily papers, this remark about a sermon I preached a few Sunday mornings ago, “Mr. Spurgeon will admit that it needed an education to understand him.” Yes, I do admit it. And I admit another thing, namely, that very many newspaper writers have not that education and that, therefore, they cannot understand what we preach.

It is with our preaching of such things as it was with Dr. Hawker, when preaching at Plymouth. One of his members brought down from London a great scientist and he thought that the learned man would like to hear Dr. Hawker, the eminent preacher of the Gospel. The next morning, this member said to the doctor, “I brought So-and-So to hear you yesterday.” “Did you?” “Yes. And what do you think he said, Dr. Hawker? He said that he did not understand a sentence of what you were talking about.” “Did he?” said Dr. Hawker, “Well, there were lots of old women in the aisles who understood it all.” They had been taught of God and the other person had not!

Now, only he who has felt it will know what I mean by this expression— the Word of God has come with power to our soul! There is a mystic influence, a Divine unction which really goes with the Word of God, in many cases, so that it enters the heart, sheds a radiance upon the understanding, pours a flood of delightful peace and joy upon the soul—and affects the whole mental and spiritual being in a way which nothing else does! You cannot explain this to others! Do you know it yourself? If so, that will be to you the sealed evidence or deed that the eternal heritage is yours! The Lord has given you the spiritual perception of these things. You had no such faculty when He gave it to you, but He took you from being carnal, in which state you could not understand spiritual things, and he made you spiritual! And now His spiritual Truth has come with the demonstration of the Spirit to your heart and you now know, by a witness which you cannot communicate to anybody but yourself, that these things are so and that you have a part in them!

The next one of these sealed evidences is this—if, indeed, this heavenly heritage is ours—we have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Unless fearfully deceived, some of us can say, tonight, that we are resting wholly upon Christ. We depend upon the blood of Christ for cleansing, the righteousness of Christ for clothing, the death of Christ to be the death of sin, and the life of Christ to be our life unto God! All that we have we derive from Him. As for myself, I have not a shadow of a shade of the ghost of a hope apart from the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—and I know that many of you can say the same.

Well now, the possession of that confidence, that child-like trust, that real faith, is an evidence to you that the heritage is yours. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God,” but he that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. He that accepts Christ and His great Sacrifice to be the one ground of his trust—and does this with all his heart and soul— has that sealed evidence which others cannot read, but which he may read with confidence, for Christ said, “He that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” He is a justified man and, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I can give you only just a hint or two upon these evidences. Another sealed evidence of our interest in Christ is that we have life in Jesus. Of this nobody but yourself can judge—and you must be sure to judge very carefully according to the Word of God. It is not the old life educated. It is not the old nature improved. It is a distinctly new life, so that you have hopes to which you once were strangers. You have fears which once never affected you. You have come into a new world—you are, indeed, born again! All around you seems new, it is with you as with one I spoke to the other day. She said to me, “Sir, either I am new, or else all the world is.” And I said, “Yes, but the world is not new—that remains old.” “Oh, but!” she replied, “my relation to it, my thoughts about it, my thoughts about everything are totally different from what they ever were before.”

You can tell if this change has been worked in you. If a horse could suddenly be inspired with mental faculty so as to be able to understand astronomy, what a new life it would be for it as it began to study the stars! Ah, but yours is a greater change than that! You have risen from the lower sphere of mere soulish life into the higher condition of spiritual life and now you consort with God, you speak with Christ, you have become familiar with heavenly things and are raised up to sit in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus! It is a new life altogether with you and you feel it beating within your soul. You cannot tell this to everybody. If you did, perhaps you would have your testimony received with a laugh. To yourself, however, it is a sealed evidence, but a very sure one.

And this leads me to the fourth evidence, which is that we now have communion with God in prayer. Worldlings may pray after a sort, that is, they can utter a few good words, or repeat a form of prayer. But true Believers speak with God as a man speaks with his friend! We tell Him our daily troubles. We detail our needs, we express our joys. Prayer is, to us, a reality—and God hears it and He answers us—and gives us many evidences of His love in the answers to our prayers. Some of these we can tell to the praise of His Glory, but there are 10 times as many which we would not tell for all the world, for they are like love passages between two enamored souls—they are too precious to be whispered to other ears! It would be casting pearls before swine if the spiritual man, who dwells with God, were to tell all that he asks of God, and all the Lord’s answers to his prayers! But, oh, believe me, you cannot enjoy real fellowship with God in prayer and come out of the closet with Luther’s, “Vici! Vici!” “I have conquered! I have conquered!” on your lips, and live to enjoy the fruits of your victory in wrestling with God in secret—and then have any doubt whether you have a right and title to the eternal heritage! That is a sealed evidence, but it is a sure one. You cannot but look back upon it with extreme satisfaction. The prophet Micah said, “My God will hear me,” and if you can truly, from your soul, say the same, you have a blessed evidence that you are an heir of Heaven!

But, next, I rank very highly among the sealed evidences of our inheritance the fact that we have the fear of God before our eyes. Fear looks like one of the minor Graces, but it is a very leading one in the spiritual life. That holy awe of God, that consciousness of His majestic Presence, that dread of doing anything contrary to His will, that tender, loving, filial fear which love does not cast out, but rather nourishes and cherishes—he that has this holy fear is a child of God! They sometimes speak in indictments against criminals of their “not having the fear of God before their eyes,” and, mark you, if a man has not the fear of God before his eyes, you need not wonder at anything that he does. Take away the fear of God from a nation and to what lengths of evil will it not go? Remember the great and terrible Revolution in France, when, at the end of the last century, she had cast off all fear of God? When a nation comes to that point, rebellion against authority is the least thing to be looked for. The horrors of the guillotine and the constant flow of blood will be sure to come—but in the child of God there is a holy, filial fear, which keeps him from doing things that others do. Remember how Nehemiah says, “So did not I, because of the fear of God”? A Christian is not held back from a certain course by a dread of punishment, but by that loving dread of offending so good and so gracious a God as he has.

Now, if you feel, tonight, that you can honestly say that you walk in the fear of God all the day long—that is a sealed evidence—and it is a very sure proof that the inheritance of the saints really belongs to you.

Another evidence is this— we have secret supports in the time of trouble. Here one could expatiate at great length if time would permit. “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” You are sustained when enduring awful pain, comforted under deep depression of spirit, strengthened for the work for which, in yourself, alone, you are quite unequal, borne upward with holy joy in the midst of cruel slander! Surely that is enough evidence for you!

Besides, the Lord gives to His people secret delights and we sing, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” At such times, the Lord gives us secret directions and instructions which come to the soul directly from Himself. Do not think me fanatical, for it is even as I say. These love tokens come to the soul with a demonstration and a power, a delight and a rapture which no words can ever express. They cannot be expressed, seeing that, in many instances, we hear, in the time of ecstatic joy, words which it is not lawful for a man to utter! We wrap these proofs up among the sealed evidences of our right to the heavenly inheritance!

Another sealed evidence is the secret love which the child of God has to all others of the children of God. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” As to the love we have to Jesus, “We love Him because He first loved us,” and our love to Him is one of the evidences of His love to us. We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. “God, my exceeding joy” is a sweet name that David gives to the Lord, and then he adds, “I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” I love to sing it as the hymn version puts it—

*“For yet I know I shall Him praise,  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He.”*

If you feel this intense love to the Lord and to His people, that is one of your sealed evidences.

But once again, and I should like to enlarge on all these points, but I must not, those inward conflicts which you now have, that struggling in your soul between right and wrong, the new man seeking to get the victory over the old corrupt nature—all these are your sealed evidences. So, also, are the victories which God gives you, when He treads evil passions beneath the feet of the new-born man-child, who is the image of Christ within you, when you conquer yourself, when you subdue anger, when you go forth to do, by the strength of God, what otherwise your nature would shrink from—all these are blessed evidences, signed and sealed, to be rolled up and put away—to be seen by no eyes but your own—and the eyes of the Most High. These, then, are the sealed evidences of our faith.

I have been obliged to hurry over this part of my subject because I need just a few minutes, now, to dwell upon the open evidences.  
II. Let us consider, secondly, THE OPEN EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH. There is a counterpart, or copy, of the sealed title, or purchase deed. What are these open evidences of our faith?  
They are such proofs as others can see—and the first of such evidences that we are the children of God must be the open Word of God itself. I read the Bible and I say, “Well, if this Book is true, I am a saved man! If this is really a Divine Revelation, then I am saved!” Beloved, have you that open evidence of your salvation? That is the best evidence in the whole world! When Peter was writing concerning the Transfiguration of Christ, he added, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.” The Lord Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I believe in Him, therefore I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The open volume of the Word of God is our open evidence of salvation!  
Next to that, the open evidence of our right to the inheritance is a thorough change of life such as other people can see. Is it so with you? Has there been a distinct crisis in your being? Have you been turned from darkness unto light? Have you been brought from the power of Satan unto God? Does your husband know of the change? Does your wife see it? Do your father and mother notice it? Does your master perceive it, if you are a domestic servant? I think that, in some persons, conversion works so marked a change that the people of the neighborhood in which they live must see it! Distinctly do I recall, here, a man whose voice was uncommonly loud when he prayed at the Prayer Meetings. I was only a child, then, but I said to myself, “I have heard that man’s voice before,” and so I had, but I was surprised to hear it in prayer, for I had heard him swear on board ship! He was a captain and he swore as if he had swallowed a trumpet—and there he was, converted, and he was speaking in the same trumpet-tones to the praise of the glory of God’s Grace! When a man has been a gross offender, there will be a conversion which men and angels and devils will be sure to see—and this is one of the open evidences that he is a Christian. May you all be such Epistles of Christ that you may be known and read of all men!  
Another open evidence is separation from the world. A man who is really a child of God cannot, after his conversion, consort with his old companions. As one said to me this week, “When I was in the shop, they began to talk some lewdness and to utter filthy words. And I just took up my hat and went away, for I heard this text in my ears, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Separation from the world is one of the open evidences of a child of God. You do not come away from them because you dislike the people, but because you cannot bear their evil ways. They find pleasure in that which is a sorrow to you— that which is food to them is poison to you—and you say to yourself, “My Lord would not wish to come and find me in this society,” so you et away from them.  
The next open evidence is found in union with the people of God, making them your companions, taking a delight in them. Depend upon it, we shall forever go with those who are our chosen friends here—the people who are our companions on earth will be our companions in the world to come! Tares will be bound up in bundles with the tares, but the wheat will be bound up with the wheat. This, then, is another open evidence of your adoption into the family of God—when you love the people of God and seek their company.  
One very clear open evidence is strict honesty, uprightness and integrity in business. Do not tell me that you are a child of God if you can cheat your follow men! You may tell that to whomever you like, but it will not be believed by any man who reads his Bible. Straightforward honesty should always be the mark of every professor of the religion of Christ! Your word must be your bond, and you must sooner fail in business than do the smallest thing that would be contrary to the strictest integrity. This will become, to many, an open evidence which they can read.  
One very open evidence of a change of heart and of our possession of the inheritance, is a readiness to forgive. If you cannot suffer a wrong and continue to cherish resentment for it, how dwells the love of God in you? How can you ever pray the prayer of the Believer and say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” when you have to stammer as you come to, “Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.” Cheerful readiness to forgive any injury done to ourselves—to overlook any wrongdoing whatever—is one of the open evidences that we are the children of God!  
Another open evidence is one which we often get and do not like, that is, the opposition of the world. If any man will serve God faithfully, he will be sure to have the dogs of Hell at him. If you were to go through a village where you had never been, before, the dogs would come out and bark at you. But if you belonged to the parish, they would know you, and they would not take any notice of you. If you are a stranger to the world and a citizen of Heaven, the devil’s dogs will howl at your heels! They cannot help it, for it is their nature. Thank God, Isaac, when Ishmael mocks you, for it is a mark that you are of the true seed and that Ishmael is not!  
Another open evidence, and one that is very sweet, is a holy patience in time of trouble and especially in the hour of death. Often have God’s people, when racked with pain, been able to rejoice in God. And when heart and flesh have failed them and the death-sweat has been standing on their brow, they have been able, even then, if not to sing, at least to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”  
III. I wish that Time would have paused for a while, tonight, but he has not. I must not keep you beyond our usual hour, so I will close with just two or three words upon THE USES TO WHICH WE PUT THESE EVIDENCES.  
One of them is that they often yield us comfort. There is truth in Dr. Watt’s hymn—  
*“When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I bid farewell to every fear,  
And wipe my weeping eyes.”*  
It takes the sting out of every trouble when we know that the heavenly inheritance is surely ours.  
Then again, these evidences answer the unjust charges of Satan when he comes and says, “You are not a child of God.” Ah, but we have the evidences of our salvation, the sealed evidence and the open evidence, and we answer him boldly!  
And above all things, I think that we ought to value these evidences because they will be produced in court at the Last Day. That is the most solemn thing of all. See how the Lord Jesus, the great Advocate of His people, produces the evidence in court—“I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink,” and so on. He produces this evidence of a work of Grace in their hearts, and says to them, “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”  
Brothers and Sisters, do you possess these evidences? If you have none, do not try to counterfeit them. For God’s sake and your own sake, do not commit forgery in such a matter as this! If you have not these evidences, pray God that you may know that you have not, and go straightway to Christ, tonight, as a sinner. You have plenty of evidence that you are a sinner and Jesus came into the world to save sinners! Put your trust in Him, now, and receive from Him the evidence that you are one of His people. If you have bad evidences, worthless evidences, counterfeited evidences—fling them away and pray God that you may get rid of whatever false comfort you have ever derived from them! If God has given you the true evidences, still come to Jesus, just as you are, for it will be your continual coming to Christ that will be your best standing evidence that you are truly in Him!  
The Lord bring you all to Jesus, tonight, just as you are, whether saints or sinners—and then shall you rejoice in Him! The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **JEREMIAH 32:6-41.**

Verses 6, 7. And Jeremiah, said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, your uncle, shall come unto you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. God gave His servant an intimation of what was about to happen so that he might know how to act. It did seem a very strange thing to come to a poor Prophet in prison and to ask him to buy a piece of land when the Chaldeans were in possession of it—and when there seemed to be no hope that he would ever see it! One said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it,” but Jeremiah could not do this, for he was shut up in prison, and the enemy had possession of the field he was to buy! Still, the thing was of the Lord, and therefore it was right. And there is many an action which, in itself, might seem absurd, but which, nevertheless, is to be performed because it is according to the will of God.

8. So Hanameel, my uncle’s son, came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. Should a minister be concerned about the buying of land? Yes, if God bids him buy it. He is not to be entangled with the affairs of this life, but Jeremiah certainly could not be entangled with this field.

9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. They always paid by weight to make sure that the amount was correct.

10, 11. And I signed the deed and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the purchase deed, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open. The transaction was all in proper legal form. We are not to be neglectful in business because we are the servants of the Lord, but in all things we should act as men of prudence and commonsense.

12-14. And I gave the purchase deed unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, my uncle’s son, and in the presence of the witnesses that signed the purchase deed, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; take these deeds, both this purchase deed, which is sealed, and this deed which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days. They had no iron safes in those days, so their practice was to put their documents into earthen vessels and bury them deep in the earth, where they reckoned they would be secure.

15. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Therefore, as an act of faith in God, the Prophet bought this meadow.

16. Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying. Jeremiah completes the business, puts the securities into safe keeping, and now he prays. It is always well to be free from care before you pray. Let nothing remain to be done, if it is possible, and then get alone and let your heart be free to speak with God. I do not suppose that Jeremiah prayed any the less or any the worse because he had attended to this business transaction. A man who lives near to God ought to be able to go from his counting-house to his closet with a happy heart!

17-19. Ah Lord GOD! behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You: You show loving kindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of Hosts, is His name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Whenever you are troubled, think much of God! Speak much of Him. This is true adoration. It will be a great help to your own spirit. Your own littleness will be forgotten in the greatness of your God.

20-24. You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and have made You a name, as at this day; and have brought forth Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; and You have given them this land, which You did swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not Your voice, neither walked in Your Law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do: therefore You have caused all this evil to come upon them. Behold the siege mounds! The earthworks thrown up about Jerusalem completely surrounded it and the Chaldeans were hard at work breaking down the walls to capture the city while the people were dying of famine and disease.

24, 25. They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what You have spoken is come to pass; and, behold, You see it. And You have said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy you the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Observe, it is hardly a prayer that Jeremiah utters—it is just a statement of his condition—and yet that is real prayer. When you do not know what to ask God, state your difficulty, for that is the very best thing you can do. When you cannot see any way out of the maze, never mind—it is for God to show you the clue. There is often much sanctified commonsense in laying the difficulty before the Lord, spreading the letter before Him, and leaving it there. When you cannot ask for deliverance in this way or that, it will be sufficient just to state the case as Jeremiah did.

26, 27. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me? This is a grand question, an unanswerable question!

28-31. Therefore thus says the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the Chaldeans, and into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and the Chaldeans that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke Me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before Me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked Me to anger with the work of their hands, says the LORD. For this city has been to Me as a provocation of My anger and of My fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before My face. Jerusalem was such a sinful city that it must be destroyed. The very roofs of the houses had been defiled by the sacrifices offered to idols. If these words were true of Jerusalem, surely they are also true in great measure of London! It has been a provocation of God’s anger, “from the day that they built it even unto this day.”

32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their Prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They seemed, from the very highest to the lowest, determined to provoke the Lord, to show how little they cared for the Most High.

33. And they have turned unto Me the back, and not the face. Like men who wished to insult a king in his very court.  
33. Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. It is a great aggravation of an offense against God when He has taught us and yet we “have not hearkened to receive instruction.”  
34, 35. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. If God had commanded them to offer up their children, they would have stood aghast at such cruelty, but they willingly sacrificed them to Molech in opposition to His will.  
36, 37. And now, therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, of which you say, It shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. Behold, I will gather them, out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. God is angry, and yet gracious! The rest of the chapter is full of tenderness and love. It is enough to make our eyes fill with tears as we note how God speaks concerning those who had rebelled against Him.  
38. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God: This is, indeed, a Covenant of Grace! It is not dealing with men after their sins, but according to the inexhaustible bounty of eternal love.  
39, 40. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. There is, here, a promise of double bliss! The Lord will not turn from His people and they shall not turn from Him. What more could God do than He, here, promises? It looks like a trial of strength between sin and Grace! Sin was like a mountain, but the Lord’s love was like the flood which prevailed till even the mountains were covered!  
41. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. See how God puts His whole heart to the work when He is blessing His people? When He forgives sin, it is with His whole heart and soul. May we, with our whole heart and soul, repent of our sins and then, with all our heart and soul, serve the Lord! Amen.

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CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH  
NO. 462

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.”  
Jeremiah 32:17.**

AT the very time when the Chaldeans had cast up mounds round about the city of Jerusalem, and when the sword and famine and pestilence had desolated the whole land, Jeremiah, while in prison, was commanded by his God to purchase a field of Hanamel, his uncle’s son at Anathoth. He was to subscribe the evidence of purchase by the usual witnesses, to seal the deed of transfer according to law and custom, and to do this publicly in the presence of all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

Now, this was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it—it was purchasing an estate which was utterly valueless. Reason would repudiate the notion. It was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bid him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children who act in faith. He bought the piece of land, and it was secured to him. He did as he was commanded and returned to his dungeon.

When he came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind. “I have been purchasing a useless possession,” said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, “Ah, Lord God!” as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence—but he stops himself, “You can make this plot of ground of use to me. You can rid this land of these oppressors. You can make me yet sit under my vine and my fig tree in the heritage which I have bought. For You did make the heavens and the earth and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Beloved, this gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God’s command, things which were unaccountable to sense and which reason would condemn. They consulted not with flesh and blood. But whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days using no weapons but the blasts of rams’ horns—they all act upon God’s command. They act contrary to all the dictates of carnal reason. And God, even the Lord God, gives a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith.

I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. But no. I see the Christian

Church degenerating more and more into a society acting upon the same principles as commercial companies. The Church, I fear, cannot now say, “We walk by faith and not by sight.” When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who, he thought, was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trust in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to Heaven against the man as a fanatic.

They said he was visionary, unpractical, mad—and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God. I do avow myself fully in sympathy with the views which he then enunciated. And I think, if the power of God were once more to baptize the Church, we should have men who would dare to trust in God instead of putting confidence in men. Men who would act once more as if God’s bare arm were quite enough to lean on, as if faith were not fanaticism, as if confidence in an unseen Being were not an unjustifiable enthusiasm.

I would to God the Church had once again a rich anointing of the supernatural, and I believe she would have, if she would again act by faith. And if you and I, Brothers and Sisters, would venture more upon the naked promises of God, we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. If we would but walk the waters of trouble by a living faith, we should find them solid as marble beneath our feet. If once again we could, like the world, be hung upon nothing but the simple power and Providence of God, I am sure we should find it a blessed and a safe way of living—glorious to God and honorable to ourselves.

I would that once again the Master would raise up a race of heroes who would be ridiculed by the world, and despised by mere professors. Men who would act by faith in the God that lives and abides forever. Men who venture on bold deeds where the weakness of the human arm would be manifest, and the might of Deity revealed. Then should we see the millennial age dawning upon us, and God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear Him.

Dear Fiends, it is my business this morning to conduct you to Jeremiah’s place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him, the Prophet resorts at once to the God that created the Heaven and the earth and he exclaims, “Nothing is too hard for You.” I shall use my text in addressing three characters—to stimulate the evangelist. To encourage the enquirer. And to comfort the Believer.

I. TO STIMULATE THE EVANGELIST. And who is the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be an Evangelist. We should, without exception, if we have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, tell to all around us what they must do to be saved. There should be no dumb tongue in all our host. We should have no idle hand in the harvest field, but everyone in his measure, whether man or woman, should be doing something to extend the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And here, dear Brother in Christ, my friend and Fellow laborer, here is your encouragement—the work is God’s—and your success is in the hand of Him who made the Heaven and the earth. Let me refresh your memory with the old story of creation and I think you will perceive flashes of light upon your work which will greatly encourage you in it.

1. Remember, in the first place, that the world was created from nothing. You have often said, “Mine is a very hard task, for I address myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, but it is not moved. I thunder forth the Law but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred. I talk of the love of Christ but the eye is not suffused with tears. I point to Hell but no terror follows. And to Heaven but no holy desire is kindled! There is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give up.”

Brother, come back with me to the world’s creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance available to His hand out of which to mold this round globe? What do the Scriptures say? Did He not make it of nothing? You have never yet grasped the idea of nothing. The eye cannot see it. It might peer into space, but space itself is something. We look up, and yonder is the blue ether, though we know not what it is. But the eye could not look on nothing. It would be blinded. Nothing is a thing which the senses cannot grasp, and yet it is out of this awful nothing that God made the sun and moon and stars and all things that are.

Had He spoken before creation, there would have been no voice to answer Him. Had He cried, there would have been no echo to repeat His voice. Nothing was there anywhere, and yet He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast! The case of the sinner is a parallel one. You say there is nothing in the sinner? Yes, there is room here for a recreating work. Inasmuch as that heart is now empty and void, there is space for the Eternal God to come, and with His outstretched arm, to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put His Grace where there was none before.

If you had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing. But, inasmuch as it is not you, but your God who works all things, you may console yourselves with this thought—He who has created all this marvelous earth and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which He might work. Take that, then, for your joy.

2. But you tell me you have none to help you or go forth in your work, you have no patronage. “Ah, Sir,” says one, “if I had a society at my back. If I had at least a few warm-hearted friends that were banded with me, that would give me some encouragement. But I have to go forth alone—of the people there are none with me. I stand up to preach in a village where all are cold and callous—where even my minister tells me I am a rash, bold young man, and had better hold my tongue. I look to the world and it hates me. I turn to the Church and it despises me. I am too enthusiastic for the Church. I am too fanatical for the world. What can I do? I am a man alone, and I have no helper!”

Brother, when God made the world—and the same God is with you— He worked alone. With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him? When He balanced the clouds and laid the foundations for the earth, who taught Him the laws of gravity? Who has weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Was He not alone? No parliament of angels

bowed at His right hand, for He created even them. No archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel, himself, is but a creature. Cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but they could not help in the work.

Look, now—what star did the angels make? What spot of earth is the creation of an archangel? Look to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath—where do you see you the work of any hand but God’s—and that hand a solitary one? The lonely worker out of emptiness creates fullness, out of non-existence calls all things, and out of Himself gets both the matter and the manner, the way and the how. His courts need no revenue from abroad to sustain them, for from Himself, alone, He draws the force which is needed.

Roll, then, your burden on your God if you are alone, for alone with Him you have the best of company. If you had the hosts of Heaven with you, what were you without your God? If all the Church were at your back, terrible as an army with banners, your defeat were certain if the Holy Spirit did not dwell in you. I tell you, Man, if all the saints and angels in earth and Heaven should unite to help you in your pursuit, yet, if your God should stand aloof from you, you would labor in vain and spend your strength for nothing. But with Him you shall prevail though all men forsake you—

*“When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?  
When He His people’s cause defends,  
Who, who shall stay His hand?”*

Let not this, then, trouble you, that you are alone. “Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.”

3. But you will reply to me, “My sorrow lies not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am very conscious of my own weakness and of my want of adaptation for my peculiar work. I come back from my Sunday’s toil, saying, ‘Who has believed my report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ It seems to me as though I plowed a rock, a rock so hard that it blunted the plowshare. I can make no impression upon it. I have beaten the air.

“I seem to have lashed the waters. I fear that I have not the gifts which are necessary, nor have I the Divine Grace that I should have. Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! I am not sufficient for these things. But rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh.” Yes. But Brother, come, cast your thought back again upon creation. The Eternal needed no instruments in creation. What tools did God use when He made the heavens and the earth? When the blacksmith brings forth his work, he fashions it with hammer and anvil—upon what anvil did God beat the red-hot matter of this earth when He formed it and made it what it is?

I know that the engraver needs a sharp tool, upon which he bears with all his might when he traces out the lines of beauty. But when God drew this fair picture—this wondrous landscape of the heavens and the earth— what engraving tools did He have? Where do you learn that He had any instruments in His mighty hands? The carpenter has his plane, and his hammer, and his awl—what plane, what hammer, and what awl did the Eternal use? Had He anything beside His own hands?

Are not the heavens the works of His fingers, and the sun and the moon His handiwork? So then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, He can surely work with a poor, and a mean instrument, in the conversion of a sinner! When I think of myself, it seems to me as if the Almighty Worker did take a straw into His hand with which to penetrate a granite rock. Yet, I know, though it is a straw, if it is in His hands, it would be able to pierce the globe and thread the spheres as on a string.

I know that if the Lord takes in His hands but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when He hurls it from His sling, it shall pierce even a giant’s brow. He saves not by man’s strength, nor by human learning and eloquence and talent. It is His strength and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look. I pray you, turn your eye away from yourself. What are you? A son of man, in whom is no strength! A man that is born of woman—unclean in your origin and unhallowed in your actions. Is there anything in you to give our God one reason to make you a winner of souls?

But, inasmuch as you are nothing, you are all the better fitted to be used by Him. He shall have all the more glory because of your weakness. I pray you, therefore, say, with Paul, “I glory in infirmities, that the power of God may rest on me.” And let this be your song—“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.” “Ah Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You.” You can do wonders even by the mean instrument of sinful man.

4. Do I hear you still complain and say—“Alas, alas! It is little I can say! When I speak, I can but give out the text and utter a few plain words upon it—true and earnest, but not mighty. I cannot sound out the rolling periods of a Robert Hall, nor wing my flight to the majestic heights of a Chalmers. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitfield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply and leave it there”?

Well, and did not God create all things by His naked Word? Was there any eloquence when God spoke and it was done? “Let there be light,” and there was light. Can you perceive any trappings of oratory here? At this day, is not the Gospel in itself the rod of Jehovah’s strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes? And does not our Beloved Apostle constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellency of the power should not be of God but of man? And lest man’s faith should stand in the wisdom of man and not in the power of the Most High?

Go on, my Brother Evangelist, go on and speak God’s Word still, for it is the Word which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. ‘Twas His naked Word, unadorned, simple and plain, which at the beginning made the Heaven and the earth. What can be more sublimely

simple than, “Let there be light”? Go and say in the same simplicity, “Sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” and your message shall be the voice of God from Heaven which shall not return unto Him void but shall prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

5. “Alas,” I hear a Brother crying from some corner of the building, “You are not aware of the darkness of the district in which I labor. I toil among a benighted, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may.” Ah, Brother, and while you talk so, you never will see any fruit, for God gives not great things to unbelieving men. For the encouragement of your faith, let me remind you that it is the God that made the heavens and the earth on whom you have to lean—and what is that which was written of old: “The earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

How dense that darkness was, I cannot tell. That primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light. That dense, thick seven-fold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon and had never been pierced by light of star. And yet, primeval though it was—I was about to call it eternal darkness but nothing can be eternal but the Most High—yet there was but a Word—“Light be,” and light was. And do you think the darkness of your hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night? Even were it so, still, God is Almighty. He has but to speak through you, has but to make your word His Word and the films of blindness shall fall from the eyes, and he that was wrapped in midnight shall be brought out into marvelous day!

I would like to know where the dark place on the earth is, for there it is that the missionaries should first be sent. O that we had faith to do and dare for God, and undertake the hardest tasks first! But alas! We are such cowards, we love fair fields of labor. We want promising prospects. We will plant a Chapel where there is a likelihood that the people will appreciate it. We send a missionary where we think there is a probability that they will receive His Word. But shall we send the man where, in our judgment, they will not receive Christ, and bid him go where they will cast out His name as evil? This is to act by faith, and this is what the heroism of the Gospel demands.

Gird up your loins, followers of Christ, seek for difficulties and overcome them. If you are not greater than other men, how are you the followers of the Divine Jesus? If you cannot go where others despair, how dwells the Holy Spirit in you? If you will not risk where others flee, where is the glorious majesty of your faith?

6. Further—and still to press the same blessed argument. “Yes,” says one, “but the men among whom I labor are so confused in their notions. They put darkness for light and light for darkness. Their moral sense is blunted. If I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain jangling and oppose themselves to the Truth of God. I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the Truth of God in the love of it.” Yes, then, I bid you go back to the old creation that you may be comforted concerning the new. Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings over the earth when it was chaos? Did He not bring out order from confusion? Do you not remember how, on a certain day, the Lord divided the waters that were above the firmament from those that were under the firmament? Do you not know how He rolled together the waters into their place and called the dry land, earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He seas? What greater confusion could there be? That incandescent mass which had once, perhaps, been gas, and afterwards condensed itself into a globe of liquid fire, was cooled with the blessed breath of God.

And when its crust grew hard and the tumultuous waters threw their waves over the heads of Alpine heights. When the winds came roaring forth and with carnival of hurricanes mingled sky and earth together. When cloud, and hill, and sea, and air, were all one seething mass, the blue sky appeared and clouds rolled upwards to their place and seas came downwards to their beds. He spoke, and lo, the obedient waters which had flung their white crests like the manes of wild horses tossing in the wind, hastened to their appointed stable in the deep. And there they remain, kept in check by no more mighty a bridle than a belt of sand. Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it. Disorder yielded to law. Darkness gave place to light. Chaos turned to glorious order in His sight.

Well, now, the same marvels can be worked in your case, only take care that you act for God and in God’s strength, or else you might as well bid a stormy sea be still, as you command the confused notions of men to find rest and peace in Christ. He that made the heavens and the earth, even the everlasting God, can move your difficulty away—only trust in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

7. “Ah,” you say, “they are all so dead, so dead!” Yes, Sir, and do you not remember how the waters brought forth life abundantly—fish and fowl that should fly in the midst of Heaven? And how the earth—yes, this dull, dusky earth—brought forth the creeping things and the cattle after its kind? And how at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth? O Sir, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men! You have but to rely on Him, and the quickening influence shall descend and you shall live.

8. See how fair and glorious this earth is now! Well might the morning stars shout together and the sons of God shout for joy! And do you think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom and teem with hallowed life? Do you think that Christ cannot make the angels sing even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood, and a spirit robed in white, that shall praise God and the Lamb forever? And all this He can do through you and me, my Brother!

O, let us labor, then! Let us work and toil. Let us think difficulties, delights, and troubles, but trifles. Let us lean upon Him that made the heavens and the earth, for there is nothing too hard for Him. Unbelief will make you unhappy. It will cause your service to be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High. Unbelief will prevent God from blessing you. “He could

not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” “If you will believe all things are possible to him that believes.” And if you will act as one who sees Him that is invisible, you shall see greater things than these, and God shall make your path to be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

II. In this large assembly, there are no doubt, many to be found who are really desirous to be saved, but are full of doubts and difficulties and questionings. I speak, then, TO THE ANXIOUS.

May I cut a knot in a moment by making one observation. Remember, my troubled Friend, that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God’s throne—You cannot! “By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” The question is—Can God save you? And if you will put it on that ground, I think your answer need not be a very difficult one.

Can God save you? That is the question. Now I know your unbelief will suggest first the difficulty that your mind is so dark. “I cannot see Christ,” says one. “I am in such trouble of mind, I cannot understand as I would. I feel benighted. I am like the inhabitants of Zebulon and Napthali, a people that sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. I cannot see—it is all darkness, thick as night with me.” Yes, but then there is the question—Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, He who said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle.

Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that you feel so weak— *“I would, but cannot sing.  
I would, but cannot pray.  
For Satan meets me when I try,  
And frights my soul away.  
I would, but can’t repent,  
Though I endeavor often.  
This stony heart can never relent  
Till Jesus makes it soft.  
I would, but cannot love,  
Though wooed by love Divine.  
No arguments have power to move  
A soul so base as mine.  
I would, but cannot rest  
In God’s most holy will.  
I know what He appoints is best,  
Yet murmur at it still.  
O could I but believe!  
Then all would easy be.  
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve—  
My help must come from You!”*

I cannot do what I would. I would leave sin, but still I fall into it. I would lay hold on Christ, but I cannot. Then comes the question—Can God do it? And we answer, He who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save you when you can not help yourself.

Let me remind you that no part of the world helped its own creation. It is absolutely certain that no mountain uplifted its own head. It is quite clear that no star appointed its own path of brightness. No flower can lift its head and say, “I created my own loveliness.” No eagle that cuts the air can say, “I gave myself my soaring wings and my piercing eyes.” God has made them all. And so, Sinner, you who are troubled because of your impotency—He wants nor needs no power in you. He gives power to the weak, and to them that have no might He increases strength. Rest upon God in Christ, and cast yourself on Him, and He will do it all.

“Yes,” you say again, “but I am in such an awful state of mind— there is such a confusion within me—Hell is opened from beneath and the sluices of my soul’s sorrows are drawn up. Grief streams forth in rivers from my eyes. I cannot tell what is the matter with me. My heart is like a battleground torn up with the prancing of the horses. I know not what I am. I cannot understand myself.” Pause, I pray, and answer me, Was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for you, and give you a peace that passes all understanding? I beseech you, my dear distressed Friend, trust in Christ, for He can hush the hurricane to slumber, and lay the storm to sleep.

Let me remind you, O Enquirer, that there is more hope in your case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation there was nothing done beforehand. The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided, no stores laid in to effect the purpose. We read not that God had piled up a mass of nebulae that He worked out into worlds. No, He began the work and finished it without any previous preparations. But in your case the work is done already, beforehand. On the bloody tree Christ has carried sin. In the grave He has vanquished death. In His resurrection He has rent forever the bonds of the grave. In His ascension He has opened Heaven to all Believers.

And in His intercession He is pleading still for them that trust Him. It is finished, remember, so that it is easier to save you than to make a world, for the world had nothing prepared for it. There was nothing ready—but here everything is ready and all you are bid to do is to come and sit at a feast that is already spread—to wear a garment that is already woven, to wash in a bath that is already filled with blood. Sinner, what do you say? Will you believe in God’s Anointed or not?

Yet again, remember that God has done something more in you than there was done before He made the world. Emptiness did not cry, “Oh, God, create me.” Darkness could not pray, “Oh, Lord, give me light.” Confusion could not cry, “Oh, God, ordain me into order.” But see what He has done for you! He has taught you to cry, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” He has made you plead, “Lighten my darkness, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” He has taught you to say, “I have gone astray, like a lost sheep, seek Your servant.” See, Friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet it falls—and shall you cry for it, and God withhold it?

The thirsty earth has no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend, and will God let you cry and not answer you? Look at the forests in winter, they cannot ask for leaves, and yet the verdure comes in its season.

Nor can the corn entreat for sunshine, and yet God gives good things to all in due season. And you, made in His own image, will He let you cry and not hear you? When He has Himself said, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live”?

Yet once again, and here is a rich thought of comfort—it was in God’s power to make the world or not, just as He pleased. No promise bound Him. No Covenant made it imperative upon Him that His arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save you except from His own promise—and that promise is—“He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He cannot, He cannot withhold saving you if you call upon Him. His Covenant has bound Him to be merciful to those who confess their sins. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins and to save us from all unrighteousness. This, then, is a case that glistens with brighter light than did the case of the uncreated world. And as, of His own will, without pledge or Covenant, He made the earth what it is—most surely now He has promised it—He will save you if you trust in Jesus.

Once more here. It is certain that there is more room in your case for God to glorify Himself, than there was in the making of the world. In making the world He glorified His wisdom and He magnified His power. But He could not show His mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here in your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for His loving-kindness, His faithfulness, His veracity, His power, His Grace. Yours is a hopeful case, because it is hopeless to you.

There is room for God, because, certainly, there is no space for you. You can do nothing. It is your extremity, and it is, therefore, God’s opportunity. What would I give this morning if I could turn one tearful eye away from itself to Christ! I know how foolish we all are that we all look to flesh and blood. Turn your eyes, Sinner, to the Cross where the Savior bleeds. Rest on Him—He, without whom was not anything made that was made, died for you. He who was in the beginning with God and who was God, works out your redemption. Trust Him and the work is done. Rest on Him and your soul is brought today into the realm of safety, and you have passed from death unto life.

I will tell you a little anecdote which will show how foolish we are, when we depend on self. I have heard that lately, a ship on her way to Australia met with a very terrible storm and sprung a leak. And a little while after, a hurricane overtook her. There happened to be a gentleman on board, of the most nervous temperament that can be imagined, whose rambling tongue and important air were calculated to alarm all the passengers. When the storm came on, the captain, who knew what damage had been done, managed to get near him.

And the gentleman said to the captain, “What an awful storm. I am afraid we shall go to the bottom, for I hear the leak is very bad.” “Well,” said the captain, “as you seem to know it, and perhaps the others do not, you had better not tell them, lest you should dispirit my men. Perhaps, as it is a very bad case, you would lend us your valuable aid and we may possibly get through it. Would you have the goodness to stand here and hold hard on this rope? Pray do not leave it, but pull as hard as ever you can till I tell you to let it go.”

So our friend clenched his fists and put his feet stiff down and kept on holding this rope with all his might for several hours. The storm abated. The ship was brought right and our friend let go of his rope. He expected a deputation would bring him the thanks of all the passengers but they were unconscious of his merits. He thought at least there would be a contribution for a trophy or plaque for what he had done but no plaque came. Even the captain did not seem very grateful, so he ventured, very distantly and in a roundabout style to hint that such valuable services as his, having saved the vessel, ought to be rewarded with some few words of gratitude, at any rate. He was shocked to hear the captain say, “What? Do you think you saved the vessel? Why, I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of the way! You did a world of mischief till I got you quiet.”

So now, mark you, there are some people who are wanting to do so much. They think they can certainly save themselves, and there they stand, holding the rope with their clenched fists and their feet tightly fixed, while they are really doing no more than our poor friend. If ever you get to Heaven, you will find that everything you did towards your own salvation was about as useful as what this man did when he was holding the rope—the safety of the vessel lies somewhere else, and not in you. And that what is wanted with you is just to get you out of the way—and when you are out of the way, and are made a fool of, then Christ comes in and shows His wisdom. While, perhaps, all the while you are bemoaning yourself that you should be so badly treated, it would not have been possible for you to be saved unless you had been put out of the way, that Almighty God might do the work from first to last.

III. And now I have to conclude with one or two words of ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS.  
And so, my Brothers in Christ, you are greatly troubled are you? It is a common lot with us all. And so you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Your vessel is on her beamends, and now there is nothing for you but just to be rolled on the Providence and care of God. What a blessed place to be rolled on! Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a Rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God, and God alone! On some few occasions I have had troubles which I could not tell to any but my God and I thank God that I have, for I learned more of my Lord then than at any other time.  
There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nothing, he flies into his Father’s arms and how blessedly he is clasped there! So that I say again, happy trouble that drives you to your Father! Blessed storm that wrecks you on the Rock of Ages! Glorious billow that washes you upon this heavenly shore! And now you have nothing but your God to trust to, what are you going to do? To fret? To whine? O, I pray you do not thus dishonor your Lord and Master! Now, play the man, play the man of God. Show the world that your God is worth ten thousand worlds to you.  
Show rich men how rich you are in your poverty when the Lord God is your Helper. Show the strong man how strong you are in your weakness when underneath you are the everlasting arms. Now Man, now Man, now is your time to glorify God! You know there was no room for your courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Our present mode of warfare bids fair to annihilate courage altogether, for now men fight at such a distance that the hand-to-hand fight is impossible. But in those brave days of old, when the troops of Rupert and of Cromwell met hand-to-hand, when uphill the Puritanical legions spurred their horses against the hosts of “the man of blood”—then there was room for bravery!  
Then men could fight not at two miles’ distance but foot-to-foot. Then there was room for the solitary bravo to lead the way against a multitude. Then the scaling ladder clicked on the top of the wall and the brave man of the forlorn hope went up it step by step, with his cutlass between his teeth, until he reached the top. Then men could make themselves famous. But now, what with iron ships, and large Armstrong guns, there is hardly room for men to be courageous. But, Believer, you, in your lonely distress, have returned to “the brave days of old.”  
When you had your regular income from the Consuls, when your business prospered, when you had your children and your friends about you, why there was no room for you to perform heroic deeds of resignation and trust! But now you are stripped, now at it, for your foes are before you. When the Duke of Wellington asked a soldier what kind of dress he would like to wear if he had to fight another Waterloo—“Please, Your Grace,” said the man, “I’d like to fight in my shirtsleeves.” Well now, you have come to that. You have nothing now to encumber you. You can fight in your shirtsleeves, and now is the time to win the victory. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord your God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in your weakness and magnify His might in the midst of your distress.  
The Lord help us to lean wholly on Him and never on ourselves. And let His name be had in remembrance while the earth endures. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2020 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?”  
NO. 2020

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

**“Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?” Jeremiah 32:26, 27.**

THIS method of questioning the person to be instructed is known to teachers as the Socratic method. Socrates was likely, not so much to state a fact as to ask a question and draw out thoughts from those whom he taught. His method had long before been used by a far greater teacher. Putting questions is Jehovah’s frequent method of instruction. When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind it was with a series of questions. “Know you the ordinances of Heaven? Can you set the dominion thereof in the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you? Can you send lightning, that they may go and say unto you, Here we are?” and so forth.

Questions from the Lord are very often the strongest affirmations. He would have us perceive their absolute certainty. They are put in this particular form because He would have us think over His great thought and confirm it by our own reflections. The Lord shines upon us in the question and our answer to it is the reflection of His light. The Infallible One challenges a contradiction, or even a doubt. “Is anything too hard for Me?” is the strongest way of saying that nothing can be too hard for Him, for it proclaims defiance to Heaven and earth and Hell, to produce a difficulty which can perplex the Lord.

I invite you, therefore, dear Friends, to turn the question over in your minds till the omnipotence of Jehovah shall be your one all-absorbing thought. You cannot think of anything which renders it necessary to put a footnote to the text. Search well and see if it needs qualification. See whether there is an exception to the rule of absolute omnipotence. Revolve the Divine question long and well—“Is anything too hard for Me?” May your thoughts be awake at this time! May the Truth of the text take possession of your minds and fill them with its fragrance even as the woman’s box of ointment filled the room with its perfume!

I. I shall ask you, first, to consider the wonderful question of our text which the Lord put to the Prophet, VIEWING IT AS NECESSARY. The utterance of these words was no superfluity, there was need for them to be spoken. Flesh is frail and mortal minds are forgetful. And Jeremiah, great as he was, was but a man.

It was needful to tell the Prophet this though he knew it. He never doubted that the Lord is Almighty and yet it was needful for Jehovah Himself to speak home this Truth to his mind and heart. It is often necessary for the Lord Himself to drive home a Truth into the mind of His most faithful servant. None can teach as the Lord teaches. Truth is never fully known by the sons of Zion until the Lord teaches it to them. Hence it is written, “all your children shall be taught of the Lord.”

We learn much in many ways, but we learn nothing vitally and practically till the Spirit of God becomes our schoolmaster. The God of Truth must teach us the Truth of God or we shall never learn it. Jeremiah knew this Truth in his inmost soul—see the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of this chapter—“I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for You.” He expressed the Truth admirably and yet the Lord saw it needful to give him a special Divine Revelation to impress it more fully upon his heart.

Brethren, it is one thing to know that such a doctrine is true and quite another thing to know the Truth itself. We need to be persuaded of it so as to embrace it. It is a glorious thing to see Truth blaze out as if written in letters of fire. We are far too apt to put Truth down in our creed and after that to shut it away from practical everyday use. We believe it and we should be indignant if anybody disputed it. And yet we ignore it. The Truth of God laid upon the shelf is as good as unknown. Doctrines which are disputed often have the most influence upon the community because they are brought clearly before men’s minds. And being threshed out, they yield seed for the sower and bread for the eater.

We read in one of the Epistles, “I put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the present truth.” There is a Proverb which says that, “Truth is mighty and will prevail.” That is true, as far as it goes. But the Truth of God may be formally admitted and then it may be laid aside and so may never prevail. It is ill to treat a Truth like some great Egyptian king who is swathed in fine linen, embalmed with precious spices and pompously placed in the tomb with other honorable mummies. The Lord would not have the Truth of His own omnipotence thus dealt with, and therefore He comes forth from His secret place and speaks personally to His servant, saying, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

May the Lord do the same with us in reference to the precious Truths of His Gospel! May the Holy Spirit Himself take of the things of Christ and show them to us. Then shall we see them in their own light and know them as Divine realities!

But I go a step further and say that it is necessary for us to be thus specially instructed, even though we know a Truth well enough to plead it in prayer, as Jeremiah did when he cried, “There is nothing too hard for You.” That man is no mean scholar in the classes of Christ who has learned to handle Scriptural Truths when pleading with the Lord. Oh, that we used more argument in prayer! Prayers are weak when they lack pleadings. “Bring forth your strong reasons, says the Lord.” The sinews of prayer are the holy arguments which we urge with the Lord, such as His own promises and our great needs—His own glory, His covenant, the malice of the enemy, and so forth. We know great Truths of God well when we see their bearing towards God in supplication.

And yet, though we may be able to plead it in supplication, we may not even, then, know the Truth to the full. O men of God, you that are fathers in Israel, may the Holy Spirit still teach you, till you know all the power and fullness of His Truth. In lowliness of spirit I doubt not that you still cry—

*“I find myself a learner yet,*

*Unstable, weak and apt to slide.”*  
May the Comforter continually bring to your remembrance the things which Jesus has told you till you know the heart and soul of them.

You gracious mothers in Israel, may God reveal Himself to you more and more and even those Truths which you already plead in your closet may He yet cause you to realize more vividly still. May you weave songs as well as prayers out of the Truth of God. This Truth of His omnipotence may He come and speak to our hearts as He did to the heart of Jeremiah—

*“Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh— Is there anything too hard for Me?”*

But I must yet go a step further. It is necessary for God thus to reveal Truth individually to each of our hearts even though we may have acted on it. Jeremiah had acted on the fact that nothing was too hard for God. He had but very little money. And in days of famine and pestilence money was very precious. A morsel of bread was worth silver during the siege. Poor Jeremiah had not many shekels and those shekels would all be wanted in one way and another for the necessaries of life. And yet he had counted into the scales the price of a piece of land at Anathoth, which he would probably never see, much less enjoy.

The Lord had bid him do so and he had done it without demur. Beloved, it is a great thing to be a little child before God, unquestioningly obedient to our Father’s will. We may not calculate consequences, nor estimate difficulties. We are to do what the Lord tells us, as He tells us, when He tells us. O you Jeremiahs, it is—

*“Yours not to reason why,*

*Yours at all price to buy.”*  
Jeremiah did not doubt, debate, or even delay. He signed the deed and took care to have it properly preserved. If you see any difficulty, obey the Lord first and seek an explanation afterwards, for so the Prophet did. He obeyed in the full confidence that nothing was too hard for God.

After his obedience he began to look back on what he had done and to be considerably bewildered while trying to make out how God would justify what He had done. Elijah himself was faint, though he had taken the

Prophets of Baal and slain them before the Lord—but the faintness came after the conflict and not before it. This is much the best time for faintness, if we faint at all. He was the Prophet of fire, a man of iron firmness for his Master, yet after the strong excitement had passed he was overcome and it was needful for his Lord to revive him.

The best of men are men at the best. If the Lord lifts you up into the purity and dignity of a child-like faith, yet you will have your moments when you will cry, “Lord, speak to me Yourself again, even though it be out of the whirlwind. And let me know that I have done all these things according to Your word and not after my own fancy.” Even the practice of Truth does not raise us above the need of having it again and again laid home to the soul. So, you see, our gracious God applies to our hearts the Truth which we know, which we plead and which we practice—that it may come even yet more fully into our soul and abide there.

Another necessity for this arises out of further manifestations with which we are to be favored. God had caused Jeremiah to know His omnipotence so far but he was to see still more of it. Faith has led you into marvelous places. But there are greater things before you and the Lord presses Truth upon you that you may receive more of it. Did you ever climb a mountain? A friend of mine, when among the Alps, asserted confidently that he could reach the top of a certain mountain in half-an-hour. It certainly looked very near us but my eye had been better educated to estimate distances among mountains and I assured him that it would take him all the day to stand upon that ridge.

The fact is, that when you have climbed one stiff bit of hill you find yourself bound to go down into a valley before you can tackle the next ascent. There are hills above hills and one summit is a sort of lookout from which you see that you have much further to go. That which looked like a part of the side of the hill may really be a mountain by itself. And when you have ascended it, you have the cheering privilege of seeing that you are now at the bottom of the next. In fact, although you are decidedly higher, you often seem to have further to go than when you started.

It is just so with our experience of Divine things—when we know the Lord to the full of our capacity, that capacity enlarges and we begin to learn again. We know more and for that very reason are far more conscious of our ignorance than we were at the first. The Lord Himself came to His servant Jeremiah and thus prepared him for those greater things which He was about to reveal. The Lord had told him what to do and he had done it and thus he had believed up to the highest degree of that which was revealed to him. And therefore the Lord was going to reward his obedient faith by committing to him other mysteries and prophecies of the future.

The city was to be burned and to be destroyed. God would wash out the footprints of sin in the blood of the sinners and lay their land utterly waste. And yet the day would come when the scattered people would come back and lands and vineyards would be bought and sold, whereof the buying of the field at Anathoth was a type and a pledge. Then the Lord would restore the nation to more than its former prosperity and make with the people an Everlasting Covenant that He would not turn away from them to do them good and would put His fear in their hearts that they should not depart from Him.

All that he had already believed would prepare Jeremiah to believe in this amazing blessing. Possibly some of you imagine that it would be an easy thing for him to believe well of Israel but, indeed, you forget how the people had treated him. He had been dealing with them patiently and tearfully for many years and they had proved a most perverse, rebellious and cruel people. They had jested at his tears, disbelieved his prophecies and refused his warnings. He was even then in prison for having spoken the Truth. So that it needed that God Himself should come to him and cheer him as to these people, saying, “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?”

The stiff-necked people could be brought to obedience and should be, for the Lord Himself would do it. The Lord would take away the stony heart out of their flesh and make them a lovingly obedient people. This was impossible with Jeremiah but possible with Jehovah. He will yet be glorified even in the midst of those who have dishonored Him and despised His Prophets. Thus you see how wise it was of the Lord to repeat to His servant that which he knew, pleaded and acted on—that he might be made to believe still more fully in the all-sufficiency of the Lord his God.

II. Under the second head of our discourse we shall look at the text REGARDING IT AS DECISIVE. “Then came the Word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?” This argument is decisive. For the argument is fetched from the Lord Himself. Note this—in his prayer, Jeremiah drew his encouragement from what the Lord had done. Observe “Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for You.”

Creation is a fine argument. The God that made the heavens and the earth without help from any can surely do anything He pleases. He who made the mountains and the sea and the isles thereof can do anything. He who created the skies and made the stars also in the far-off space— those great and mighty orbs—what is there that He cannot do? This was good argument for Jeremiah. But Jehovah does not point to His works, nor quote creation nor Providence—He speaks of Himself—the source of all, from where a thousand earths and heavens might flow like streams from a fountain. There it stands in its majestic simplicity—“I am Jehovah.”

When we look to God alone and think, by the help of His Spirit, of who

He is and what He must be, then we realize that nothing can be too hard for Him. Alas, what feeble notions we have of God! I dare say we think that we magnify Him but in reality we belittle Him with our highest

thoughts. When we go down to the sea of trial and do business on great waters of trouble we find that we know little enough of God. When we see His wonders on the deep we are astonished and overwhelmed and if one of His storms should arise, our faith is staggered. If we did but rise to an idea of God—if we could but form a fair idea of the immeasurable greatness of His power—doubt and mistrust would become impossible. “Is anything too hard for Me?” says Jehovah.

Meditate much upon the Divine Father, Creator and Preserver. Meditate upon the Divine Son, the risen Redeemer, who has all power in Heaven and in earth. Meditate upon the sacred Spirit, of whom the rushing mighty wind in the tornado is but a faint symbol and you will feel that here is the source of all might. “I am Jehovah.” The argument takes you to Himself and coming to you from His own mouth the reason is a decisive one.

But He means us also to see the argument as founded on His name, “I am Jehovah.” I am always sorry that our revisers had not the courage of their knowledge and had left the Divine name as it is in the original Hebrew and given us the word “Jehovah” where they usually put LORD. It is a name of awe and glory, and the Christian Church must get back to it and return more distinctly to the worship of Jehovah. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—this God is our God forever and ever. And we might more clearly have recognized this if the incommunicable name had been preserved to us in our version of the sacred Scriptures.

The name brings out the personality of God. Those who say that there is no God, are, some of them, forced to admit that there is a central force—a power which makes for righteousness. They talk of an impersonal something but we believe in a personal God and he who has no personal God has, in truth, no God at all. I cannot call an unknown force my Father, and I cannot address my trust or my prayer to it. It, indeed! The Creator of persons an it! We want Him, a Person, a conscious, thinking, acting personality. This we have here—“I am Jehovah.” The name signifies self-existence. God does not exist because of His surroundings—He draws nothing from without. His life is in Himself. He derives no support or aid from anything outside of Himself. Indeed, there is nothing which has not come of Him. All things were made by Him and He sustains all things by the word of His power.

The name of Jehovah reminds us that He has within Himself sufficiency for all His will. He has adequate power of performance for all His purposes and decrees. Jehovah wills and it is done. He has created legions of angels but He borrows nothing from them. He can truly say, “I Am and there is none beside Me.” Those mysterious living creatures which are nearest to His Throne are His creatures and not His helpers. The best instructed and the most willing of His servants derive their all from Him but supply Him with nothing. Remembering the name, Shaddai, God AllSufficient, we understand all the better His question, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

He lays the burden of the question upon His own Self. The whole stress of that which is hard in itself and too hard for others, He meets with that word, “I am Jehovah.” All the power that can possibly be required in any imaginable case is in that name “Jehovah”! It is an immeasurable word— the eagle’s wing cannot rise to its height. He that dives into the abyss cannot reach its depth. Jehovah’s name is higher than Heaven, deeper than Hell, broader than space and greater than all things. What can we know of this infinite Word, “I am Jehovah”?

Moreover, the name sets forth the Truth that He is immutable—He is “I Am that I Am.” Time does not affect Him, nor change come near Him. He is never less than Jehovah. He cannot be more. We may at any moment of the dark night rest as confidently upon the I AM as in the brightest day. In fact, the meaning of that glorious word is infinite and unutterable. I do not wonder that the Jew should fear to write it and substitute for it the word Adonai, or Lord. We, casting away the superstition, feel an equal reverence and when our God says to us, “I am Jehovah,” we bow before Him and confess that all questioning of possibility is ended forever.

Yet in the text please notice that the argument is also founded on the Lord’s relation to man. “I am the Lord, the God of all flesh.” There is no other God for man anywhere or at any time save Jehovah. The gods of the heathen, aha, aha! They deserve no such name—they are idols but our God made the heavens. There is one living and true God for all flesh. There is, there can be no other. There is no room for another god, for our God fills all things. He is the God of all flesh, for “it is He that made us and not we ourselves.”

We have neither been evolved by Law, nor struck out by chance. The wretched it, which idiots talk of, is no sire of ours—Jehovah is the Maker of all flesh—

*“His sovereign power, without our aid,*

*Made us of clay and formed us men.”*  
We rejoice that all flesh have such a God. Yet note that before the Lord, men are only “flesh.” Hear this, you kings and great ones of the earth! He calls you “flesh.” How sorrowfully do we see the truth of this in the heartrending sickness of one of the greatest and best beloved of potentates! How wretchedly do we see it amidst the pomp of the funeral when the greatest of the great are carried out to be laid in the pasture of the worm!

Hear this, you men of light and leading! You who have bedecked your names with all the letters of the alphabet! You, too, with all your learning, are but flesh. Do I hear you say of such a one—he is a great man? Is “great” a word which can be linked with flesh? What is the grandeur, the glory, the pomp of flesh? All flesh is grass and grass is cut down and withers. Right surely is he accursed that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. You tell me of the charms of beauty. You sing of your beloved so white and ruddy—think what they will come to by-and-by. Flesh! Ah me!

Leave it to itself. Is there anything fouler or more putrid than flesh when God calls back the spirit which quickens it?

Behold the harvest of flesh in the garner of the sepulcher! See how the great reaper heaps up corruption! This is what we are, Brothers and Sisters. God sees us in our true condition and He calls us “flesh.” Yet I do rejoice that, while we are flesh, He is our God. How is the worm linked to the immortal! Happy men who have such a God! Not that flesh and blood, as they are, can inherit the kingdom of God, nor that corruption can dwell with incorruption. But for Believers in the Lord Jesus there is a resurrection which shall lift us into a body of a nobler sort. We shall soon be rid of this carrion and we shall be aloft with Him where He dwells. And then, in the day of His appearing, even this poor body shall put on glory and in our flesh shall we see God.

As the Lord makes the dull gold of earth into clear gold, like unto transparent glass, even so He makes this vile body to be like the glorious body of our risen and ascended Lord. We bow before the Lord, even we who are but dust and ashes, yes, worse—who are but flesh—and we bless His name, that yet He deigns to call us His people and to be our God. The argument is that since Jehovah is the God of all flesh He can effect His purposes by men and work among them things which seem impossible. The argument is so great that it puts all other arguments out of court.

Poor Jeremiah is puzzled—he has been buying that acre or two of land which he will never see and his pockets are empty. And Baruch has been putting away the title-deeds in an earthen vessel, with a half-smile upon his face. The Prophet sits down and thinks over the transaction and his reason as the devil whispers, “What a fool you are! You might just as well have bought a horn of the new moon.” Yet, somehow it must be made to appear a wise and sensible transaction, for the Lord never makes fools of His people. Jeremiah feels that as the command came from Jehovah, his own judgment is out of court—it is for the Lord and not for him to make good the transaction.

All Jerusalem was to be burned and destroyed. What could be the use of his purchase? But, then, the condition of Jerusalem was not the point to be considered. God had said, “I am Jehovah,” and that had put the King of Judah and his mighty men out of the reckoning. Is anything too hard for Jehovah? Come, Jeremiah, rake up your difficulties. Set in order the discouraging circumstances. Call in your friends, who all shake their heads at you and point their fingers to their brows, as much as to insinuate that you are a little gone from your senses. And then, answer them all with this—“nothing is too hard for Jehovah.”

This clears the deck of every doubt that would board your vessel. This is the blessed argument which answers every difficulty and sets faith upon a rock from which it cannot be removed! “My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.”  
III. Having led you thus far, I now would have you follow me in something practical, namely, APPLYING IT IN DETAIL. The text says, “Is anything too hard for Me?” Apply this question to the justification of your obedience. When you know what is right it will happen, more often than not, that to do right will be costly or at least risky—and if you judge after the manner of worldly-wise men you will consider yourselves likely to be losers by obeying God. You may lose friends, reputation, assistance and peace. This question of loss is answered at once by this fact—if you do what God bids you—the responsibility of your conduct lies with Him and He will bear you through. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

As He justified the action of His servant Elijah at Carmel and justified the purchase made by Jeremiah, so will He justify all the obedient actions of His people. He will bring forth our judgment as the light and our righteousness as the noonday. Apply this glorious Truth of God to the sure fulfillment of all the Divine promises. Consider a great one to begin with. This chapter evidently shows that the Jews are one day to be converted and restored. Do you believe it? “Oh,” says one, “that would be a wonder”! It will be a wonder and the text may be read, “Is anything too wonderful for Me?”

He can call them off from money-hunting—can take away their unbelief concerning the Lord Jesus. He can cause the lips which now revile the name of the Crucified to sing praises to the Nazarene. Glory be to His name, He can cause the waters of Siloa, which flow softly, again to flow with blessing and make the desolate land again to blossom as the rose. They that crucified the Lord of Glory shall look on Him whom they pierced and shall mourn for Him. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Apply this to any case of great sin. Select anyone whom you knew to be especially hard-hearted and pray for him earnestly and hopefully. Choose out some glaring sinner, or special heretic, or fierce hater of religion and pray for him. You say to yourself, “I will choose an easier case.” Do not. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Will you, in your judgment, set anyone beyond the reach of mercy and out of the bounds of grace? Make an application of our text to the most desperate and loathsome sinner and believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord. O chief of sinners, if you are here this morning—blasphemer, swearer, thief, drunkard, whoremonger, harlot, take home this question to yourself—Thus says the Lord, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

If you believe in the Lord Jesus, God has saved you, saved you now. He can and will wash every believing sinner from all his sins through the blood of Jesus and He will graciously blot out all his iniquities. Remember how He forgave David and Manasseh and the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus and the woman that was a sinner? May the Holy Spirit make a personal application of omnipotent love to each of you who now feel your sins! Salvation is not too hard a thing for the Lord.  
Apply this to difficult Truths of God. I will put before you a problem.

There is the Truth of man’s free agency. It is an easy cut, you know, to deny that there is such a thing as free will. But it is not fair, for men are responsible, free agents, and God has endowed them with will. But the knotty question arises—if man acts freely in his sinful actions how can predestination be a fact? If every man acts after his own will, how, then, does God foreordain all things? I answer, “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?” The solving of this great problem constrains me to worship the Lord. For He does solve it in actual history.

I could understand God’s executing His purposes upon material substances such as stones and wood. But this is the grandeur of His power, that while He leaves men free agents and does not in any case lead them to sin, yet they do act exactly as He foretold that they would do. The responsibility lies with them, for they do as they please. But yet His Divine purpose is effected. Peter said to the Jews concerning our Lord, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” They did their evil deed most willingly and yet it was in the Divine purpose from of old.

They were eager to destroy Christ out of diabolical malice and yet all the while they were the instruments of the death by which we are redeemed from destruction. Have faith enough to believe that Jehovah rules in the world of mind as well as in that of matter. He does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. Consider another hard case—the hardest of all—human salvation. Sin must bring with it punishment. It is an inevitable Law of moral government that if you break the commandment, the command will be avenged upon you.

Yet God is merciful and He is willing to forgive sin. How can it be possible for God to exercise the fullness of His mercy and yet discharge the necessities of His justice? All men and all angels put together would have made but one fool in trying to solve that difficulty. The Lord has answered it. He gave His Son to bear our sin. Jehovah Jesus died and presented Himself as the great sacrifice for our iniquities. On yonder Cross the Law is honored and man is justly saved. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Bring here your own little problems. You are always getting into tangles and snarls. Prudent friends try to help you but the tangle grows worse. Bring your hard cases to One who is wiser than Solomon and He will draw out a clear thread for you. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” After Calvary nothing is intricate or difficult. The atoning sacrifice is such a triumph of wisdom and grace as can never be paralleled. Love here wore the girdle of omnipotence. All things are possible since Jesus has died. We believe in the deep depravity of humanity but Jehovah can change its nature. The Lord of Love can make sinners into saints. We tremble lest some have lost the very capacity for virtue. We ask in despair, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” But with God such marvels are everyday things.

For the salvation of great multitudes we are also exercised. We look on wicked London and despair of it. We look on China and India and Africa and say, “Can these dry bones live?” “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” The tears are in our eyes as we think of the Congo and the heroic ones who have perished by its pestilential waters. Will Africa ever stretch out its hands to Christ? “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

We look upon the Church at home in the present day. It is steeped in worldliness and smothered with false doctrine. Many have turned aside from the Gospel and given themselves up to a thousand errors—how can the evil be cured? It is to be cured. It must be cured. It shall be cured, for thus says Jehovah—“Is anything too hard for Me?” If the Lord had left but one faithful man under Heaven He would with that one man deliver Israel. But He has reserved for Himself thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Let us have no fear about it but let us exhibit a boundless confidence. God’s Truth will win the day whoever comes against it. “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?”

I have lived to see and shall yet live to see such marvels in this respect as fill my mouth with laughter and my tongue with singing. “The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” If the Lord waits a little it is that He may gain the more glory. If He even seems to draw back, does not many a man draw back when he is about to take the longer leap? Have you ever seen a man draw back his hand when he is about to strike a tremendous blow? God is never baffled—Jesus shall not fail, nor be discouraged. The living Christ has died in weakness once. But now that He lives He lives, in all the power and majesty of the living God. To what may we not apply the text, when Jehovah asks us, “Is anything too hard for Me?”

IV. Lastly, dear Friends, I beg you to treat the text as USING IT WITH DELIGHT. Time allows but few words. Use the text as a preventive of unbelieving sin. You say you are in a nasty hobble. I know you are. And therefore the devil says, “Put forth your hand unto iniquity.” An evil transaction seems the sure way to get you out of your difficulty. What? Do you wish to help the Lord? Do you dream that He needs your sin to aid Him in delivering you? Flee from the rash action. Let not your hand reproach you, as Crammer’s did. When at the stake he held it in the fire and cried, “That unworthy right hand,” because it had once signed a recantation.

Do not sin. Be poor, but be holy. Be straightforward and honest, come what may. God does not need the help of your sin in order that He may give you your daily bread. When I think of a man supposing that sin is necessary to help God’s Providence, I am ashamed. Even in what is right, our aid to God is like an ant lending help to an elephant. But to do wrong to help the Lord to provide for us is a sort of acted blasphemy. And such a poor creature as you are, do you think that your foul finger is needed for

God’s Divine work?

Away with the idea of its ever being needful to do wrong. Let all sins of haste, all tricks of policy, all compromises with error, all silence through the fear of consequences, all doings or not doings which would involve a blot on your conscience be put away forever. That filthy thing— temporizing and parleying with evil, which men call prudence—let it be hanged upon the gallows of scorn. Do God’s work thoroughly, heartily, intensely—and God will reward you in His grace.

Use it next for consolation in the time of trouble. You are now in a pit wherein there is no water—how can you ever get out? Listen—“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” It is worse than a pit, you say —it seems like a living Hell. The Lord can deliver you. Remember Jonah in the belly of the great fish which went down deeper and deeper till it seemed to dive below the bottoms of the mountains? It seemed all over with Jonah. But it was not so. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Jonah owned that “salvation is of the Lord,” and the fish was not able to imprison him any longer. Forth came Jonah to life and liberty. Jehovah has delivered those who trust in Him, and He will yet deliver us.

Next, use the text as a window through which you look with expectation. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Expect the unexpected to happen to you. He who whispers to himself—“God is going to do something for me that I have never looked for” is the brave man. “A storm is brewing,” cries one. Is it? My way of putting it is—rain is being prepared for the earth. Brethren, the Lord’s blessing is coming upon the Churches—look for it! Let this text be a stimulus to you to engage in great enterprises. Launch out into the deep. Do not always keep on fishing for shrimp along the shore.

Attempt great things for God. Attempt something which as yet you cannot do. Any fool can do what he can do. It is only the Believer who does what he cannot do. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Fall back upon omnipotence and then go forward in the strength of it.

Let the text be a reason for adoration. O You to whom nothing is hard, we adore You! We worship You with all our hearts and this day we believingly link our weakness with Your omnipotence. We trust You for life, for death, for eternity. Dear Savior, we trust You now with all our sins and sorrows. Nothing is too hard for You, therefore save Your poor servants according to the riches of Your grace—

*“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall;  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All.”*

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JEHOVAH’S CHALLENGE  
NO. 2675

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 20, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 31, 1882.

**“Is there anything too hard for Me?”  
Jeremiah 32:27.**

A Truth of God may be sincerely believed by us and yet it may do us good to have it put in the form of a question. As I read the chapter, I called your attention to Jeremiah’s confident declaration to God, “There is nothing too hard for You.” Yet in our text, which is only a few verses further on in the chapter, the Lord says to this same Prophet, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” I think the explanation of this mystery is that we do not always thoroughly believe even all that we do truly believe. We may believe it so as to have no doubt about it, but not so believe it as to be prepared to put it into practice. Jeremiah might say to the Lord, “There is nothing too hard for You,” and he might be confident of the truth of his words, yet there might be, in the background, so much mistrust, possibly imperceptible to himself, that it might be necessary for God to put the matter to him in the form of a question and to say, even to believing Jeremiah, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Ah, we little know what unbelievers we really are! The most of us are scarcely aware of what an awful amount of skepticism still lies lurking within our breasts, only waiting for the opportunity to show itself.

Besides, dear Friends, you must always remember that it is one thing to believe a general doctrine, but it is quite another thing to make a particular and personal application of it. Jeremiah believes that God can drive away the Chaldeans and leave the land free for the use of its owners—but can he believe that the little plot of ground at Anathoth, for which he has just paid 17 shekels of silver, will ever be worth the money it has cost him? I expect the devil began to inject doubts into his mind concerning that transaction by saying to him, “Can you trust God about that purchase of land?” So the Lord does not, at once, accept Jeremiah’s declaration when the Prophet says, “There is nothing too hard for You,” but He puts to him a direct question relating to that very point, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Some of you think you could believe concerning the conversion of a nation, but do you never have doubts concerning the conversion of a perverse child? You believe in the peacefulness that is to reign during the millennium, but have you never had a doubt about the peace of your own domestic circle? You could trust God, you say, in a storm at sea, but can you trust Him about that bad debt on your books? You could depend upon Him, you say, in death and throughout eternity, but can you depend upon Him about that trifling matter which is just now bothering you and giving you so much vexation? Is there anything, great or small, that is too hard for God? That is the question I am going to try to answer. I throw down the challenge, in the name of the glorious God who said to Jeremiah, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Now is your opportunity to bring up your hard things, your difficult things, your apparently impossible things and to see how they are affected by this challenge of the Most High—“Is there anything too hard for Me?”

In calling attention to this challenge of Jehovah, I ask you to remember, first, that the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God. Next, I will mention some of the hard things which remain to be done. And, lastly, since nothing is too hard for the Lord, I will try to answer the short and simple question, “What then?”

I. First, then, I want you to remember that THE HARDEST CONCEIVABLE THINGS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DONE BY GOD.  
Let us begin at the beginning, with God’s work of creation, as Jeremiah does in this very chapter, and we shall then say, with him, that Jehovah “made the Heaven and the earth.” There was a time when there was nothing that had been created and God dwelt alone. There was no raw material out of which to construct the universe, yet, when it pleased Him to do so, everything was formed and fashioned by God out of nothing. What, then, can He not do after having done that? I ask you to also think what God did afterwards. At first, when He made the world, He left it for ages in an unfinished state, for “in the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void.” But, long afterwards, when He came to put it in order, and make it fit for man’s abode—and then to create man to have dominion over all the earth—who was with Him to help Him? “With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him?” With His own hands He piled up the mountains and dug the foundations of the great deep. His unaided power achieved it all! Everything was in darkness even after He had made it, but He spoke, and said, “Light, be,” “and there was light.” Everything was in confusion and chaos. The earth and the waters were mingled together, but again He spoke, and divided the land from the sea, and the clouds rose up to paint the sky, the rivers sought their bed and old Ocean was girt about with his belt of sand!  
God did it all, but, even then, the world was dead. No life was anywhere to be seen. But again God spoke and, straightway, the earth was green with grass, herbs and trees! The waters teemed with fish, all kinds of birds began to fly in the open firmament of Heaven and multitudes of beasts ranged the plain. Then, last of all, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” Now, whenever we doubt the power of God to do anything, let us read again the first chapter of the Book of Genesis and then say, with Jeremiah, “Ah, Lord God, behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You!” There is nothing which the Lord did not make and He made it all unaided. He did it all alone, by His own unguided wisdom and skill. Therefore, one of the hardest things that ever could be done, was done by God when He accomplished His great work of Creation!  
Now let us think of His work under a different aspect, that is, His work of destruction. And let any who doubt the power of God tremble as they hear or read how He has displayed it. Again and again has the Lord shown how easily He can rid Himself of His adversaries and shake them off, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. Go far back in the history of the world and note how all mankind had become corrupt—they who ought to have been holy and separate from sinners, had mixed themselves with the ungodly—and on a certain day, when God’s patience had at last reached its limit, He spoke and down came torrents of rain, descending with tremendous power and, at the same time, the sluices of the great deep were unlocked and up leaped the fountains that, till then, had been sealed! And, very soon, over the whole earth, there was one great sheet of water, for God had determined that He would destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth, save a “few, that is, eight souls,” whom He had housed within the ark. Terrible as the work of destruction must have been, it was done as God determined and, after that, let none ever think that God cannot overcome His enemies! Let no one ever imagine that a warfare can be successfully waged against Him! When He bares His arm for battle, His foes shall all flee before Him like chaff before the wind, or they shall fall before Him like the wheat falls before the reaper. He can create and He can destroy! In looking back upon what He has already done, we can see that He has accomplished inconceivably great and difficult things both in making and in unmaking. “Ah,” you say, “perhaps these are sublime things on an enormous scale.” Yes, but God is great on any scale, and almighty wherever you perceive the signs and tokens of His working!  
Think, next, of His work for the defense and deliverance of His chosen people. Read the Book of Exodus—you cannot too often read the wondrous story of how, when the children of Israel were few in Egypt, God nevertheless preserved them. And how, when they multiplied and the cruel Pharaoh arose and tried, first, to curb and then to crush them, God remembered His people and determined to bring them out of the land of bondage. Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go.” How that proud monarch bridled up when he heard those words! “Who is the Lord,” he said, “that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” He soon knew who Jehovah was, for plague followed plague till everything that Egypt had was destroyed and, last of all, God “smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.” Then the oppressors opened wide their gates and Egypt was glad when Israel departed. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth His people! And when they came to the Red Sea and the Egyptians pursued them—and the tyrant thought that he would surely destroy them, for the wilderness had shut them in— then the Lord divided the sea and led His people through the depths in safety! “But the sea overwhelmed their enemies,” and on the farther shore, Miriam and the women joined in the jubilant refrain to the triumphant song of Moses and the Israelite host, “Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”  
Brothers and Sisters, after this mighty act of Jehovah, you need never imagine that He cannot deliver His people! You need not suppose that a little Church, or a little island, or a little nation shall be domineered over by the proud ones of the earth! If God shall but repeat that ancient command, “Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm,” it will be a case of, “Hands off,” for the oppressors, however mighty they may be—and they will have to learn that they must not touch the elect of the Most High to do them harm!  
If you need another instance of God’s wonderful working, I remind you that harder things than we need to have done for us by God have been done by Him in the work of His Providence. Think how He led His people through the wilderness and fed them for 40 years, though all that time they never stirred a plow in the furrow, or gathered fruit from fig trees or from olive trees. A pathless desert was the highway of the millions who were His people! Heaven dropped with daily manna for them and the smitten Rock yielded a perennial stream to quench their thirst. When they craved flesh to eat, the Lord sent them innumerable feathered fowl. Their garments waxed not old upon them, neither did their feet swell for 40 years in that great and terrible wilderness. When you think of all this, my poor Brother, you may well say, “If God could do that great work, surely He can provide for my little family.” Of course He can! The God who could, for 40 years, feed three millions of people who marched or stopped with nothing but bare sand beneath them, can much more feed you, O you of little faith!  
All these are great things that God has done, but I am going to take you into much greater depths than we have traversed yet, for all this is as nothing compared with what God has done in His great work of Redemption. Creation is shorn of its glory. The terrors of God at the deluge may almost be forgotten. The deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea may take quite a secondary place and the leading of the people through the wilderness may be put quite in the background when I begin to tell the story of our redemption! This is the hardest thing, the most amazing thing God has ever done! His Son came down to live among men! He took on Him a human form and was born of the Virgin Mary, sheltered in a stable, cradled in a manger! This is such a miracle that all the other miracles I ever heard of seem commonplace affairs compared with this wonder of wonders—that God should take upon Himself the nature of man and then— still more marvelous—take upon Himself the sin of His people and bear the awful load of their transgression, all the burden of their punishment and endure it even to the last pang, drinking up the cup of Infinite Justice to its dregs! Never was God so Godlike as when Jesus died upon the Cross! Never was Omnipotence so potent as when He died that men might live, crushing the old dragon as He bled, leading captivity captive while He was, Himself, bound to the accursed tree, casting death into an eternal grave when He, Himself, was laid in the sepulcher! I cannot adequately tell you the story of all these marvels! The very angels in Heaven have been set a-wondering ever since that day—and they have been continually telling to one another, over and over again, the story of the God that loved and died and, by His love, death and living again, defeated Satan, conquered death and led captivity captive for all His people! I feel more inclined to burst out with, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” than to say even a single syllable more concerning this greatest of all God’s works!  
Certainly, in what I have said, I have fully proved that the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God and, therefore, He may well ring out the challenge of our text, “Is there anything too hard for Me?”  
II. Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN TO BE DONE.  
The hardest things have been done by God—what remains to be done? Look within you, look around you. Find all the difficult things that you need to have done for you and then see how easy it is for the Lord to meet your every need! Some of the hard things relate to temporal matters. “It would be a great thing for God to deliver me out of all my troubles,” says one, “for I am sorely afflicted and tried.” But, really, my dear Friend, after all that God has done, will you, can you, dare you think to yourself that He cannot deliver you? Are you His child? Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Then, surely, you will not say that He will leave you—that He will forsake you—or that He cannot help you! I am certain that you would be ashamed to lead anybody to think that God could not deliver you, yet you have, perhaps, allowed the thought to creep into your own mind. Then drive it out at once! Do not let it remain there a moment longer. God can help you and in very simple ways, too.  
I have known Him deliver His people in very extraordinary and unexpected ways. There was a poor man, not long ago, who had no bread for his family and they were almost starving. One of his children said to him, “Father, God sent bread to Elijah by ravens.” “Ah, yes,” he replied, “but God does not use birds in that way now.” He was a cobbler and a short time after he spoke those words, there flew into his workshop a bird, which he saw was a rare one, so he caught it and put it in a cage. A little later, a servant came in and said to him, “Have you seen such-and-such a bird?” “Yes,” he answered, “it flew into my shop, so I caught it and put it into a cage.” “It belongs to my mistress,” said the maid. “Well, then, take it,” he replied, and away she went. Perhaps you think that there was not anything very remarkable in that incident, but when the girl took the bird to her mistress, the lady sent her back to thank the cobbler for his care of her pet—and to give him half a sovereign! So, if the bird did not actually bring the bread and meat in its mouth, it was made the medium of feeding the hungry family although the father had doubted whether such a thing could happen! God has blessed ways of delivering His people if they will but trust Him. I do not doubt, if this were the time for such testimony to be given, that every Christian here could tell some story of the way in which God has delivered in time past. “Oh, yes,” says one, “I could, I know.” What, you? Yet you are the very one who doubts God’s power to deliver you! Cover your face for shame and cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me! Forgive my unbelief and help Your poor child to trust Your fatherly care and to know that You will provide for me.”  
But, next, some of the hard things relate to spiritual matters. I fancy that I hear someone say, “I have a trouble which causes me more anxiety than the things you have just mentioned. I know that God can provide for me in temporal matters, but I have a very hard fight of it, spiritually. I am tempted, first in one way, and then in another, till I sometimes fear that I shall not be able to hold out. Satan appears to know just where I am weakest. He shoots at the joints of my harness and all his fiery darts seem to sorely wound me. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy.” David said something very much like that, yet he did not perish by the hand of his enemy, King Saul. He died in his bed, rejoicing in his God! And very likely it will be the same with you. At any rate, if you are trusting in Christ, you shall not be overcome, for greater is He that is for you than all that can be against you! Do you believe that you, a child of God, cannot be so helped by Him that you shall be able to overcome any kind of sin? Surely you cannot believe anything so dishonoring to your Heavenly Father?  
If you do, I do not. I cannot tell how God’s mind comes into contact with man’s mind, but I know that it does—that His Spirit comes into most intimate connection with our spirit and so influences our spirit that the sin, which once seemed to fascinate and charm us, loses all its attractions and delights. And the doubts and fears, which for a while depress us, have, by-and-by, no depressing power whatever! You remember how Eliphaz said to Job, “At destruction and famine you shall laugh,” and God often helps His servants to laugh at those very things which before seemed great burdens to them. There is nothing in your spiritual case that is too hard for the Lord—so bring it before Him in faith and prayer this very hour!  
I fancy that I can hear someone else saying, “But I am not God’s child! Oh, how I wish that I could be! Alas, I am a great sinner.” What has been your sin, my Friend? I do not want you to tell me—I only ask you what it was that you may tell it to yourself, and then answer the Lord’s question, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” If Christ had not died, it would have been useless to ask you that question, but since Jesus died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” And since it is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” can there be anything conceivable that is too hard for the Lord? There is no sin which you have committed which the blood of Christ cannot wash out if you believe in Him! Though you were even red with murder, black with blasphemy and covered from head to foot with the filthiness of lust, yet, on your believing in Jesus, you will be made, then and there, as white as snow! Free pardon for every kind of sin is proclaimed to every soul that will believe in Jesus Christ. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” if they will only trust in Christ. So, in this sense, there is nothing too hard for the Lord. There is no sinner too guilty for the Lord to forgive when he trusts the Savior’s Sacrifice on Calvary.  
“Yes,” says another friend, “I can understand that I can have forgiveness, but this is a greater difficulty to me—I have been so long a transgressor of God’s Law that I do not think I ever could conquer my sin.” No, I know that you could not and I want you to be fully persuaded that you could not! And then, when you are perfectly convinced upon that point, let me ask you this question, “Is even this thing—this power of overcoming sin—too hard for the Lord? Your successful resistance is out of the question—you cannot accomplish anything in this great conflict, for you are nobody and nothing—but is the struggle too hard for the Lord?” It often happens that a man says, “Well, I know that I have been a great drunkard. Drinking has been my besetting sin, but I can leave it off when I like, and become a sober man at once.” So he does and he signs the pledge and wears his blue ribbon. But, by-and-by, the color of that ribbon ought to be ruby rather than blue, for the man has given way to strong drink again! The reason of his fall is that he cured himself and so the disease came back. But the drunkard who says, “I am afraid to trust myself, for this intemperance has got such a hold on me that I never can get out of its clutches by my own power. O God, deliver me! I trust You to save me! I look to Jesus Christ to save me!” He is the man who shall be helped and he shall be more than a conqueror through the might of God! Let me assure you, my dear Friend, that there is no form of sin from which you cannot be delivered by the Grace of God. After many years of vice—prolonged, continued, inveterate, horrible vice—men have not only been reformed and reclaimed, but they have been renewed, sanctified and made pure and holy!  
I wonder how you would have felt, if you had been visiting in certain of the South Sea Islands, and you had been sitting at the Lord’s Table with some good old deacon, and then, after you had been eating and drinking with him at the Communion and had heard him pray and preach, somebody had whispered in your ear, “That man used to be a cannibal. He has murdered many.” “Oh,” you would say, “and has the Grace of God changed such a lion as that into a lamb?” It would have struck you as a very remarkable illustration of the power of Divine Grace, yet there are, even in this Tabernacle tonight, cases that are quite as striking as that! If you could know all about them, you would agree with me that it is so. God’s Grace can do marvelous things! It can change lions into lambs, ravens into doves and sinners into saints! In fact, the proof of Christianity is the moral change which it is continually working in the minds and lives of men and women. Above all other miracles stands this one—the miracle by which the dishonest are made just, the impure are made clean and the disobedient are brought to the obedience of faith.  
Truly, there is no case that is too hard for the Lord. I suppose a good many of you never heard that “Satan” came into this place, one Sabbath,

and was converted. [The remarkable story of this man’s conversion is related at greater length in C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, Volume IV, with other similar narratives. Visit Pilgrim Publications for availability and pricing at http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/spurgeon.htm#\_BIOGRAPHIES.]

“No,” you say, “surely that has never happened.” Yes, it has! I can vouch for the truth of the story. There was a sailor who lived at Wivenhoe, in Essex, a man who was such a vile blasphemer and who lived altogether such a disgraceful life, that the people called him, “Old Satan.” When the ship in which “Satan” sailed, came to London, a godly seaman, who was on the same vessel, persuaded the man to come to hear me. He was the more willing to do so because I once lived at Colchester, which is not far from Wivenhoe. As he heard the Word, the Lord touched “Old Satan’s” heart and there was never before such a stir in Wivenhoe as when he went home, a converted man, to tell other sinners the power of the Grace of God! If there is anybody here who might be called a very devil, let him come and trust Christ, and he shall be saved straightway. Come along with you, poor slave of Satan! Leave your old master this very minute! Do not give him even a moment’s notice, but speed away to the great Father’s house and He will receive you, for He is expecting you! No, more— it is He who is drawing you, by His gracious Spirit! And it is His Son who has said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” God grant that many who have been hard sinners, may come to Christ and find in Him eternal life!

Once more, Jehovah’s challenge, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” contains a lesson for you who are trying to serve the Lord. I want you also to catch the meaning and the message of my text—there is nothing too hard for God, so He can save the children in your Sunday school class! He can bless the people of the district where you visit. He can help you to talk to that dying person whom you went to see yesterday. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, so He can bless you, city missionary, to that dark slum which gives you so much anxiety. He can bless you, dear Friend, at that street corner where you scarcely get through a dozen sentences before you are interrupted! This question of Jehovah, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” seems to be like a rallying cry from God to urge all His followers to press on, like heroes, without a doubt about the victory! “Courage, my comrades,” said Mohammed to his troops, one day, when the battle was going against them—“I can hear the angels coming to our rescue.” There were no angels flying to help him, but they are always coming to aid us when we need them, for, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” If we are truly trusting in the living God, He will surely send the heavenly principalities and powers to help us, so that, in our weakness, His strength shall be glorified and sinners shall be saved!

I can believe in the conversion of the Jews when I hear Jehovah’s challenge, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” I can believe in the spread of His Gospel over the whole world when I hear Him ask, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” I can believe in my Master setting up a Kingdom that shall have no bounds and no end, when I hear His royal enquiry, “Is there anything too hard for Me?” Very often, when we get among men and women, we seem to be surrounded by a lot of children playing with toys, for they bother, hinder, hamper and only increase our own helplessness. But when we get clear of them and just look to God, alone, then we seem to have elbowroom for our work. A thoroughly consecrated man can do something, by God’s Grace, when he has got rid of the intolerable nuisance of having too many human helpers who are often only hindrances—and who has not any other helper but his God. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be flung back upon the bare arm of Omnipotence—to be gloriously compelled to rest on God and on God alone! May many of us know, by happy, personal experience, how blessed it is!

III. I have done, dear Friends, when I have, in the last place, very briefly answered a short and simple question. Since nothing is too hard for the Lord, WHAT THEN?

I want that we, as a people, should be true to the very core to our blessed God and, to that end, as there is nothing that is too hard for Him, let us trust Him, all of us, whatever our trials or our difficulties may be. Let us have no sham faith, no pretended confidence, but real trust in a real God!

Then, next, I want that we should act as if we trusted God. Do not let us waver, “for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”

And, then, believing in God, let us always do what is right. Let us believe that to do the right is always right—that policy—that “hedging” a little, and doing what we call a “slight wrong,” can never be justified in the sight of God.

Finally, let us live a life of love, a life of forgiveness and kindness, trusting that God will cause love to overcome human hate and kindness to conquer all misrepresentation. Live in all respects so as to glorify God.

Beloved in the Lord, who are one with us in Christ Jesus, do be outand-out Believers and let your faith be as evident as the color on a healthy cheek, that all men may see that the very life-blood of your spiritual being is your faith in God and in His Christ! What made brave Oliver Cromwell, in the days gone by, so terrible an enemy to all who loved not liberty and right? It was his faith! And he had gathered about him a band of men who also believed and so, when the Ironsides marched to the fight, you might as well have hoped to stop the stars in their courses as to keep those men back from victory! And today, what England needs is men of faith whose watchword is, “The Lord of Hosts!” and whose confidence it is that “with God all things are possible,” and also that “all things are possible to him that believes.” May all of us be such Believers, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 32:1-27.**

Verses 1-5. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. For then the king of Babylon’s army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the Prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah’s house. For Zedekiah, king of Judah, had shut him up, saying. Therefore do you prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, says the Lord: though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper. So you see that Jeremiah was shut up in prison at the time here mentioned. Zedekiah, the king of Judah, had treated him very harshly because of his faithful utterance of the Word of the Lord. He was a true servant of Jehovah, yet he suffered much at the king’s hands. One very remarkable event, which happened at that time, is here recorded.

6-8. And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, your uncle, shall come unto you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. So Hanameel, my uncle’s son, came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray you, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is yours and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. The Lord had told him beforehand that it would be so and, therefore, in due time, his cousin came to him with the offer of this plot of land in the country of Benjamin.

9, 10. And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. This was, in every respect, a very extraordinary transaction! Remember that the Chaldeans were already besieging Jerusalem and they were all over the land, carrying fire and sword into every part of it. Jerusalem was shut up, so that none of the inhabitants could get out of the city—yet here is Jeremiah, himself a prisoner, buying land which was virtually worth nothing whatever! But he believed so firmly that the Chaldeans would yet permit the Jews to live unmolested in that land that he paid down the purchase money for the field and saw to the legal execution of the deed of transfer, just as you or I might have done if we were purchasing a plot of land in our own country. This is a notable instance of the triumph of faith over unfavorable surroundings and, also, of the Prophet’s obedience to the Word of the Lord.

11, 12. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase to Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, my uncle’s son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. Jeremiah did all this openly. What they may have thought to be an absurd action, he did not do in private, but in the presence of them all! True faith in God does not go in for holeand-corner transactions. Faith can do its business in the light of the sun! Faith believes God under all circumstances and believes that the truest common sense is to obey His Word. Therefore she is not ashamed of what she does—neither shall she ever have cause to be ashamed or confounded, world without end! There is a living God and if we do what He bids us, good must come of it. No harm shall happen to the man who confidently rests in the Most High.

13-17. And 1 charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, Ah Lord GOD! Faith cannot live without prayer. When she has performed her most heroic deeds, she turns to God and humbly asks for renewed strength, for oh, my Brothers and Sisters, the best of men are but men at the best—and those who have the most faith never have any to spare. Jeremiah says, “I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God!” It looked, at first sight, as if the Prophet was going to utter some mournful complaint, or to express some doubt or misgiving concerning the purchase of the land, but it was not so. Having allowed that exclamation to escape from him, his faith came to the rescue and he continued—

17. Behold, You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You. Is not that a grand sentence? “There is nothing too hard for You.” He that could make the Heaven and the earth can do anything! Read, in the Book of Genesis, the story of the creation, and see how, “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” And then judge as to what can ever be a difficulty for the Almighty. Surely you must say to Him, as Jeremiah did, “There is nothing too hard for You.”

18. You show loving kindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of Hosts, is His name. See how these godly men, in their times of trouble, delighted in the great names and glorious attributes of God. There are, nowadays, many namby-pamby, fashionable religionists, wrapped in luxury, who have only a little God—they never seem to know “the Great, the Mighty God”—but Jeremiah, with the smell of the prison still clinging to him, talks grandly! “The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is His name.”

19-21. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for Your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and have made You a name, as at this day; and have brought forth Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror. Those ancient Jews, in the time of their trouble, always looked gratefully back to the wonders worked by Jehovah in Egypt. That great deed of God, when He smote the might of Pharaoh, was always present to the Hebrew mind and the people, in every season of tribulation, refreshed themselves with the remembrance of it. Well, then, dear Friends, as they sang the song of Moses, shall not we sing the song of the Lamb? Will not we go back in thought to the glorious triumphs of our Redeemer and recount again and again, for the encouragement of our faith, what Christ did for us upon the Cross, even as the Jews thought often, for the strengthening of their confidence, of their wondrous deliverance from Egypt by the high hand and the stretched out arm of Jehovah?

22-24. And have given them this land, which You did swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey, and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not Your voice, neither walked in Your Law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do: therefore You have caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts. The margin renders it, “the engines of shot,” which we see, by the next chapter, were powerful enough to throw down the houses in Jerusalem.

24, 25. They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what You have spoken is come to pass and, behold, You see it. And You have said unto me, O LORD GOD, Buy you the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans. I suppose that, although Jeremiah, with unquestioning faith, had done as God had commanded him, yet afterwards, when he was alone in his prison cell, he began to think the whole matter over. And though he may not have had any actual doubts, yet he probably had some anxieties as to the issue of the whole affair. He could not quite understand it, so he wisely put it before the Lord. Some of you who have truly trusted God, may yet be just now perplexed with anxiety of one kind or another. Well, then, tell it to the Lord—go at once into His Presence and spread the case before Him, as Jeremiah did.

26, 27. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me? That question we will try to answer presently. [Remember, the exposition was before the sermon.]

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34, 686, 1042 and from “Flowers and Fruits”—54.  
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1623 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHOLEHEARTED RELIGION  
NO. 1623

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.” Jeremiah 32:39.**

THOSE of you who were present last Lord’s-Day morning will remember my sermon upon “Mongrel Religion,” [Sermon #1622] in which I dealt with those who feared the Lord and served other gods. Their heart was divided and, therefore, they were found faulty. They had, as the Hebrew puts it, a heart and a heart—a heart that went this way and a heart that went the other way. And so, as a matter of fact, they became, as the Prophet says, as “a silly dove that has no heart.” The discourse of this morning is intended to exhibit wholehearted religion which is the opposite of the sad mixture which we have so lately denounced. We wish to look upon persons of Caleb’s stamp, who followed the Lord fully—in whom, by the Grace of God, the divided heart has become united—so that with their whole heart they serve the Lord their God.

Our text is an extract from Jeremiah’s copy of the Covenant of Grace. The Lord promises to Israel, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” And in the 40th verse He says, “And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” This, then, is the Covenant of Grace which God has made with His people and it is highly suggestive that the first blessing of it relates to the heart, for God, when He begins with men, does not begin with the outward way, but with the inward spirit. He puts it, “I will give them one heart and one way”—the way is second—the heart comes first. Understand, then, that in all true godliness we must begin with heart-work.

It is no use hoping to polish the outside until, by degrees, you enlighten the interior. No, but the light must first be placed within and then, as it shines through, spots on the exterior will be discovered and will all the more readily be cleansed away. God works not to the center, but in the center, and then from the center into the outer life. In reference to the heart, one of the earliest works of Divine Grace is to unite it in one. Strange to say, but I would be equally truthful if I said that one of the first works of Grace is to break the heart—but so paradoxical is man that when his heart is unbroken, it is divided—and when his heart is broken, then, for the first time, it is united, for a broken heart, in every fragment of it, mourns over sin and cries out for mercy.

Every shattered particle of a contrite spirit is united in one desire to be reconciled to God. There is no union of the heart with itself till it is broken for sin and from sin. Early in the morning of Grace, the man comes to himself and is restored to the unity of his manhood. The effect of this inner reunion is very salutary. We read of the prodigal, that, “when he came to himself,” he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” The heart is united in itself when it is united to the Lord! Even as the Lord has said by the mouth of the Prophet, “I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart.”

It is of this unitedness of heart that I shall speak first. And then I shall go on to those other Covenant blessings which come after it, according to the text. These are placed after it, in order to show its great value, since it is the first step to exceedingly precious blessings. First, then, we will consider unitedness of heart—“I will give them one heart.” Secondly, the blessing which immediately arises out of it, consistency of walk—“I will give them one way.” From these two come the third blessing, “steadfastness of principle—“that they may fear Me forever.” And consequent upon all this comes personal blessings, “for the good of them.” And attendant upon that favor, relative benediction—“and for the good of their children after them.” Our program is very extensive—may the Spirit of God help us to fill it up.

I. We begin, then, at the beginning, with UNITEDNESS OF THE HEART. Our first statement under this head shall be that it is naturally divided. Sin is confusion and at its entrance it created a Babel, or a confusion, within the heart of man. Until man sinned, his nature was one and undivided, but the Fall broke him and destroyed his unity. Within him, now, there are many voices, many imaginations and many devices. Within him there is strife and contention, wars and fights, which come of his lusts, which struggle with each other and with his understanding. Observe the contest which is constantly visible between his conscience and his affections. His affections choose that which is evil, while his conscience approves that which is right. The desires go after that which appears to be pleasant, but the judgment warns the mind of its folly and, therefore, a controversy between the two powers of the soul.

The lusts crave for that which the intellect condemns; the passions demand that which the reason would deny; the will persists in that which the judgment would forego! The ship of our manhood will not obey the helm; there is a mutiny on board and those powers which should be underlings, strive for the mastery. Man is dragged to and fro by contending forces; conscience draws this way and the affections drag in the opposite direction. Our propensities and faculties are, by nature, like the crowd in the Ephesian theater of whom we read, “Some, therefore, cried one thing and some another; for the assembly was confused.”

We sin not without some measure of compunction and we do not quit our sin, thoroughly, even when we yield to conscience, for the heart still hankers after that which the conscience disallows. To many a man it is given to admire things that are excellent and still to delight in things which are abominable! His conscience bids him rise to a pure and noble life, but his baser passions hold him down to that which is earthly and sensual. Frequently, too, there is a very great division between a man’s inward knowledge and his outward conduct. Men are often wise in the head and foolish in the hand—they know the right and do the wrong! The Law of God is read in their hearing and written upon their memories and yet it is forgotten in their lives. They are men of great discernment in theory and yet in their actions they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; darkness for light and light for darkness!

They sin against the Light of God—“They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Often and often the man is as right as Justice, herself, in his opinions, and clear as the day in his information— and yet he gropes as the blind and stumbles at noonday as in the night! His knowledge goes one way and his will another. He knows the consequences of sin and, therefore, fears! He perceives the pleasureableness or profit of sin and, therefore, presumes! He is sure that he will never be so base as to fall into a certain fault, but, by-and-by, he rushes into it and defends himself for so doing, till he changes his fickle mind—and then he denounces that which just now he allowed! How can he be right with God when he is not even right with himself?

All through the carnal man, if you look at him, there is confusion and mischief! We would call that creature a monster which had its head towards the earth and its feet towards Heaven—and yet the carnal man lives in that position! He ought to tread the world beneath his feet, but he places it above—while the Heaven to which he should aspire, he daily spurns! He lets his animal passions, which should be treated as the dogs of his flock, become his lords and masters. He reverses the order of Nature and bids the beast within him to have dominion over the spirit. Appetites, which in their way are good if they are kept in with bit and bridle, are permitted to become evil because they have unlimited indulgence and are allowed to be the tyrants of the soul! The Ishmael of the flesh mocks the Isaac of the conscience and is unreproved! Solomon said, “I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth.” And the same may be seen in the little world within where appetites rule and grander capacities are placed in servitude.

Man is a puzzle and none can put him together but He that made him at the first. He is a self-contradiction, a house divided against itself, a mystery of iniquity, a maze of folly, a mass of perversity, obstinacy and contention! Sin has made the heart to be so inwardly divided as to be like the troubled sea which cannot rest, or like a cage of unclean birds—every one fighting its fellow—or like a den of wild beasts which cease not to rend each other. When man cast off the yoke of the One God, he fell under bondage to many gods and many lords who struggle for supremacy and make the one kingdom into many rival principalities.

Since sin became natural to man, it became natural that man’s heart should be divided. But it must be united—that is the point and, therefore, the Covenant promise, “I will give them one heart.” For, dear Friends, in the matters of godliness, if our heart is not whole and entire in following after God, we cannot meet with acceptance. God never did and never will receive the homage of a divided heart! Alexander, when Darius proposed that the two great monarchs should divide the world, replied that there was only room for one sun in the heavens. What his ambition affirmed, God declares from the necessity of the case. Since one God fills all things, there is no room for another! It is not possible for a heart to be given up to falsehood and yet to be under the power of truth! It is idle to attempt to serve two such masters as holiness and iniquity.

God cannot smile upon an unhallowed compromise and allow men to bow in the house of Rimmon and yet worship in His holy Temple. God will have all or nothing—He will have us only, wholly, altogether and always His or else He will have nothing to do with us! False gods can bear a divided empire, but the true God cannot have it. You may assemble a parliament of idols, but Jehovah says, “I am God alone.” It was once proposed to the Roman senate to set up the image of Christ in the Pantheon among the gods, but when they were informed that He would not agree that any worship should be mingled with His own, the senate straightway refused Him a shrine. In this they acted in a manner consistent with itself—but those are altogether inexcusable who swear by the Lord and swear by Malcham!

We provoke the Lord to jealousy when we offer Him a corner in our souls and allow our vain thoughts to lodge within us. Errors can lie down like sheep in a field, but no error can lie side by side with the lordly lion of the Truth of God! There is no god but God. Jehovah, He is God! There is one Mediator between God and man—the Man Christ Jesus. Whatever a man sets up in his heart as the object of his affections in opposition to God is a vain, a vile, a vicious thing—and that man cannot be accepted of the Lord! Would you, then, serve God, O man? Him only must you serve. Would you bring unto Him an offering? You must first give Him your heart—your undivided heart. He cries, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He says not, “Give Me a share of it.”

He will not call that house His Temple where other things are worshipped as well as Himself. Abhorrence, not acceptance, shall fall to the lot of that man who is half-hearted with God! And is not this as it should be? Does not the love of Jesus deserve our wholehearted love in return? His love, which made Him become Man, deserves man’s entire homage! His love which led Him to the Cross deserves that we be crucified to the world for His sake! His love to death demands that we be dead to sin for His sake! His love which now rules all Heaven for our sakes deserves our soul, our life, our all. He gave Himself for us—His whole self—and we must give our whole hearts to Him.

In the chapter before us the Lord says, “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.” Shall we give half a heart to our wholehearted God? Shall we be double-minded when He is so intense in blessing us? Shall we love the world and hope to have the love of the Father in us at the same time? God will not have it and we do not wish it. The heart must be united! We have seen that it must be united for acceptance. We now note that it must be united for sincerity—a divided heart is a false heart. Where there is no unity of heart there is no truth in the spirit. Tell me that you love the world and I will tell you that the love of the world is enmity to God! Declare that you will serve Belial ever so little and I know that your service to Christ is but Judas’ service—mercenary, temporary, traitorous! Sincerity does not open the front door to Christ and the back gate to the devil.

Our heart must be united, next, for intensity of life. True religion needs the soul to be always at a fervent heat. “The kingdom of Heaven,” says our Lord, “suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” None climb the hill whereon the New Jerusalem is built except such as go on hands and knees and, laying aside every weight, give themselves wholly to the divine ascent. The pilgrim who hopes to reach the better land and makes a pleasure trip of it is under a mistake—it is hard traveling and requires ardor and perseverance. It is so in every good word and work. A lazy prayer requests a denial and shall have it. Half-hearted praise is an insult to God and everything in religion that is not done with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength—is a sin—however much it may look like a virtue! When we are most intense, we do not come up to the zeal which these important things deserve—how can we, then, imagine that we can please God with less than our best?

Know you not that our Lord has said, “Because you are lukewarm, I will spue you out of My mouth”? No stronger expression of disgust can possibly be used and this disgust is not for the bold and hardened rebel, but for the moderate disciple who served God without fail, but without zeal! God loves a whole heart, but half a heart is His abhorrence. Only those who run with all their might will win the race and, as the man of divided heart is lame in both his feet, he can have no hope of the prize. Lord, make my heart one that I may give it all to You and spend and be spent in Your one service, since You, only, are the One in whom my soul delights!

The heart must be united to be consecrated. Will God be served with broken cups and cracked flagons? And shall His altars be polluted with torn and mangled sacrifices? All the things in Heaven and earth which the Lord acknowledges as consecrated things are dedicated to Him and to Him alone. Can you imagine that within the Holy Place there would be an altar, part of which was used for sacrifices offered to Jehovah—and another portion for victims presented to Molech? The idea cannot be endured! The Lord said of old to Ezekiel, “Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, in their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their posts by My posts.” God will not account that to be consecrated to Himself which is used by another. Brethren, we must be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, or we cannot be consecrated to Him at all! We are unconsecrated, we are polluted, we are as things accursed if we are divided in heart!

Once more, we must have our heart united or else none of the blessings which are to follow in Covenant order can possibly reach us. For, look, “I will give them one heart.” And then it follows, “one way”—no man will have a consistent, uniform way while he has a divided heart! Read next, “That they shall fear Me forever.” But no man will fear God forever unless fear has taken possession of his whole heart! The convert may profess to follow the Lord for a while, but he will soon turn aside. He who does not begin with his whole heart will soon tire of the race. “Forever” is a long day and requires our whole soul to hold on and to hold out!

The Lord also promises that this shall be “for the good of them, and of their children after them.” But those who give God a part of their heart neither win a blessing for themselves nor for their posterity—they are not among the seed that God has blessed, neither can they be. Oh men and women, if your hearts run here and there and your aims and desires are scattered like a flock of sheep—running abroad according to their own willfulness—the Good Shepherd will not feed you! When He comes to visit you, He will gather all your desires and aspirations into one fold—and then He will lead you into green pastures and make you to lie down therein. As under the old Law men might not sow with mingled seed, nor wear garments of linen and woolen mixed, so neither can those of divided way and heart come into the favor of God.

So I leave the first head when I have noticed that, according to the text, God will give His chosen this unified heart—“I will give them one heart.” Ah, we shall never obtain this blessing other than as a free gift of God’s Grace! Teachers may put holy thoughts into our heads, but they cannot alter our hearts. We may unite our thoughts in some system of divinity, but we can never unite our desires upon the Divinity, Himself, except we experience a work of Grace upon our souls. The one Lord must make our heart one! He who once made the heart, must make it anew to make it one. “There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” But none of these seven ones would ever be ours unless it were added, “But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” and only that Grace can make our heart one!

This the Lord does, in part, by enlightenment through the light of His Holy Spirit. He shows us the worthlessness and deceptiveness of everything that would attract our hearts away from Jesus and from our God. And when we see the evil of the rival, we give our heart entirely to Him whom we worship. The Lord works this, also, by a still more thorough process, for He weans us from all idolatrous loves. He makes our carnal delights to become bitter to us, so that we turn aside from them with disgust, even as the Egyptians loathed to drink of the waters of the river which they formerly idolized, for the Lord had turned it into blood. He puts gall upon the breasts of the world and then we look elsewhere for comfort. It takes much to make us cry with David, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

Disease and death are summoned to shoot their fatal arrows at our dearest ones before we will give God the whole of our hearts. It is hard to love the creature much and yet not too much—it is a great thing to love our beloved ones in Christ and in subordination to Christ. Many a mother has had to lose child after child because she had stirred the jealousy of the best Beloved by dividing her heart between Him and her little ones. Many a man in business has fallen from wealth and prosperity because God saw that His heart went astray after His possessions. Doubtless many have had eloquence, talent and gifts of various kinds—and they doted upon these things until it has been necessary to remove them to unite their hearts upon God and so they have been laid aside by sickness, or the mind has lost its vigor, or the voice has failed and the gift has become a plague, rather than a comfort—and thus their heart has lost its idol and has turned unto the Lord.

If Christ is married to us, He will have use chaste unto Himself. What would we think of a man who is engaged to a woman and is found spending his love upon another as well? We say he is false and treacherous, and we utterly despise him. He ought to give his heart to her whom he has espoused and to love her with constancy, or he cannot be esteemed a pureminded man. Even so, in our dealings with the Lord Jesus, we must be watchful lest a single desire or affection should prove false to Him. Such a glorious Object of affection must fill the whole horizon of the soul, even as the sun fills all the heavens with his light and the stars are quite forgotten. All the rivers run into the sea and so must all our love run to Jesus. Oh Brothers and Sisters, shut the gates of your hearts lest any steal away by night from the Lord! The heart must be whole and wholly His.

Remember that you may have a great gash in your head and yet you may live. But if but a pin’s point should divide your heart, you will die. Ask for Divine Grace to say with the Psalmist, “O God, my heart is fixed.” Then, indeed, will you sing and give praise. This is not only important, it is essential! See, my Hearers, whether you have received this choice blessing of the Covenant of Grace, each one for himself—this holy, uniting work of the Spirit of God.

II. If we have this, we may now advance to the second blessing of the Covenant here mentioned, which is CONSISTENCY OF WALK—“I Will give them one way.” When the heart is united, the man lives for a single objective and that alone. Running in one direction, striving for one purpose, he keeps to the one way which leads to Heaven. As Christ is our one life, so is He our one way. Without this unity, there can be no truth in a man’s life. If he spins by day, and unravels at night, he is acting out a falsehood. If he runs to the right while men look at him, but trudges back, again, to the old post, as soon as men’s eyes are taken from him, his life is doubletalk—which is but a fine word for a lie!

It is a dreadful thing for a man’s word to be a lie, but for a man’s whole life to be a lie is still more horrible. We may have much more of the liar about us than we dream. Let us see to it and pray God, that, like Nathanael, we may have no guile in us. We may patch up our life with bits of religion and remnants of profession till it becomes like the beggar’s coat, of which no man knows the original—such a garment may be fit for a beggar—but shall we wear it? The seamless garment of the Truth of God, woven from the top throughout, adorns a Christian, but motley raiment proves a man a fool. Unless we follow the Lord with one heart and one way, we shall be found to be liars, after all, and if all liars have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the Second Death, what will be his lot whose life was false to itself and false to God? Inconsistency of behavior shows that the Truth of God is little set by in the heart.

We must, dear Friends, have one walk, or else our life will make no progress. He who travels in two opposite directions will find himself not moving forward. How is it that some professors are at much the same place as they occupied 20 years ago? Years have made them more gray, but not more gracious! At night they fastened up their boat in a little creek of the river and when the tide ran out, they waited and waited until, close to the end of its running—and then they went down a little way with the tide but very soon the stream ceased to turn—and so they drifted back with the flood and hitched up near the same muddy shore as before! Like a pendulum, they travel far, but get no farther! Growth, progress, advancement—none of these can they know, for they are double-minded— and so run to and fro in the earth and wear themselves out with vanity.

Multitudes of people are doing this! They make such progress one Sunday that they resolve, from now on, to live unto God. They begin at a steam engine rate! They plow the sea of life in their eagerness—they are like a vessel which has had new boilers put into her! But by tomorrow where are they? They have burst their boilers, or they have allowed the fires to go out—and from now on they are without spiritual life or motion and lie like logs upon the stream. This will not do! We must have one way of uniform vitality. I do not say that we can always make apparent progress at the same rate, for powerful under-currents affect our life and a man may be doing much who is successfully over adverse influences.

When a fierce wind is blowing, a captain at the will may be driven on shore if he does not steam right into the teeth of the hurricane. If he does this, is he not making the surest real progress if he manages to stay where he is and avoid the fatal danger? I say, then, that if we do not seem to advance, we may, nevertheless, in the judgment of God, be making true progress if we resist the mighty impulses which would otherwise hurry us on to destruction. But if we have two ways and steer this way and that way and every way by turns—with the view of pleasing men and making things easy all round—we cannot speed towards the desired haven. We must choose and keep to one way or we cannot attain to usefulness.

What influence has a double-minded man? If a man speaks for God, today, and so lives, tomorrow, that he virtually speaks for the devil, what power has he over those around him? How can he lead who has no way of his own? If your actions play fast and loose with truth. If your life is a checkerboard of black and white. If you are everything by turns and nothing long, what force, for good, can you possibly exert? Consistency and unity of life are necessary to usefulness! And I am sure it is necessary for anything like assurance. The best of Believers may, through holy anxiety, question their own state, but the man who has two ways may well sing—

*“‘Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His or am I not?”*

O you who are inconsistent in life, I must be bold to tell you that many of your friends are even more in doubt about you than you are about yourself! ‘Tis a point we also long to know, for we cannot tell whether you love the Lord or no, whether you are His or not! Sometimes we see happy signs about you and our charity hopes all things. But when we see you falling, again, into evil ways, we are distressed and even our charity weeps over you! How can we be assured of your change of heart when we see so little change of life? What a pity to lead such a life that it puzzles those who love you best to form any judgment as to your condition! If you were to die as you are, we should not know which way you would go, for your present path is dubious and intricate.

Would you go to Heaven or Hell? Common judgment would depend upon whether you died in one of your good fits or in one of your bad ones! Is this a pleasant way of putting it? O you who blow hot and cold, you are strange beings! You seem, to the common observer, to be too good for Hell and not good enough for Heaven! You cannot be divided at the last and, therefore, you may rest assured that the powers of evil will seize you as their own! No person can come to any true personal assurance while his life is of a double character. But if I know that I have one heart and that my heart belongs to my Lord—and that I have one way, a way of obedience to Him—then may I be assured that I am His!

If I cannot make such progress as I would, yet if I follow my Lord and keep my face steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, then I know where I am, what I am and where I am going! Holiness of life proves our faith and faith ensures our salvation—and salvation begets joy, peace, and confidence! “Hereby we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” A plain way will make our condition plain. This unity of way is a Covenant blessing—it comes not of man, neither by man, but God gives it to His own elect as one of the choice favors of His Grace—“I will give them one heart and one way.”

III. Briefly we notice, in the third place, the next Covenant blessing, STEADFASTNESS OF PRINCIPLE—“That they may fear Me forever.” Get the heart and the way right and then the spiritual force of the fear of God will abide in us in all days to come. Notice the basis of true religion—it is the fear of God—it is not said that they shall join a Church, make a profession and speak holy words forever. No, it is that, “They may fear Me forever.” Oh Brothers and Sisters, our religion must have the Lord in the very heart of it! We must be in constant contact with God and possess in our souls the true fear of God, for as this is the beginning of wisdom, so is it the only security of perseverance!

When God has given us a true spiritual fear of Him, it will abide all tests. Outward religion depends upon the excitement which created it. But the fear of the Lord lives on when all around it is frostbitten. What happens to many converts? The revivalists have gone and they have gone, too. But if God has given us one heart to love and obey Him and His fear is in us, we do not depend upon the mental thermometer! Like salamanders, we can live in the fire—and like seals, we can live in Arctic ice. We are not dependent upon special services and warm-hearted exhortations, for we have a springing well within us! We live upon the Master and not upon the servants— the Spirit of God does not leave us because certain good men have gone elsewhere. No, God has given us to fear Him forever.

Persecution comes, Christians are ridiculed in the workshop, they are pointed out in the street and an opprobrious name is hooted at them! Now we shall know who are God’s elect and who are not! Persecution acts as a winnowing fan and those who are light as chaff are driven away by its blast. But those who are true corn remain and are purified. Careless of man’s esteem, the truly God-fearing man with one heart holds on his one way and fears the Lord forever! Then, perhaps, comes a more serious test, the trial of prosperity. A man grows rich. He rises into another class of society. If he is not a real Christian, he will forsake the Lord. But if he is a true-born heir of the Kingdom of God, he will fear the Lord forever and consecrate his substance to Him. A heart wholly given to God will stand the wear and tear of life in all conditions, whether in honor or in contempt.

Poverty is a severe test to many and I have known numbers of professors forsake the House of God because, as they say, their clothes were not fit to come in. That is a poor excuse! I fear their hearts were not fit to come in! The fear of God would make the godly man swallow his pride and follow Christ in rags—he will bear a famine of bread and a famine of water—but he cannot endure a famine of the Word of God! His soul must be fed and so he must and will be found where the Lord’s Table is spread with the Bread of Heaven. When God stripped Job of all his riches, it was then that his integrity was seen and proven.

With some of you old age is creeping on, but I rejoice to know that your Grace is not decaying! You are becoming deaf; eyesight is failing you and your limbs are trembling—but you can still hear the voice of the Lord and behold the beauties of His Word and run in the ways of His statutes! If God has given the young man one heart and one way, he will fear God forever and will not forsake the Lord when infirmities multiply upon him. He will bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright! If our soul is wholly Christ’s, we can never go back to perdition—“Who shall separate us from the love of God?”

The Lord has cast such cords of love about us that He holds us fast! We can lose father and mother, yes, and our own lives, also, but we cannot forsake the Lord whose blood has bought us from the lowest Hell! We are bound for the Kingdom—who shall keep us out of it? We have been shot like arrows from the bow of God and we must speed onward till we rest in the target of eternal bliss! Oh what a mercy it is to have within us a fear of God which is not to last for a period of years, but forever!

IV. Very hurriedly I mention the next thing, which is PERSONAL BLESSEDNESS, “for the good of them.” Where God gives us one heart, one way and steadfast principle, it must be for our good in the highest sense. Tell me who are the happiest Christians. They will be found to be wholehearted Christians! When heart and life are divided, happiness leaks through the crack. We must be steady in the pursuit of righteousness if we would abide in the enjoyment of peace. Brothers and Sisters, if you want to know the sweetness of religion, you must know the depth of it! The foam upon the top of the sacred cup is often bitter, but at the bottom lies the essence of sweetness. I will not say, drink deep or drink not at all, but I will say this, that those who are content with superficial godliness have no idea of the delights which dwell in the deep places of communion with God.

Plunge into the River of Life! Let body, soul and spirit be immersed into its floods and you shall swim in unspeakable joy! Lose sight of the shores of worldliness and you shall see God’s wonders in the deeps! In intense devotion to the Lord you will find the rare jewel, satisfaction. “O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord!” Sweet content never dwells with half-heartedness. This shall be for your good every way—for your guidance in business, for your direction in devotion, for the good of your mind here—for the good of your spirit hereafter. To be endowed by Grace with one heart and one way is to be rendered fit to live and fit to die! I am sure if you read the biographies of men, if they are fairly written, you will find that the good, the true, the great, the noble were single-minded.

Those who have the clearest sight of God are the pure in heart and the undivided in heart—and those who enjoy a Heaven below are those whose hearts and lives are engrossed with heavenly things. The blessed life is that of fervent love and thorough consecration. Do these things abound among you, Brethren? I believe that in this assembly there are more wholehearted Christian men and women than I am likely to meet with in any other gathering. And yet, for all that, I cannot help fearing that even here there are professing Christians who never knew what it was to give their hearts perfectly to God’s work, or to the love of Jesus!

When these people come to the hour of trouble, they are dispirited and rebellious. Would it be so if they were perfectly resigned to God’s will? These people are often short of spiritual comforts. Would they be short of them if they had made a clean and clear surrender to their God? I believe they would not. Men who will not eat are starved and weak—and many a disease finds soil within them through the weakness of their constitution. But those who feed on Christ, the Bread of Heaven, are nourished and strong—and are preserved from a thousand ills by that very fact. O God the Holy Spirit, I cannot talk to Christ’s servants as I wish to do, but You can move them, now, to aspire after a complete giving up of themselves to You, for this shall be for their good!

V. The last is a RELATIVE BLESSING—“And for their children after them.” Wholehearted Christians are usually blessed with a posterity of a like kind. Consecrated men and women live to see their children following in their steps. When sons and daughters forsake the ways of godliness, do you wonder, when you spy out the home life of their parents? If religion is a sham, do you expect frank young men to respect it? If the father was hollow-hearted in his profession, will not the children despise it? The genuine, thoroughbred Christian is often hated, but he is never the object of contempt. Men may ridicule him and say that he is a fool, but they cannot help admitting that he is happy! And the wiser sort among them wish that they were such fools, themselves!

Be thorough and true, and your family will respect your faith. The almost inevitable consequence of respect in a child towards his parent is a desire to imitate him. It is not always so, but as a rule it is so. If the parents live unto God in a thorough-hearted way, their sons and daughters aspire to the same thing. They see the beauty of religion at home around the fireside and their conscience, being quickened, lead them to pray to God that they may have the same piety, so that when they, themselves, commence a household, they may enjoy the same happiness. Certainly if any of you are the children of eminently godly parents and are living in sin, your parents’ lives condemn you!

Are they in Heaven? Dare you go to their grave and sit upon the grassy hillock and think of how you are living? It will force tears to your eyes to contrast yourself with them! You may well tremble to think that you neglect your mother’s Savior, that you forget your father’s God! It will go hard with those who leap into Hell-fire over a father’s prayers and a mother’s entreaties—yet some seem desperately resolved on such suicide! I hope these are comparatively few and that it is still true, “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Temporal and spiritual blessings come upon households where the heads of the family are completely consecrated to God. Try it! Try it! I will be bound that you will find it profitable! If at the Last Great Day you shall find that consecration to Christ is an error, I will be willing to bear the blame myself! I am not afraid that anyone among you will ever censure me for having excited you into a too fervent zeal, or a too devoted life!

Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid of those of you who go ankle deep into religion and never venture further—I am afraid lest you should, by-andby, return to the shore! But as for you who plunge into the center of the stream and find waters to swim in, I have no fears! You shall be borne onward by a current ever increasing in strength till in the ocean of eternal love you lose yourselves in Heaven above! I can wish you no greater blessing than that the Holy Spirit may make you wholehearted, consistent, persistent, ardent, established and persevering in the things of God! On you and on your household my heart pronounces this benediction—the Lord give you one heart and one way that you may fear Him forever. Amen.

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PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS

NO. 2108  
DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1889, **BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will make an Everlasti ng Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” Jeremiah 32:40.

LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife—I felt great tenderness and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy—the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. Today, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast His saints today! May the Comforter who convicts of sin now come to cheer us with the Promise!  
We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness—it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation—not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil—but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of Divine Grace.  
May the Lord show us how He establishes His saints in righteousness and makes the works which He has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of His appearing!  
We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in Covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of Covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God and are even in league with God. God has made with them a Covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into Covenant with men. But He has done so. God has pledged Himself to His people and they have, in return, through His Grace, pledged themselves to God.  
These are Heaven’s Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This Covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed—it is not a thing of passing time—but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!  
These Covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that He is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has He appeared to you and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you”?  
Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? Your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has He given Christ to you? Has He made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, He has done you good. For these gifts are the outcome of the Covenant and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.  
These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge you, whether it is so in your own case. This is the Covenant promise—“I will put My fear in their hearts.” Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please Him? Do you desire to be like He is? Are you like He is in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short? And does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious Presence of God your Heaven below? Is it all the Heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the Covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the Everlasting Covenant—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the Covenant—“I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that Covenant—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this. But I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak, is, in itself, enough for the delight of all true Believers.

When you have an abundance of solid food to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask. Nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings—however badly I may carve it—you who have appetites will not fail to feed on it. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this Covenant is called “a new Covenant.” And it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto His people, that if they would keep His Laws and walk in His statutes, He would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full—all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey His Law.  
Truly, Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their needs, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels’ food. He sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night He lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He Himself walked in the midst of them and revealed Himself to them as He had done to no other nation—they were a people near unto Him, a nation beloved of the Lord.  
But under the exceedingly favorable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares and no neighbors to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God. No, they did not even remain faithful to Him as their God. For they worshipped a molten image and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eats grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs. And they cried, “These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of  
Egypt.”  
Thus they broke the Covenant in a most wanton and wicked manner. Such a Covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people—therefore the Lord, in His immeasurable Grace, resolves to make with them a Covenant of a new kind, which cannot, thus, be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old Covenant—the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32—“Which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them.”  
After long patience, He visited them for their iniquities and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into His rest. Later He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them. He made them to be carried away captive. And at last He allowed the Romans to burn their holy city and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the Covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them.  
But in these days the Lord has, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all Believers, a new Covenant. Not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new Covenants. For they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the Covenant of Grace— they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about Divine Grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God’s mercy and then combine with it conditionswhich make it justicerather than Grace.  
Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation is of Divine Grace, it is not of works—otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, it is not of Divine Grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new Covenant is all of Grace, from its first letter to its closing word. And we shall have to show you this as we go on.  
It is an “everlasting” Covenant, however—that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration. But this is an “Everlasting Covenant.” Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word “everlasting” means lasting forever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that “an Everlasting Covenant” means a Covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?  
The first reason why it is an Everlasting Covenant is that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The Covenant of Works was made with the race in the first Adam. But the first Adam was faulty and failed full soon. He could not bear the stress of his responsibility and so that Covenant was broken. But the surety of the new Covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ. And He is not faulty but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of His chosen and He stands for them—they are regarded as members of His body and He is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative.  
The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people. And because He cannot fail—for in Him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the Covenant of which He is the Surety must stand. He abides forever in His Melchizedek priesthood and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in His nature and in His work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain and, therefore, the Covenant stands in Him.  
When it is written, “I have given Him for a Covenant to My people,” we see that the Covenant cannot fail, because He cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all His believing people in the Covenant, therefore the Covenant is everlasting.  
Next, the Covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it. But when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which He was the Surety. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by His own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government and made amends to holiness for man’s offenses.  
The Law is more glorified by His atoning death than it was dishonored by man’s sin. This Man has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. And that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the Covenant that He sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the Covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remains only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of Grace and Truth, such as these—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.  
“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.” Will not God be true to His engagements? Yes, verily. When He makes a Covenant and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no Word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.  
Furthermore, the Covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the Free Grace of God. The first Covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the Law, God would bless them. But they failed through disobedience and inherited the curse. The Divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit but according to mercy. Not according to the personal character of men but according to the personal character of God. Not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform.  
Sovereign Grace declares that He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The Covenant which saves men according to God’s will and good pleasure is founded upon a rock. For God’s Free Grace is always the same, and God’s sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, “I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the Covenant. But if it is of pure Divine Grace, then the Covenant is everlasting.  
Again, in the Everlasting Covenant, everythingthat can be supposed to be a condition is providedby God’s Grace. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent. But the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to giverepentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Spirit works in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter Heaven, that we should be holy. But the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.  
All that is required is also supplied. If there is, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or Grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a Covenant giftwhich will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that a condition, which might seem to put the Covenant in danger, is so surely provided for that there arises no flaw or fracture.  
Moreover, the Covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God’s working, He always advances from the good to the better. The old Law was put away because He found fault with it, and therefore the new Covenant must last till a fault can be found with it—which will never be. This is the glory which excels—no brightness can exceed the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God—or more safe to man—than the plan of salvation set forth in the Covenant of Grace.  
The moon gives way to the sun and the sun gives way to a luster which shall exceed the light of seven days. But what is to supersede the light of Free Grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-Begotten that we might live through Him? The Covenant of Grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of Divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last forever.  
Beloved, rest in the Everlasting Covenant as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was Divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” to be made with guilty man? It was also Divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Savior like the Only-Begotten of the Father? Who could have given Him for a Covenant, but the Father?  
The Covenant is Divine in its maintenance. Note well the Word of the Lord—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” He does not say, “They shall make a covenant with Me.” But, “ Iwill make a covenant with them.” That God is the maker of the Covenant is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even His promise and His oath—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head. And very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.  
II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT—“I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”  
Please notice the terms here—the Lord does not merely say, “I will not turn away from them,” but, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” He will not cease to work good for His chosen. The Lord is always doing His people good. And here He promises that He will never leave off blessing them. Not only will He always love them but He will always prove His love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of His goodness. In effect He says, “I will not cease blessing them. I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good.”  
Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in His doings towards His Covenanted ones? He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because He has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks and in His voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good”—and we are sure that He will not forfeit His Word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons—this suffices, the Lord has said it. Has He said and will He not do it?  
Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why He should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when He began to do them good, they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of Divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state.  
In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because He could see no good in us, why did He begin to do us good when we were without desire towards Him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants and a dunghill of sins when He began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first He revealed His love towards us. The same motive which led Him to begin leads Him to continue. And that motive is nothing but His Grace.  
Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the Believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that He foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises His heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit—He proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, He entered into a Covenant with us and began to bless us with all our sin before His mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the Covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account.  
There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet.” He entered into a Covenant that He would not turn away from us, to do us good. And no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to Him when He thus pledged His Word of Grace.  
Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God, at this day, viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved and yet He promised to do us good—  
“He saw me ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all.”  
And if today I am sinful, if today I have to groan by reason of my evil nature—I am but where I was when He chose me and called me and redeemed me by the blood of His Son.  
“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We were undeserving objects upon whom He bestowed His mercy, out of no motive but that which He drew from His own nature. And if we are still undeserving, His Grace is still the same. If it is so, that He still deals with us in the way of Grace, it is evident that He still views us as undeserving. And why should He not do good towards us now as He did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.  
Moreover, remember that He sees us now in Christ. Behold, He has put His people into the hands of His dear Son. He has even put us into Christ’s body—“for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” He sees us in Christ to have died, in Him to have been buried, and in Him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in Him are we well-pleasing to the Father. Our being in Him identifies us with Him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ’s acceptance with God, it stands firmly and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good.  
If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy. But in Jesus

our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ, He cannot reject His people—until He repudiates the atonement and the resurrection—He cannot cast away any of those with whom He has entered into Covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.  
The Lord will not turn away from His people, from doing them good, because He has shown them so much kindness already. And all that He has done would be lost if He did not go through with it. When He gave His Son, He gave us a sure pledge that He meant to finish His work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” But that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out His whole Deity to save His people and has given His whole Self in the Person of the Well-Beloved for our redemption.  
And can you believe that He will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous! Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favored that we dare not fear that His favor toward us will cease. So heavenly, so Divine, is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely that the secret of the Lord is with us, and He will forever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed.  
Like Paul, each one of us may say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that He will complete His designs of Grace.  
Beloved, we feel sure that He will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when He has hidden His face He has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of His countenance, but never the love of His heart. When the Lord has turned away His face from His people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for His love. How often He has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves His Spirit!  
When we have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, you tried people of God—the Lord’s chastening has always been for our good. When the Lord has bruised us till the wound has been blue, our heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away our comforts, He has done us good by driving us closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched us by our losses and made us healthy by our sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when He is seen in dark colors, has not turned away from doing us good—we are persuaded that He will never cease daily to load us with benefits.  
Moreover, I close with this argument—that He has involved His honor in the salvation of His people. If the Lord’s chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of His redemption? Will not the Enemy say of the Lord, “He had not the power to carry out His Covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them”? Shall that ever be said of God? Will He thus lose the glory of His omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail—neither can I conceive that He can withdraw His declarations of love to those with whom He is in Covenant.  
The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, faints not, neither is weary. “He is in one mind and who can turn Him?” “He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.” Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing —  
“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest ofHis sheep;  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.”  
Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence—for the text is the inspired Word of God—and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus says the Lord, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”  
III. The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.”  
Let me read very distinctly these words—“They shall not depart from Me.” If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints—“They SHALL NOT depart from Me.” The salvation of those who are in Covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive—“They shall not depart from Me.”  
It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord and wholly lose the life of God—what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the Believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly.  
If a man abides not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it—if Divine Grace were gone, safety would be gone. “Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” “If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” If the work of Grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Spirit has, indeed, regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done?  
There is such a thing as being “born again.” But there is no such thing as being born again and again. Regeneration is once and for all—it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, “Though I go back to my old sin and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a Believer.”  
No! No, profane talker! The text says not, “They shall be saved though they depart from Me.” But, “They shall not departfrom Me”—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! For they must perish and with them no Covenant of peace has ever been made.  
Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, “I will put them where they shall not be tempted. I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth.” No, the Lord does not take His people out of the world. But He allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict but, “He gives us the victory.”  
We are tempted as was our Lord. But we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—“They shall not depart from Me.” What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted—but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to Him and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.  
How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, “that the man who is converted may live as he likes.” We have never said so. We have never even thoughtso. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes. Or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he couldlive as he likes, he would never sin but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live—but that they shall not depart from Him!  
This is effected by putting a Divine principle within their hearts. The Lord says, “I will put My fear in their hearts.” It would never be found there if He did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. “I will put My fear in their hearts.” That is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before His Law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. “I will put My fear in their hearts” is the first great act of conversion—and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart.  
The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones. For the Lord still puts His fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell—He has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all His own and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, He knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God’s great holdfast upon His people, “I will put My fear in their hearts.”  
What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see His infinite greatness and the fact that He is everywhere present with us. And then, filled with a devout sense of His Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, “My fear,” also intend filial fear. God is our Father and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” This child-like love kindles in us a fear to grieveHim whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from Him.  
There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex Him? He favors me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to His will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot. And when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favor, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander.  
Our cry is, “The Lord bathes me in His love, He indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with Himself— how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Loved of Him so especially and united to Him by an Everlasting Covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God! But it is our joy to do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.  
See, Beloved, this perseverance of the saints is perseverance in holiness—“They shall not depart from Me.” If the Grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, He has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life but He has said it—“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”  
The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed. It is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for Heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth which cannot die—for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to Glory.  
If any disagree with what I have said, I cannot help it. But I would beg them not to differ from the text. For the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40). There it stands, “They shall not depart from Me.” But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of His people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God—and the Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word. For faith comes by hearing and holy fear comes through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word.  
That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures. For as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed Truth and meditation thereon. Study the Doctrines of Grace and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the Gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts.  
Be much in private prayer. For that stirs up the fire and makes it burn more brilliantly. Seek to live near to God, to abide in Him. For as you abide in Him and His Words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit and so shall you be His disciples. I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might and many were comforted by it. But, better still, many were set thinking and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward.  
Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door but it is all door and when you get in, there is nothing to be had. You are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not. But if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the Covenant of Grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them.  
“Oh,” says one, “if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it! If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it. But if it is pure silver all through, let me have it. Does the gift of Divine Grace make us partakers of the Divine nature and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? Then let us have it.” I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness.  
The sweet meat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—If I give myself to Christ, He will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to Him and He keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, “They shall not depart from Me!”  
To use an old figure—be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time—so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life—take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you forever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour.  
Faith in the Everlasting Covenant stirs my heart’s blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm! I can never give up my belief in what the Lord has said, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hebrews 8; 10:12-39. HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 229, 228.  
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PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS  
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**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” Jeremiah 32:40.**

LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife—I felt great tenderness and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy—the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. Today, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast His saints today! May the Comforter who convicts of sin now come to cheer us with the Promise!  
We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness—it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation—not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil—but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of Divine Grace.  
May the Lord show us how He establishes His saints in righteousness and makes the works which He has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of His appearing!  
We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in Covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of Covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God and are even in league with God. God has made with them a Covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into Covenant with men. But He has done so. God has pledged Himself to His people and they have, in return, through His Grace, pledged themselves to God.  
These are Heaven’s Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This Covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed—it is not a thing of passing time—but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!  
These Covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that He is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has He appeared to you and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you”?  
Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? Your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has He given Christ to you? Has He made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, He has done you good. For these gifts are the outcome of the Covenant and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.  
These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge you, whether it is so in your own case. This is the Covenant promise—“I will put My fear in their hearts.” Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please Him? Do you desire to be like He is? Are you like He is in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short? And does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious Presence of God your Heaven below? Is it all the Heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the Covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.  
This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the Everlasting Covenant—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the Covenant—“I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that Covenant—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this. But I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak, is, in itself, enough for the delight of all true Believers.  
When you have an abundance of solid food to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask. Nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings—however badly I may carve it—you who have appetites will not fail to feed on it. May the Holy Spirit make it so!  
I. First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.”  
In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this Covenant is called “a new Covenant.” And it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto His people, that if they would keep His Laws and walk in His statutes, He would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full—all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey His Law.  
Truly, Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their needs, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels’ food. He sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night He lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He Himself walked in the midst of them and revealed Himself to them as He had done to no other nation— they were a people near unto Him, a nation beloved of the Lord.  
But under the exceedingly favorable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares and no neighbors to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God. No, they did not even remain faithful to Him as their God. For they worshipped a molten image and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eats grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that has horns and hoofs. And they cried, “These be your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”  
Thus they broke the Covenant in a most wanton and wicked manner. Such a Covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people—therefore the Lord, in His immeasurable Grace, resolves to make with them a Covenant of a new kind, which cannot, thus, be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old Covenant—the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32—“Which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them.”  
After long patience, He visited them for their iniquities and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into His rest. Later He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them. He made them to be carried away captive. And at last He allowed the Romans to burn their holy city and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the Covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them.  
But in these days the Lord has, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all Believers, a new Covenant. Not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new Covenants. For they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the Covenant of Grace— they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about Divine Grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God’s mercy and then combine with it conditions which make it justice rather than Grace.  
Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation is of Divine Grace, it is not of works—otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of works, it is not of Divine Grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new Covenant is all of Grace, from its first letter to its closing word. And we shall have to show you this as we go on.  
It is an “everlasting” Covenant, however—that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration. But this is an “Everlasting Covenant.” Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word “everlasting” means lasting forever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that “an Everlasting Covenant” means a Covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?  
The first reason why it is an Everlasting Covenant is that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The Covenant of Works was made with the race in the first Adam. But the first Adam was faulty and failed full soon. He could not bear the stress of his responsibility and so that Covenant was broken. But the surety of the new Covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ. And He is not faulty but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of His chosen and He stands for them—they are regarded as members of His body and He is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative.  
The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people. And because He cannot fail—for in Him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the Covenant of which He is the Surety must stand. He abides forever in His Melchizedek priesthood and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in His nature and in His work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain and, therefore, the Covenant stands in Him.  
When it is written, “I have given Him for a Covenant to My people,” we see that the Covenant cannot fail, because He cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all His believing people in the Covenant, therefore the Covenant is everlasting.  
Next, the Covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it. But when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which He was the Surety. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by His own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government and made amends to holiness for man’s offenses.  
The Law is more glorified by His atoning death than it was dishonored by man’s sin. This Man has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. And that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the Covenant that He sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the Covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remains only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of Grace and Truth, such as these—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.  
“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.” Will not God be true to His engagements? Yes, verily. When He makes a Covenant and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no Word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.  
Furthermore, the Covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the Free Grace of God. The first Covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the Law, God would bless them. But they failed through disobedience and inherited the curse. The Divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit but according to mercy. Not according to the personal character of men but according to the personal character of God. Not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform.  
Sovereign Grace declares that He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The Covenant which saves men according to God’s will and good pleasure is founded upon a rock. For God’s Free Grace is always the same, and God’s sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, “I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the Covenant. But if it is of pure Divine Grace, then the Covenant is everlasting.  
Again, in the Everlasting Covenant, everything that can be supposed to be a condition is provided by God’s Grace. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent. But the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Spirit works in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter Heaven, that we should be holy. But the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.  
All that is required is also supplied. If there is, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or Grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a Covenant gift which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that a condition, which might seem to put the Covenant in danger, is so surely provided for that there arises no flaw or fracture.  
Moreover, the Covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God’s working, He always advances from the good to the better. The old Law was put away because He found fault with it, and therefore the new Covenant must last till a fault can be found with it—which will never be. This is the glory which excels—no brightness can exceed the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God—or more safe to man—than the plan of salvation set forth in the Covenant of Grace.  
The moon gives way to the sun and the sun gives way to a luster which shall exceed the light of seven days. But what is to supersede the light of Free Grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the OnlyBegotten that we might live through Him? The Covenant of Grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of Divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last forever.  
Beloved, rest in the Everlasting Covenant as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was Divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” to be made with guilty man? It was also Divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Savior like the Only-Begotten of the Father? Who could have given Him for a Covenant, but the Father? The Covenant is Divine in its maintenance. Note well the Word of the Lord—“I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.” He does not say, “They shall make a covenant with Me.” But, “I will make a covenant with them.” That God is the maker of the Covenant is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even His promise and His oath—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head. And very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.  
II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT—“I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”  
Please notice the terms here—the Lord does not merely say, “I will not turn away from them,” but, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” He will not cease to work good for His chosen. The Lord is always doing His people good. And here He promises that He will never leave off blessing them. Not only will He always love them but He will always prove His love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of His goodness. In effect He says, “I will not cease blessing them. I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good.”  
Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in His doings towards His Covenanted ones? He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because He has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks and in His voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good”—and we are sure that He will not forfeit His Word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons—this suffices, the Lord has said it. Has He said and will He not do it?  
Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why He should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when He began to do them good, they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of Divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state.  
In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because He could see no good in us, why did He begin to do us good when we were without desire towards Him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants and a dunghill of sins when He began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first He revealed His love towards us. The same motive which led Him to begin leads Him to continue. And that motive is nothing but His Grace.  
Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the Believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that He foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises His heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit—He proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, He entered into a Covenant with us and began to bless us with all our sin before His mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the Covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account.  
There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet.” He entered into a Covenant that He would not turn away from us, to do us good. And no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to Him when He thus pledged His Word of Grace.  
Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God, at this day, viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved and yet He promised to do us good—

*“He saw me ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all.”*  
And if today I am sinful, if today I have to groan by reason of my evil nature—I am but where I was when He chose me and called me and redeemed me by the blood of His Son.

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We were undeserving objects upon whom He bestowed His mercy, out of no motive but that which He drew from His own nature. And if we are still undeserving, His Grace is still the same. If it is so, that He still deals with us in the way of Grace, it is evident that He still views us as undeserving. And why should He not do good towards us now as He did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that He sees us now in Christ. Behold, He has put His people into the hands of His dear Son. He has even put us into Christ’s body—“for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” He sees us in Christ to have died, in Him to have been buried, and in Him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in Him are we well-pleasing to the Father. Our being in Him identifies us with Him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ’s acceptance with God, it stands firmly and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good.

If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy. But in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ, He cannot reject His people— until He repudiates the atonement and the resurrection—He cannot cast away any of those with whom He has entered into Covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from His people, from doing them good, because He has shown them so much kindness already. And all that He has done would be lost if He did not go through with it. When He gave His Son, He gave us a sure pledge that He meant to finish His work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” But that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out His whole Deity to save His people and has given His whole Self in the Person of the Well-Beloved for our redemption.

And can you believe that He will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous! Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favored that we dare not fear that His favor toward us will cease. So heavenly, so Divine, is the

sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely that the secret of the Lord is with us, and He will forever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed.

Like Paul, each one of us may say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that He will complete His designs of Grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that He will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when He has hidden His face He has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of His countenance, but never the love of His heart. When the Lord has turned away His face from His people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for His love. How often He has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves His Spirit!

When we have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, you tried people of God—the Lord’s chastening has always been for our good. When the Lord has bruised us till the wound has been blue, our heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away our comforts, He has done us good by driving us closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched us by our losses and made us healthy by our sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when He is seen in dark colors, has not turned away from doing us good—we are persuaded that He will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument—that He has involved His honor in the salvation of His people. If the Lord’s chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of His redemption? Will not the Enemy say of the Lord, “He had not the power to carry out His Covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them”? Shall that ever be said of God? Will He thus lose the glory of His omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail—neither can I conceive that He can withdraw His declarations of love to those with whom He is in Covenant.

The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, faints not, neither is weary. “He is in one mind and who can turn Him?” “He will ever be mindful of His Covenant.” Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing —

*“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep;  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.”*

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence—for the text is the inspired Word of God—and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus says the Lord, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

III. The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.”

Let me read very distinctly these words—“They shall not depart from Me.” If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints—“They SHALL NOT depart from Me.” The salvation of those who are in Covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive—“They shall not depart from Me.”

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord and wholly lose the life of God—what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the Believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly.

If a man abides not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it—if Divine Grace were gone, safety would be gone. “Salt is good: but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” “If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” If the work of Grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Spirit has, indeed, regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done?

There is such a thing as being “born again.” But there is no such thing as being born again and again. Regeneration is once and for all—it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, “Though I go back to my old sin and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a Believer.”

No! No, profane talker! The text says not, “They shall be saved though they depart from Me.” But, “They shall not depart from Me”—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! For they must perish and with them no Covenant of peace has ever been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, “I will put them where they shall not be tempted. I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth.” No, the Lord does not take His people out of the world. But He allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict but, “He gives us the victory.”  
We are tempted as was our Lord. But we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—“They shall not depart from Me.” What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted—but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to Him and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, “that the man who is converted may live as he likes.” We have never said so. We have never even thought so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes. Or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he could live as he likes, he would never sin but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live—but that they shall not depart from Him!

This is effected by putting a Divine principle within their hearts. The Lord says, “I will put My fear in their hearts.” It would never be found there if He did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. “I will put My fear in their hearts.” That is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before His Law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot and to obey the Lord whom once we defied. “I will put My fear in their hearts” is the first great act of conversion—and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart.

The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones. For the Lord still puts His fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell—He has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all His own and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, He knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God’s great holdfast upon His people, “I will put My fear in their hearts.”

What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see His infinite greatness and the fact that He is everywhere present with us. And then, filled with a devout sense of His Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, “My fear,” also intend filial fear. God is our Father and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” This childlike love kindles in us a fear to grieve Him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from Him.

There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex Him? He favors me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to His will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot. And when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favor, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander.

Our cry is, “The Lord bathes me in His love, He indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with Himself—how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Loved of Him so especially and united to Him by an Everlasting Covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God! But it is our joy to do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

See, Beloved, this perseverance of the saints is perseverance in holiness—“They shall not depart from Me.” If the Grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, He has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life but He has said it—“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed. It is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for Heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth which cannot die—for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to Glory.

If any disagree with what I have said, I cannot help it. But I would beg them not to differ from the text. For the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40). There it stands, “They shall not depart from Me.” But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of His people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God—and the Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word. For faith comes by hearing and holy fear comes through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word.

That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures. For as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed Truth and meditation thereon. Study the Doctrines of Grace and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the Gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts.

Be much in private prayer. For that stirs up the fire and makes it burn more brilliantly. Seek to live near to God, to abide in Him. For as you abide in Him and His Words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit and so shall you be His disciples. I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might and many were comforted by it. But, better still, many were set thinking and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward.

Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door but it is all door and when you get in, there is nothing to be had. You are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not. But if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the Covenant of Grace that those who are wise are

anxious to obtain them.  
“Oh,” says one, “if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration  
means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it! If  
salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it. But  
if it is pure silver all through, let me have it. Does the gift of Divine Grace  
make us partakers of the Divine nature and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? Then let us have it.” I pray  
that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness. The sweet meat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that  
salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young  
man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the  
Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—If I give myself to Christ, He  
will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to Him and He keeps me. Oh,  
how musical these words, “They shall not depart from Me!”  
To use an old figure—be sure that you take a ticket all the way  
through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time—  
so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe  
in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life—take a ticket all the  
way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other  
ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets  
are forgeries. He that cannot keep you forever cannot keep you a day. If  
the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an  
hour.  
Faith in the Everlasting Covenant stirs my heart’s blood, fills me with  
grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm! I can  
never give up my belief in what the Lord has said, “And I will make an  
everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do  
them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart  
from Me.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hebrews 8; 10:12-39.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 229, 228.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0 . Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2036 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE WHOLE-HEARTEDNESS OF GOD IN BLESSING HIS PEOPLE  
NO. 2036

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, JULY 29, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.” Jeremiah 32:41.**

WE cannot help looking for the restoration of the scattered Israelites to the land which God has given to them by a covenant of salt—we also look for the time when they shall believe in the Messiah whom they have rejected, and shall rejoice in Jesus of Nazareth whom today they despise. There is great encouragement in prophecy to those who work among the seed of Israel. And it is greatly needed, for of all mission fields it has been commonly represented to be one of the most barren and upon the work the utmost ridicule has been poured.

God has, therefore, supplied our faith with encouragements larger than we have in almost any other direction of service. Let those who believe work on! Those who believe not may give it up. They shall not have the honor of having helped to gather together the ancient nation to which our Lord Himself belonged. For be it never forgotten that Jesus was a Jew. If we, who are branches of the wild olive, have been engrafted into the good olive, how much more easy shall it be, when God wills it, that the natural branches, which for a while were cut off because of unbelief, should be again grafted into their own native stock?

God send it speedily! Oh, that it were so even now! May the house of Israel look on Him whom they have pierced and turn unto Him with all their hearts. At present we have to say and sing—

*“You chosen seed of Israel’s race,  
A remnant weak and small;  
Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”*

It is a rule, in interpreting the Word of God, that the promises made to the natural Israel, so far as they are spiritual, belong to the spiritual Israel.

Believers in Christ are the true seed of Abraham. “Though Abraham is ignorant of us and Sara acknowledge us not,” after the flesh, yet Abraham is the father of the faithful. And they that are faithful justly claim him to be their father. They that are of faith are of the spiritual seed of Abraham, who believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. The covenant made with Abraham is a covenant made with all who are in Abraham, with all the seed born according to promise, as was Isaac. And we may lay hold, without doubt or hesitancy, upon all the spiritual promises made to the seed of Israel as being made to all who, like Israel, know

what it is to wrestle with God and to prevail.

I have, therefore, no doubt whatever in taking such a promise as this and using it with reference to the whole company of God’s elect—those peculiar people, whom God has created for Himself, who shall show forth His praise. Viewed in that light, we have before us a text of exceeding glory, one of those great Scriptures that make me fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord causes to pass before me. I have presumed to handle it, but I do not presume to say that I can take you into its innermost meaning. I shall pick up a nugget here and there which I find upon the surface. But I am painfully conscious that the great gold-mines underneath are not, as yet, within my reach.

Oh, that we had Divine Grace to dig deeper! Oh, that we had greater capacity for comprehending the heights, depths, lengths and breadths of the love of God to His people! I am forced to say to each one of you, “Silver and gold have I none. But such as I have I give you.” I can only present to my hearers such as I am able to grasp with my own mind. May the Lord bless it!

I shall say to you, first, consider this text for instruction. Secondly, consider it with evidence. And thirdly, consider the inferences which naturally flow from it, Oh, that the Holy Spirit may take of these deep things of God and show them unto you!

I. First, CONSIDER OUR TEXT FOR INSTRUCTION. When you do so, the first thought is, God blesses His people heartily. “I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart.” Notice, in passing, that word “assuredly.” For it confirms the word as full of truth and certainty. There must be no doubt here— assuredly banishes it utterly. When the Lord looks upon His chosen and opens His liberal hand towards them, assuredly His heart goes with His hand. There are some works of God in which His heart does not go. He smites the guilty with His left hand. But He says, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but that he turn unto Me and live.”

But when He is dealing with His right hand of loving kindness, His heart goes out with His hand. O Beloved, you that receive His Grace may know assuredly that besides the blessings which you receive, you also have God’s whole heart. He blesses you with His whole soul or life. He concentrates His nature upon you that He may bless you to the full. He is slow to wrath but He is swift to mercy, for He delights in it. When He deals out His Grace to His people, then you see the loving God, for “God is love.” And you see the living God, for He blesses you with His whole soul. His Godhead is displayed in the deeds of His love.

There is a way of doing things and there is another way of doing things—a work can be done and done according to rule and no great fault can be found with it. But yet it may be done listlessly and as a matter of routine. Another worker takes pleasure in his work and throws his heart and soul into it. The result will show the difference in points which one can hardly mention in words. A painting with a great painter’s heart and soul in it is a rare treasure. When the worker puts himself forth to his utmost, that he may do the work in the noblest fashion, the product is most precious. Even so has God determined that in the wonders of His Grace, through Jesus Christ, He will show Himself more fully than in any other labor to which He has set His hand. No other work so clearly displays the heart of Jehovah.

But then, next, He does this work of blessing His people thoughtfully, for it is added, “and with My whole soul.” Not only the affections of God, speaking after the manner of man, but the great mind and life of God is thrown into the work of saving and blessing His people. His essence, His soul, is here at home. The design argument, when brought to bear upon nature, proves the existence of God. We see in nature clear marks of design and a design argues a designer. Much more when that argument is brought to bear upon the works of Divine Grace do we see the Lord.

For in the transactions of Divine Grace there is design in everything. There is no one act of Grace but has its design of perfecting the chosen— not one blessing of the Covenant but has its aim for their eternal blessedness. Salvation is full of those thoughts of God which are as much higher than our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. What a wonderful thought of God was the purpose to save His people at all! When He brought His foreknowledge to bear upon the future condition of the chosen, He knew what they would be and provided for it. He determined to meet all the difficulties that He knew would arise, especially when He saw them ruined in the Fall.

He determined to undo by the second Adam the mischief worked by the first. He saw His chosen dead and determined to give them eternal life in His Son. He saw them guilty and condemned to punishment and He resolved to remove that condemnation by a Sacrifice. Perhaps the grandest thought of all was that God should meet Law by Law and death by death—and bring His people, guilty as they were, to bear the punishment in the Person of their glorious Substitute. And yet cause them never to bear the punishment at all in their own proper persons—for they were set free through the one perfect Sacrifice.

If you would learn God’s wisdom to the full, as far as a human mind can grasp it, you should study the marvelous system of redemption, that whole scheme which begins in election and which will never cease

*“Till all the chosen race  
Shall meet around the Throne;  
Shall bless the conduct of His Grace,  
And make His Glory known.”*

Can you catch the thought that all the affections of God go out to His chosen and that all the thoughts of God concentrate themselves upon them? Though He upholds high Heaven and rules the universe, though illimitable space is filled with the marvels of His power and skill, yet is His whole heart and soul with His beloved ones. As a man, however wide his business, thinks still continually of his home, so does God, however many are His thoughts, consider first and last those of whom He says that He has engraved upon the palms of His hands. With His whole heart and His whole soul He gives them undivided attention. Did not I tell you I could not dive into the depths of this sea? I have thought of God’s heart as I dared. I have thought of God’s soul as best I could. But how can I know

what is meant by the whole heart and the whole soul of the Infinite? Yet all this goes forth when the Lord blesses His people, whom He has redeemed unto Himself. He says it Himself and so we may dare repeat it— “With My whole heart and with My whole soul.”

We notice next, that if that is so, then He employs all His resources to bless His elect. When a man is doing a thing with his whole heart and with his whole soul, you know that there is nothing in that man but what will come out if necessary—there is nothing the man has but what he will use it to accomplish his purpose. He counts all things cheap so that he may achieve the design which has absorbed him. The Lord our God—I speak as a man and with deep reverence—is absorbed in doing good to His people—there is nothing that He is, there is nothing that He has but what He will bring it to bear upon the design upon which He has set His whole heart and His whole soul.

When the prodigal returned to his father’s house, his father, in joy over him, did not keep back anything. Had he love in his heart? He kissed him. Had he language on his lips? He spoke his love—“Bring forth the best robe,” says he—it was always kept locked up by itself. But the best robe is for him—“put it on him. Put a ring on his hand.” Go to the jewel chest and fetch out the rarest treasure. Put shoes on his feet—the most costly sandals you can find, bring them here and let him be shod right royally. The whole resources of the mansion were lavished on him. “Bring here the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and be merry.”

They had not music every day but the father will not let a single harp or timbrel be silent on that day. The tinkling feet of the maidens shall keep time to the music—nothing shall be wanting to show forth the father’s love and joy and make his son rejoice. Behold, what God has done for His people! He has given them His all—all the wisdom of His Providence shall be theirs while here and all the glory of His Heaven hereafter. God has His abode in Heaven—behold, He makes it the abode of His chosen forever. Angels are His courtiers—they shall be ministering spirits to His elect. The Throne of His Son they shall sit upon with Him. The victories of God shall furnish them with palms and the delight of God shall find them harps.

But stop, there is something more than all that! It was little for God to give earth and Heaven but He must needs give His Son, the express image of His Glory, His other self. Out of the bosom of His love must Jesus Christ be taken. For He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. Great God, You have all things and You have given all things to Your people! You have not held back of Your power, or of Your majesty. For we see Your strength, Your sovereignty, Your whole Self, in their salvation!

You have not kept back Your wisdom or immutability. For we see both of these in their attaining to eternal glory! You have laid out Your own boundless all-sufficiency, that You might bring Your many sons to glory. Oh for a well-tuned harp! My soul does magnify the Lord. But how can I fitly praise Him?

The Lord subordinates all other works to that of His love. When a man is absorbed by a mighty purpose, he may be doing other things—it may be needful that he should. But you will see him bend all other matters towards his chief end. He will bring home the sheaves from all the fields he tills and lay them up in the garner of his main purpose. Now see what God has done. When He made the heavens and the earth, His infinite wisdom thought of His people. And when He came to order the nations in Providence, “He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

At this hour no king ascends the throne and no dynasty vacates it, without reference in God’s mind to His ultimate object. Pestilence, famine, earthquake, wars—all have some relation to the Church of God. All that happens, all that is yet to happen-whether it is the falling of the star Wormwood, or the pouring out of the vials, or whatever else we dimly see in the mystery of prophecy—all shall move toward the grand purpose of almighty love. These events are the bow but His love purposes are the arrows. Everything, from the first opening of the seals to the complete unfolding of the Book, shall have to do with the calling, cleansing, training, preserving and perfecting of those chosen ones whom He has given unto His Son.

In the end, the heavens and the earth that now are shall be rolled up, like a worn-out vesture and pass away. But in that day the Lord will have respect unto His chosen and for them shall be prepared a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. For the Bride of Christ, who shall have made herself ready for the marriage supper, there shall be a fit dwelling. Everything, whether of creation or destruction, mercy or judgment, shall work, like the wheels of some vast machinery, to produce good to those who are the people of the living God.

I would add to these thoughts, feeble and superficial as they are, by noticing, next, that the Lord gives to His people and for His people without stint. He blesses them with His whole heart and with His whole soul. Some persons of a half-hearted nature, even if they entertain you kindly, yet betray their want of warmth. Others in every little act prove their intense heartiness. I recollect when I was able to journey through the country preaching, I for several years stayed occasionally with a fine old English farmer.

He used to have a piece of beef upon the table, I do not know how many pounds it weighed but it was enormous and I said to him one day, “Why is it that whenever I come here you have such immense joints? Do you think that I can eat like a giant? If so, it is a great mistake. Look at that joint, there,” I said, “if I were to take it home, it might last me a month.” “Well,” he said, “if I could get a bigger bit I would, for I am so glad to see you. And if you could eat it all, you should be heartily welcome. I want everybody

that comes here today to feel that I will do my very best for you.”

He did not measure my necessities to the half-ounce but he provided on a lavish scale. I quote this homely instance of giving heartily to show you how, on a Divine scale, the Lord makes ready for His guests. When He entertains His people, ah Sirs, He does not give them a measured portion of hard, dry bread but He sets forth “fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well refined.” The festivals of God are on a scale of splendor commensurate with His measureless dominion. When He feeds His children—though once they would have been thankful to eat the crumbs from His table—He sets them among princes and gives them to eat of the king’s meat.

He lays eternity under contribution to provide for the needs, no, for the desires, for the joys of His people. We are not straitened in our God. He has not arrayed us in coarse garments but He has covered us with the robe of righteousness. He has not merely washed us but He has put jewels on us as a bride adorns herself with ornaments. He has not provided workmen’s tenements for us to dwell in but, “in my Father’s house are many mansions.” The Lord has not merely put at our disposal the beasts of the earth but His angels are our bodyguards. In the Temple of God’s love no stone is commonplace. They are all great jewels.

Read in the Revelation how every course is jasper, or sapphire, or chalcedony, or emerald. The walls of His temple of Grace are of all manner of precious stones, from the foundation to the top stone. But even jewels are mere toys compared with the infinite wealth of the Divine liberality towards His own chosen. There is no stint supposable when the infinite Jehovah gives with His whole heart. How narrow are my expressions when I would set forth His illimitable goodness!

Beloved, another point sets forth most plainly that the Lord blesses His people with His whole heart and with His whole soul, for He perseveres in it. When did He begin with us?—

*“Before His hands had made  
The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth’s foundations laid,  
Or fashioned Adam’s clay.”*

When will He end with us? Never. For our souls are bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. Truly, if He had been mindful of our shortcomings He might have found abundant cause for casting us off. But He has not dealt with us after our sins.

I appeal to your own consciences, you that are the people of God— might He not many a time have said, “I am weary of you”? But the weariness has been on the other side—His love complains of you, “You have been weary of Me, O Israel.” The Lord has rejoiced to do us good and has multiplied His mercies. Are you not surprised with the variety of His favors towards you? An old writer says that “God’s flowers bloom double,” for He sends two blessings where there seems but one. But I would say they are like the light—they are sevenfold, even as in every ray from the sun we have seven colors blended in harmony.

What sevens and sevens of infinite love are contained in every beam of mercy that comes to the redeemed! As every sin is many sins, so every pardon is many pardons. As every need contains many needs within it, so every supply is many supplies. God blesses us many times every time He blesses us. And the wonder of it is that He continues these heaped-up mercies. He has not forgotten His Covenant of day and night. And certainly His mercies have been new every morning and fresh every evening. Great is His faithfulness.

Sometimes we think that the Ruler of the Universe has surely set aside His Covenant as to seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat. For this year it is cold in summer-time. But yet our mind is sure that His Word will not be violated in this respect. And even so, our gracious Lord may for a while answer us roughly and smite us sharply, till the blueness of the wound alarms us. But all this is no evidence of want of love. Did He not say, “As many as I tenderly love I rebuke and chasten”? His Covenant stands secure—there is with God no variableness, nor shadow of a turning. He continues, still, to hold fast to the purpose of His Grace towards His chosen and He will do so even to the end. All glory be unto His name!

As the Lord perseveres in His work, so He succeeds in it. God is determined to make something of His people and He will. He has made a great deal more of us now than we ever dreamed that He would have done. He has made saints out of sinners, servants out of rebels, children out of aliens. Some of you are now being used in His service who were once the tools of Satan. Remember what you were once. Do not forget the dunghills whereon you grew. Think you of the mire out of which the Lord of Love lifted you. What a change He has worked! When you are very depressed you ought to recollect that change.

The Lord has done for you already that which should make you thunder out His praise forever. But the Lord is going on to do far more for you. He has taken off some of the coarsest surface but He will polish you yet to an exceeding beauty. I verily believe, if we could see ourselves as we shall be, it would make us laugh for very joy. If we could look in some magic glass in which a man could see himself in the glorified state, we should sit down and look at it with amazement, till we should cry, “Can that be I? Is it possible that I shall ever come to such glory and beauty?”

O my Brothers and Sisters, you are only in the egg as yet. You have chipped a little bit of it and you have looked out. But the most that you have seen is your own shell. Know you not that you have wings? Yes, wings which you cannot stretch as yet, for they are bound down by the shell. But you shall spread them soon and mount aloft into that clear blue where eagles are at home. You shall rise above all visible things and reach the serene abodes of the blessed. There shall you—

*“From all this earthly grossness quit,  
With glory crowned forever sit;*

*And triumph over death and you, O Time!”*  
I suppose that God’s great purpose was to multiply the glory of His only begotten Son. For the second Adam there was not found a helpmeet and the Lord resolved to fashion for Him a bride, a dear companion. The glorious Son rejoiced in the thought and henceforth His delights were with the sons of men. To this end the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory and for the same purpose we are to be made like He. He is the image of the invisible God. But He is also the first-born among many Brethren who are all to bear the same likeness. “It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is.”

I think Milton was not far from the truth when he supposed that Satan made a great gap among the courtiers of Heaven when he led astray the third part of the stars of Heaven, and that God resolved to repair that wall of service with living stones more costly and more beautiful than those which were removed from their place. Certainly He is doing so. In Heaven there sits a Man nearest to the eternal God and we are there with Him and made like He—sons and yet servants, servants and yet sons. Does not Jehovah bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? I am getting a little deeper now. Here are waters to swim in. What I say is true but it is not the tenth part of the Truth of God. Blessed is that promise, “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter.”

Closing up this first division, we note that God delights in all that He does for His own. We are happy when God blesses us but not so happy as God is. We are glad when we are pardoned but He that pardons us is more glad, still. The prodigal, going back to his home, was very, very happy. But not so delighted as his father, who could say, “This my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.” The father’s heart was the fullest of delight and it was by far the larger heart, so that it could hold more joy. The Lord rejoices over His people, resting in His love and joy over them with singing.

Beloved, you think it impossible that God should delight in you, for you do not delight in yourselves. Yet it is true that He “takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy.” A little babe, if it had wit and could look at itself, would say, “How inferior I am to my father! What feeble hands! What tottering feet! I am a poor, puny, dependent creature.” Yes, but that is not the way in which the mother thinks of it. She spies out a loveliness in the weakness and a beauty in the littleness of her babe. She looks at it until her eyes swim with tears lest anything should harm it. She thinks it the most beautiful thing that ever was and doubtless it is so to her.

Our God has all the instincts of motherhood and fatherhood blended in one. And when He looks upon His Church He calls her “Hephzibah”—“My delight is in her.” I read not that He delights in the works of nature, alone, but He rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth. He does not rejoice in the works of His hands so much as in the works of His heart. The whole Godhead is at home in blessing those whom everlasting love has ordained to everlasting life.

Brethren, I will say no more. I leave this choice subject with you. Unlock this casket and examine the pearls, although you will not be able to estimate their full value—“I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.”

II. Secondly and, I am sorry to say, briefly, CONSIDER THE TEXT WITH THE EVIDENCE. I have already given you large evidence, and, therefore, I may have to go over the same ground again. In order to prove that God does thus bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul, I would remind you that the whole Trinity is engaged in the blessing of the chosen. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in essence and one in this loving object.

First comes the Father. It was He that chose us—chose us, not because He must choose us or not, but freely with “His whole heart.” He chose us when kings and great ones were passed by. With a deliberate, unchangeable, eternal choice, He made us His own. Having chosen us, He planned for us. Oh, the plans of Infinite Grace in the council chamber of eternity— far-reaching, all-comprehending plans of unfailing love! Wisdom from her throne determined the way in which God would lead His people and bless His people and sanctify His people and perfect His people.

The great Father then entered into a Divine Covenant with His whole heart and His whole soul, pledging His royal Word and then adding His oath, that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. That Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, is proof of the whole-heartedness of God. Remember, also, the gift of His dear Son. Here are two wonders—the gift of Christ for the chosen and the gift of the chosen to Christ. The more you think of these two mysteries, the more will your mind be overflowed with gratitude. “O world of wonders! I can say no less.”

When all this was done for us before we were born, was it not a striking thing that the Father should resolve to give us of His own life? Seeing we were spiritually dead, “He has begotten us again unto a lively hope.” This is marvelous! We that are His chosen are also His children, partakers of the Divine nature. No, I cannot speak of that. That is to be thought of in your inmost souls—and I had almost said, dreamed of in your sleep.

Next, the Lord adopted us, for He does nothing by halves. Regeneration gives us the nature of children but adoption gives us the status and rights of children. “If children, then heirs, heirs of—what?—Heirs of the world? No. Heirs of the world to come? Yes, if you please. But the Scripture speaks more largely—“Heirs of God.” God Himself has become the heritage of His own people and they are “joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.” Surely I have proved that the Father has blessed us with His whole heart and with His whole soul.

In reference to the ever-blessed Son of God, whom we worship as most truly God, we have the same Truth to state. He loved us ages before He came to earth as man. Long before He came to earth to bleed and die, He

visited His people in different forms and was seen by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and others. In all this He proved how His whole heart and His whole soul went out to men. But, lo! the fullness of time is come. What do I see yonder? A Babe in a manger! An infant at a woman’s breast! Thus the Son of the Highest condescends for our sakes. I see Him, further on, a humble Man, despised as a Nazarene. With weary feet He traverses Galilee and Judea and Samaria, bearing our sicknesses, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

It is He. It is the Son of God! Start not as I lead you unto the garden of agony where His groans amaze the angels and the bloody sweat dyes all His garment as if He had trod the winepress. It is He whom all the heavens adore. Is He not serving us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? I see Him bowing His head down to kiss our fallen humanity and stretching out His hands on the Cross to embrace the guilty. His feet meanwhile fast nailed as though He meant to await the latest comer. Yes, it is He—it is He who loved us with an everlasting love. Alas, His side was pierced and blood and water flowed. Say, did He not bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? Was there ever one who lived so intensely as Christ did, or died with such whole-hearted self-sacrifice?

Truly, the zeal of God’s house had eaten Him up. His whole heart and His whole soul went out in our redemption. After He was dead He rose again and He was as intent to bless after His resurrection as when He fell asleep. He visited His disciples and comforted them. Then He went up to Heaven and rejoined the Father’s majesty but He changed not his mind. Still with His whole heart and with His whole soul He lives for us. He is preparing Heaven for us. He has taken possession of our celestial estates and He is pleading for us before the Throne. Do you not hear His intercession at this hour?

Every day he continues to promote the interests of His redeemed with His whole heart. Moreover, He is hurrying to come to us. “Behold,” says He, “I come quickly.” Always, ever, with His whole heart and with His whole soul, this glorious Son of God is blessing His people. All honor be to His Divine majesty!

I must not omit the Holy Spirit, “to whom be all honor and glory.” The sacred Spirit of all Divine Grace blesses us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. He came after us when we went not after Him. When we were mad with sin and ravenous after the pleasures of it, He followed us, to check us in our headlong career, to beckon us to better things, to draw us there and to help us when we began to incline to the holy. He gave us life and light and liberty. The most wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit is that He should ever deign to dwell in us. Is the Holy Spirit within this body?

Does He dwell within the child of God? It is even so. For a prince to reside in a hovel is little condescension compared with the Spirit of God dwelling in these vile bodies of ours. Yet He is within us. And, being here, He works with all His heart. He quickens, but He leaves not that life untaught, for He instructs us. He teaches us to profit, “line upon line, precept upon precept.” But He is not content with teaching—He comforts us. When we are sad, He comes with Divine consolations—this is very, very tender of Him. He would not do this if He were not befriending us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. But He stops not at comforting. He goes on to render aid—“He helps our infirmities.” Nor is this all—He strengthens us and works in us to will and do of His own good pleasure.

My time is gone and perhaps it is as well, for I have not the grace or wisdom to set out all this great matter. But if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are found blessing us thus, we see in the sacred Unity in Trinity, not only unity of nature but unity of purpose. And the One Jehovah is blessing us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. How I chatter! My text is majesty, my talk is poverty. One cannot preach upon such a text as this. How shall I reach the height of this great argument? Here is manna for your souls! It tastes as wafers made with honey. Digest it well and let it saturate the secret parts of your nature and there let it sweeten spirit, soul and body.

III. So I close by saying to you—CONSIDER THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW FROM THE TEXT. The first inference is one of consolation. Does God bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul? Oh, then, how happy we ought to be! Come, my Sister, wipe those tears away! Come, my Brother, you must get out of your despondency! You must not be down in the dumps while such a Truth as this is before you. This unseasonable weather fills our bones with rheumatism and our spirits with depression. But the eternal Truth must influence more than the transient weather.

While meditating on this theme, I said to myself, “Come, come, this will not do—with such a subject as this you ought to sing for joy.” I felt that my preparation for the pulpit ought to be one continuous song. The Lord blesses me with His whole heart and with His whole soul, what better news can I hear? This sweet assurance is a bath of milk. Of the man who believes it we may say, “Butter and honey shall he eat.” You breathe the perfume of Heaven when you can get at the meaning of this text. Oh, the joy that lies asleep in these words, as odors hide away in flowers! Come, heavenly wind and wake the slumbering joys—constrain the celestial perfumes to flow abroad, that we may exult in them.

Our God does not give us His mercies off-hand, as we see a man fling a penny to a beggar. No, no, He blesses us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. When the wicked are increased in riches, God’s heart does not go with the gifts which enrich them—they are as bullocks fattened for the slaughter. The Lord does not think much of riches, and, therefore, He usually gives them to the ungodly as men give bones to dogs. But when He deals with His people, ah, then His heart goes with every penny that He gives them, with every crust that He puts on their table, with every drink of water that refreshes them, with every breath of air which sustains their lives.

When your pulse beats, it keeps time to the goodness of God. In heights or in depths, in brightness or in darkness, God’s endless, boundless, measureless love is always shining on you. Come, come, I say again, sorrow is out of place in this house this day. This is a feast day! Let us rejoice with heart and soul, seeing the Lord our God so largely blesses us.

Another inference and I have done—it is one of exhortation. Let us love our God with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Let us begin with trusting Him with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Lay the whole of your burden upon God—tell the whole of your sorrow to your Father. Trust Him for the past, the present and the future. Trust Him completely, implicitly, unhesitatingly. Then love Him with all your heart and soul. We do not half love our God. I think I spy a spark or two of love down there in those ashes and among those half-charred logs of wood. Come, let us wake up the flames till they blaze again.

Blow carefully on the drowsy fires. Let us create a great fire and then heap on fresh logs. Oh, to love the Lord with something like His own love! Let us also serve Him with our whole heart and our whole soul. How often the service that is done for God is slovenly, heartless, dull! Let it not be so again. Brothers, if we preach, let us preach with our whole heart and with our whole soul. Sisters, if you teach your classes, teach them with your whole heart and with your whole soul. If all you can do is to give away a tract, give it away with your whole heart and with your whole soul.

He that gives His whole heart and soul to you, great as they are, may well claim that you give your whole heart and your whole soul to Him, little as they are. May the blessed Spirit lead you to whole-hearted consecration and this will be a truly practical sermon! They say, “Put the whip into the manger.” And that is what I have tried to do. I have fed you that you may go the faster. Away, then, you courageous steeds! Be strong as oxen and swift as eagles! Fed on such food as this, you are bound to do the work of God with energy and perseverance.

Glorify God’s name, seeing He has done all this for you. Oh, that you would all feed on this meat! Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God—and being born of God he has God’s heart and soul engaged for him. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you may take to yourself all that I have said. But if you believe not, I fear that you will die in your sins. God save you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2664 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THINGS UNKNOWN  
NO. 2664

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 4, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1858.

**“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you know not.”  
Jeremiah 33:3.**

GOD’S people will never thrive on anything less substantial than bread from Heaven. Israel in Egypt might live on garlic and onions, but Israel in the wilderness must be fed with the manna that came down from Heaven, and with the water that gushed out of the Rock when it was smitten by the rod of God. The child of God, while he is yet in his sins, may, like other men, revel in them, and the pleasures and follies of this world may be his delight. But when he is once brought out of Egypt by the high hand of God’s purpose, and the almighty hand of God’s strength, he will never live on anything less than God’s promise and God’s Truth! It is vain for men to try to remove his doubts and strengthen his self-confidence. It is vain for men to endeavor to feed himself with man-made doctrine or with rationalistic ideas—he must have something that is Divine, that has the stamp of Revelation upon it. In fact, unless we can come forth every Sabbath with a, “Thus says the Lord,” we are not capable ministers of the New Covenant and it is not in our power to comfort the Lord’s children.

In this chapter we find the Prophet Jeremiah in prison. He was shut up in the court of the prison and, in order to comfort him, the Word of the Lord came to him saying, “Thus says the Lord.” Something less than that may suffice in the time of our prosperity, to make our hopes buoyant, for, alas, there is enough of the natural man in the Christian to make him rejoice even in carnal things when he is far from being thoroughly sanctified. But when we are in trouble. When affliction and adversity, sickness and suffering are trying us, there is no man-made raft upon which our soul can float through floods of tribulation and waves of deep distress—we must have the Divine life buoy of a, “Thus says the Lord.” That is what the Christian needs in every time and in every place, but this is what he most especially needs when he does business in deep waters and is sorely exercised by affliction, “Thus says the Lord.” My text is a, “Thus says the Lord.” “Thus says the Lord, call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

Here is, first, a large promise. Here is, secondly, an implied imperfection. And here is, thirdly, a particular application of the promise, making up for that imperfection.

I. Here is, first A LARGE PROMISE. “Call unto Me, and I will answer you.”  
Now, if any friend should write us a letter containing such words as those, “Call unto me, and I will answer you,” we would naturally understand by them that whatever we might ask of our friend, he would most assuredly give us. And if he were a person in whose ability and kindness we had confidence, we would not be very slow in availing ourselves of his permission to seek his aid. If we were in debt, we would apply to him for financial help so that we might be able to meet our liabilities. If we were tried by sickness, we would apply to him that he might give us medicines to relieve our pains. If our friends had been ungrateful to us, we would most likely call upon him for sympathy. And if our spirits were distressed from some unknown cause—if we believed him to have immense wisdom—we would ask him for some cordial to raise us from our distress.  
But how different is the case when we read these Words as coming from the lips of God! Then, my Brothers and Sisters, how strange it is that, instead of making use of them, we just read them as a matter of course—we seldom think of making use of them! “Yes,” we say, “it is a very comforting doctrine, that God answers prayer. It is truly consolatory to hear our minister inform us that whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.” But there the matter ends. And, except with a few choice spirits, it remains a matter of doctrine and not a matter of practice to us! “O fools, and slow of heart to believe,” our Master might well say to us! And if He should come into our heart, He would administer a thousand rebukes to us for our slackness in proving the Truth of His promise. For God means what He says and, inasmuch as He has said, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you,” He intends that His Words should stand good. And He wishes us to believe them to be true and, therefore, to prove our faith by acting upon them. Alas, the Truth of God is too plain to be disputed, that the most of us, while, in a sense, we receive this doctrine because it is in the Bible, do not so receive it as to put it into practice! In introducing to your notice the great general Truth of God, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you,” I shall probably have to answer a host of objections and questions.  
“Well,” says one person, “would you wish us to believe, Sir, that whatever we ask in prayer we shall receive?” I must reply to you with discretion. In the first place, who are you who now ask that question? Are you a child God, or are you a worldling? Have you been born again, or are you still what you were by nature, without any renewal from the Holy Spirit? For, upon your answer to those questions, mine must depend. If you are still without the Spirit of God, and are unrenewed, I would remind you of that passage which says, concerning the wicked, “Even his prayer shall be an abomination”—and if your prayer is an abomination, of course you cannot expect God to accept an abomination and answer it! You must, therefore, know that you, yourself, are a partaker of the Grace of God, or else this promise does not belong to you.  
You grant me that, and then you ask me this question, “Sir, I hope I am a child of God. Am I, therefore, to understand that whatever I shall ask for in prayer, I shall receive of God?” To you, also, I must answer with discretion, lest, in endeavoring to state a truth, I should utter a falsehood. I must first ask you in what state of heart you are as a child of God. Have you been lately communing with Christ? Have you been constant in the study of His Word? What are your wishes? What are your needs? What are your desires? For, upon your answers to these questions, my reply to your enquiry must depend. It may be that you are a Christian, but, nevertheless, though an Israelite, you, like Israel in the wilderness, are asking for meat that you may satisfy your own lust, even as they did. And when they craved for flesh and the Lord sent them quails, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of the Lord came upon them!  
We are sure to have our prayers answered if it is right that they should be answered. Sometimes even the Lord’s people ask for things which it would not be for God’s Glory to give, nor for their profit to receive. If you should tell your child you would give him anything he asked for, you would not, for a moment, suppose that you included in the promise any absurd request he might make! Suppose he should ask you for a dose of arsenic? Suppose he should request you to kill him? Would you fulfill your promise? Certainly not! You would Say, “My child, I love you too well to listen to the ravings of your madness. I desire your good too much to grant your absurd request and I cannot listen to you.” God says the same—“‘Call upon Me, and I will answer you,’ but I will not always answer you as you wish to be answered. If you ask for a thing which is not fit for you to receive, I will give you something better—I will not give you that very thing. I will hear your prayers, but I will not give you exactly what you ask for—I will grant you something infinitely superior to the thing itself.”  
It would be a sad thing if God always heard our prayers and gave us just what we asked of Him. If He always gave us the exact thing we asked for, we should ruin ourselves! You may have heard the story of a woman who had a child who was very ill. When her pastor called to see her, she asked him to pray for the child’s life, and in the prayer he very properly said, “O Lord, spare this child’s life, if it is Your will.” The mother interrupted him and said, “No, I cannot have it so—this child must live. I want you to pray to God that the child may live whether God wills it or not.” The minister said, “Woman, you will have cause to tremble on account of this petition. If you ask such a thing as this of God, there will be a curse upon it.” Nevertheless, the prayer was prayed and, 20 years afterwards, that woman, with an aching heart, saw her son riding in a cart to Tyburn where he was to be hanged! Better would it have been for him and also for her that he had perished at the breast and be carried to an untimely grave, than that he should send her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. God, therefore, makes this very kind reservation that if we ask for absurd things, things which would not be for our profit, He will not grant them.  
But the question is put to me again, “Sir, if I ask for a thing which is obviously a good thing, which is most assuredly for my profit, may I be certain, after I have asked in prayer for that thing, that I shall have it?” Once more, I must ask another question. Have you yet learned the heavenly art of believing God? Because you may be a Christian, you may believe in Christ enough for your soul’s salvation, but you may be so small a Christian that you have never yet attained the mountain height of belief in all your Lord has uttered. And, mark you, the promise of an answer to our prayers is only given to our faith. The Lord Jesus Christ put it thus to His disciples—“What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.” Now, if you go on your knees in prayer and ask God for anything and do not believe that He will give it to you, it may come in God’s extraordinary bounty, but it will not come in answer to your prayer! Your prayers shall be answered in proportion to your faith. So, if you believe and ask for a thing that is for your good and God’s Glory, you will have it as surely as the promise is a promise and God is God! I have talked with many Christians and some of my aged friends have talked with far more than I have, but both they and myself can bear witness that we have never yet met with any Christian that could charge God with breaking His promise. We have met with many who have been far from having the faith they ought to have, but we have never discovered one so faithless to God as to charge Him with not answering the prayer that was stamped with believing. Whenever there is faith, there will be the answer to the prayer of faith—you will never hear a Christian deny that Truth of God.  
It was my privilege, some two years ago, when at Bristol, to visit the Orphanage of Mr. Muller, and I never saw a more striking or startling exhibition of the power of faith than I did there. Mr. Muller supports 300 orphan children on no resources but his own faith and prayer. When he needs anything, he calls them together, offers supplication to God, and asks that necessities may be supplied. And, although there are 300 to be fed, to be clothed and to be housed—and though they have often been brought so low that there has not been a farthing in their coffers, nor a handful of meal in their barrel—when mealtime has come, there has always been abundance of bread in the house in answer to prayer.  
I shall never forget my interview with that holy man of God. Some gentleman said to me, “I wish you would ask Mr. Muller a question or two, if you see him, as to the foundation of a new Orphan House which he proposes to build to hold 700 more children. Now, I feel that three hundred is quite enough for one man to care for,” the old gentleman said. “I think it is very absurd for him to have 700 more. He will never be able to support a thousand. As to the preset Institution, I believe that generous persons hear about it and send him subscriptions for it maintenance. But as to his supporting 700 more orphans, that is impossible!”  
I replied, “I think there is something in what you say. I will ask him when I see him.” But when I saw him, I could not and dared not ask him any such questions! And when I saw what a great work he had done by his faith, and began to remark upon it, he said, “Oh, it is only a little thing that I have done—faith could do far more than that. If it were God’s will that I should feed the universe on prayer and faith, I could do it. If I had more faith, it could be accomplished.” I was just going to say that, possibly, a thousand orphans would be more than he could support, when he said, “When I got three hundred children, I began to pray God to send me money to build an Orphan House to hold seven hundred more, and I already have £17,000 sent in for it, although I have never solicited a contribution from anybody but the Lord. I believe God has made me to be here, to be to the world a proof that He hears and answers prayer.” I thought so, too, when I saw that huge building and the many dear children rising up to praise their God, and singing so sweetly in honor of the Good Shepherd who had gathered them like lambs to His bosom, and had gently folded them there.  
Brothers and Sisters, we do not speak without solid facts to confirm our assertion when we affirm that whatever a saint asks in prayer, if he asks in faith, and it is for his own profit and for God’s Glory, he will be sure to have it. I daresay you have read Huntington’s, “Bank of Faith.” He certainly gives us too many of those instances for most people to believe, but I fancy there are plenty of persons alive who have had as many answers to their prayers as ever William Huntington had, and who, if they were to write the minutiae of their lives, could bear most solemn testimony to the truth that never could they remember God being unfaithful to His promises, or their prayers unanswered. This, however, must always depend upon the person, himself, for if we ask waveringly, or without faith, we must not expect to be answered. We must not forge that what God implies, when He does not grant unbelieving requests, is just this, “Inasmuch as you have no faith, I have nothing to give you.”  
We must do as the people did at Christmas time in the olden days. It used to be the custom for the poor inhabitants in a village to go round with basins to the rich people in the parish and beg bread and other victuals of them. And the rule was that every gentleman was to fill the bowl that was brought to his door. Of course, the wisest among the poor folk brought a very large bowl for the Christmas gathering, but those who had little faith in the generosity of their wealthy neighbors took a small bowl, and that was filled. But those who took a big bowl had theirs filled too! So, dear Friends, you must always try, in your prayers, to bring a big bowl to God! Bring great faith and rest assured that, according to your faith, it shall be done unto you. If you have little faith, you shall have a little answer. If you have tolerable faith, you shall have a tolerable answer. But if you have a mighty faith, you shall have such a mighty answer that you shall wonder at it, yet you shall feel that it is according to the promise of our text, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you.”  
II. Now we come to the second part of our subject and we notice AN IMPLIED IMPERFECTION. “Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” It is implied that God’s people do not know everything.  
Did you ever meet a man who knew everything? I have happened to meet half-a-dozen such. I once met with a minister who knew all things— according to his own account, I mean—not according to mine. He told me when I saw him that in the parish where he lived, there were not more than a dozen people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ in truth. I was interested in that man, for I knew a little about him, so I said to him, “Well, who are they?” So he began, “Well, there is myself, and my wife, and my two deacons,” and so on. “Oh,” I answered, “the only person I should dispute out of that number would be yourself, because I think you know too much by a great deal—you seem to have climbed up and to have looked into the secret roll of God’s Decrees. No child of God would do that. Children do not look into their father’s secrets—it is only thieves who do that. I doubt your claim to be a child of God.”  
Each of us, at times, meets with an interesting individual who knows far too much, in whose company one always feels uncomfortable. We never introduce any subject—we leave him to do that because he is the Pope of our circle. He hates Popery, of course! Two Popes cannot agree, so, naturally, he has a very strong objection to the Pope of Rome. He himself knows all things. You utter a sentiment—he tells you, directly, that it is not sound—he knows, of course. You talk about a matter of experience, but he says, “That is not the experience of the living child of God.” He is umpire, of course. He knows all about it. He is the judge who ends all strife. He settles everything. Bring him in, his vote is the casting vote, which it were almost profane to controvert! He is King, Lords and Commons, all rolled into one. He makes the laws and he fulfils them. He is, in his own sphere, the Autocrat of all Christians!  
Now, God’s children belong to a very different order of beings from this very respectable and very venerable individual! They do not know everything and they do not pretend to be full of all knowledge. One of the best of them, whose name was Paul, said, “Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark or the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”  
An old man once met a young one who had been to College about six months and he sad to him, “Do you know much?” “Yes,” the young man answered, “I am getting on very fast.” The old man said, “You will not say that in a year’s time, or else I shall have no hope for you.” In a year’s time, he asked him whether he knew much more than he did six months before. He replied, “Sometimes I think I know a great deal more, but, at other times, I think I know a great deal less. I have discovered my own ignorance more than ever this last year.” Then the old man said, “By the time you have been in college four years, you will confess yourself to be a very great fool.” And when he met him, during the fourth year, he said, “What do you know now” The student replied, “I think, perhaps, I know more than when I entered College, but, in my own opinion, I know much less. When I first came

I thought myself competent to give a decisive opinion upon every subject. Now, I am obliged to weigh everything before I am able to state anything positively. My own ignorance has been discovered.”  
Now, depend upon it, dear Friends, it will be the same with each of you! We may think, when we first join the Church, “We know almost everything.” Some people suppose that all the Truths of God are found in the Baptist denomination. Others imagine it is all in the Episcopalian, Independent, or Wesleyan denomination, or in whatever sect they belong. But when we have been members of the Baptist denomination for a considerable time, we discover that there are several faults among us. And we think, perhaps, that if we were fashioned according to the Presbyterian model, we might be improved. By-and-by, we find a friend who attends an Episcopal Church, where he hears the Gospel very plainly preached by a very earnest clergyman and we say we think there is something good in the Episcopalians! And the longer we live, the more we find that there is something good in all and that, after all, we do not know as much as we thought we did, and that our Church, though it seemed to be the very model of perfection, is found to be full of infirmities as well as any other Church, and it is not exactly the Church after all.  
I repeat, then, the assertion that is implied in the text, that we have, all of us, a certain amount of ignorance and imperfection, for if we knew all things, we would have no necessity for this promise, that God would show us great and mighty things which we do not know. But, as we are still imperfect and growing in our knowledge, this promise is exceedingly precious to us. I can scarcely think that I have any person here of that particular clique who fancy they know everything. If I have, I would say a word to him. There is a certain body of excellent men who call themselves “God’s dear people!” That is just what they are—they are dear to anybody—nobody would think of buying them. If they were to be given away, they would be scarcely worth having! They are God’s dear people. They hear their minister preach a sermon made up of the extract of gall and bitterness, and that just pleases them. His people rejoice in that kind of talk and say that he is a faithful minister. If he were to leave off being bitter, he would not be faithful—faithfulness, according to their meaning, consists in finding fault with all the world besides. They tell you to go to “Little Bethel,” “Rehoboth,” or “Bethesda,” because there is no truth anywhere else. It is only there that the Truth of God is to be had, and all other congregations are schismatics, whom it is their duty to denounce and persecute with the utmost rigor of the Gospel—and you are aware that the utmost rigor of the Gospel is worse than the utmost rigor of the law!  
The rigor of the Gospel is more intolerable than even the rule of Draco, himself, for those persons exclude, denounce, and condemn every man who is not to the very turn of a hair’s breadth in conformity with their views. To every such person we say, “Dear Brother, you are very wise! All hail to you! We will put you in the chair as the marvelous Doctor of Divinity! You are the man! Wisdom will die with you and, while we humbly bow at your feet, we are obliged to say that you do not yet know everything—there are a few things that need to be revealed, even to you! And while we keep ourselves at a respectful distance from anything like your superior knowledge, we are compelled to think that you have not yet attained unto perfection—and we cannot admit that you are the only man in all the world who understands and knows the Gospel.”  
Well, though our Brother will not join with us in saying, “We do not know all things,” I think that all who are here present will bow their heads and each one will say, “Lord, teach me what I do not know; for the little that I know is nothing to be compared with the volumes of Your wisdom which I have not read and do not yet understand.”  
III. Now we come to the third head of our subject, which is the best of all. We have, here, THE PARTICULAR APPLICATION OF THE PROMISE. “Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”  
First, we understand this promise to relate to Gospel doctrines. I confess that when I first preached in a country village as its pastor, I read all Dr. Gill’s, “Body of Divinity,” and Calvin’s, “Institutes.” And when I had done that, I thought, “Now I have got hold of the Truth of God, I am certain I have, and I can meet all opponents. And if they are not conformed to the views of that most learned man, Dr. Gill, and that excellent confessor, John Calvin, I will soon cut them up root and branch.” Well, I began to preach what I had learned from these great and good men, and I have never been ashamed of having done so, for, as a successor of Dr. Gill, I am not ashamed to endorse his views, even now, and to subscribe to the doctrinal statements that John Calvin uttered.  
However, I soon began to find out that there was a good deal to be said, after all, concerning some matters that Dr. Gill and John Calvin did not mention! And I found that I was obliged, somewhat, to stretch my charity and to take to my heart some Brothers and Sisters who did not quite see all things which those enlightened men saw! And, moreover, I found out that I did not know everything and that I had a good deal, still, to learn, and I find the same thing every day. I hope at all times to hold firmly all the Truths of God I have received. I intend to grasp tightly with one hand the Truths I have already learned and to keep the other hand wide open to take in the things I do not yet know.  
Perhaps I have some young man here who has a notion that some minister has got all the Truth, or that he, himself, has embraced all the Truth. Now, young man, there are a great many things that you do not know! There are some doctrines you do not understand. If you will wait a little while and study your Bible more, you will go down on your knees, and say, “Lord, I never knew my own ignorance as much as I do now. Will You teach me Your Truth?” Do we desire to understand the faith of God? Let us not be discouraged. In answer to our prayer, God will show us “great and mighty things” which we do not now know. You are a Christian, yet you do not comprehend the Doctrine of Election. Or, perhaps, the Doctrine of Effectual Calling puzzles you. You are a Churchman, perhaps, yet you do not know anything about these things. You are like a man I met once in a railway carriage. He said he was a High Churchman and I said I was a High Churchman, too. “How can that be?” he enquired, “you are a Dissenter.” “But,” I replied, “I believe many of the doctrines of your Church.” He said, “I think not.” “Well,” I said “I believe in the Doctrine of Election, Predestination and so on.” “Oh,” he said, “I do not.” “But,” I said, “they are in your Articles.” He said, “I believe the Catechism, but I have not read the Articles.” “Then,” I rejoined, “I am the better Churchman of the two—you are the Dissenter, and I am the High Churchman! You ought to be turned out of the Church if you do not believe the Articles. They ought to take me, and give me a first-rate living and make me one of their bishops, for I have read the Articles, and studied them.”  
A great many people do not know what they believe. No person has a right to say he is a Churchman till he has read the Prayer Book. You have no right to say you are Wesleyan till you have read Wesley’s sermons. And you have no right to say you are a Calvinist till you have read what Calvin believed. And you have no right to say you are a Christian till you have read your Bible, for the Bible is the standard of Christian faith and practice! And when you come to read your Bible, you will find this one thing out, that your own little views were not quite so wide as the Bible, after all—and you will have to say, “Lord, show me great and mighty things, which I know not now.” I am persuaded that neither the Church of England, nor the Wesleyans, nor the Independents, nor the Baptists have all the Truth. I would not belong to any one of these denominations for all the land that is beneath the sky, if I had to endorse all that is held by them! I believe that the Church ought to be governed by an Episcopalian Presbyterian Baptist Independency. I believe we are all right in a great many of our doctrines, but that we all have something yet to learn. The Doctrine of “Man’s Responsibility” is not to be denied, nor the Doctrine of “God’s Sovereignty” to be disputed. I hope that, some day, we shall all bring our views to the test of the Sacred Scriptures. Then shall we have one Church, “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” Then shall we know great and mighty things which we know not now. I would persuade you, my Baptist friends, that your system is not perfect, and you members of the Episcopalian Church, that your polity is not altogether without imperfection. And I would entreat you, my Friend, though you are a member of an excellent body of Believers, however excellent that Church may be, not to think it is infallible! Go down on your knees and ask God to teach you what you do not know, and to make you better than your creed. Or else, in nine cases out of ten, you will not be worth much.  
But, next, “great, and mighty things, which you know not,” God will show you in Providence. A poor man is in trouble. He has not funds to buy daily bread. Let him call upon God and ask for it—and though he has never seen the Lord thrust out His hand from Heaven, or feed him by the ravens, or quench his thirst with water out of the Rock—let him go down on his knees and he will find that there are more wonders in Providence than you and I have yet seen! In answer to prayer, we shall see how God’s Providence, though it is far beyond our ideas, is according to our prayers. There are many Christians who have been in great trouble and have experienced a most marvelous deliverance in Providence. If we have great trouble, let us bring them to our great God. Let us cry unto Him and, in Providence, we shall see “great and mighty things” which we know not as yet.  
In the next place, very briefly passing over these points, “great and mighty things, which you know not,” God will show you in matters of Christian experience. Let us search God’s Word and give ourselves to prayer and then, in matters of experience, we shall see “great and mighty things” which we yet know not. A Christian is immeasurably beyond the worldling and there is a possibility of a Christian becoming as much beyond himself as he now is beyond a sinner dead in sins. There is no telling how great he may become even on earth. I do not think we can ever, on earth, become perfect, but we know not how near to perfection we may come. We may not, while on earth, dwell in Heaven, but, who can tell how much of Heaven may dwell in us while we are here? Did you ever sit down and read the Life of Herbert, or Whitefield, or Haliburton? After we have read such books, we say within ourselves, “What poor worms we are!”  
We feel like Robert Hall, who, when a certain minister came to see him, said, “I am so glad to see you! Mr. So-and-So has been here. He is so far above me that I felt myself to be nothing in his presence, but now I begin to feel myself a man again.” Have you never felt, when in the company of some great and mighty man, as if you were nothing at all? When I first read Henry Martyn’s Life, I could not refrain from weeping for some hours afterwards, to think how much below such a life as his I was living! Yet you know not but that you may climb where these men did! The steps of the mountain of piety may be steep to look upon, but they are accessible to the feet of diligence. Go on and you shall yet stand where Moses stood, and behold Canaan from the top of Nebo! Remember that you are as yet upon the lowlands. Be not ashamed to acknowledge that you are desirous to climb upwards. Bend your knees and God will show you in experience “great and mighty things” that you yet know not.  
If any man is content with his own experience, it is entirely through ignorance. I will defy anyone to take Rutherford’s Letters and sit down and, after reading them, to not say, “Rutherford seems to have been like an angel of God! I am only a man, I never can stand where Rutherford stood.” Frequently, when I return home from Chapel on the Sabbath evening, I get down George Herbert’s Book of Songs. And when I see how much he loved the Lord, it seems to me as if he had struck upon his harp the very notes that he shall heard in Paradise—and sung them all again. Let us not be discouraged—we may yet become Herberts, and Rutherfords, and Whitfields! No, there is no reason why we should not become as great as the Old or New Testament saints! There is no reason why we should not be as great as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! For why should not every child of God, in these days, become a mighty a man of faith as was Abraham of old? Let us plead the promise of the text—“Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”  
And, to conclude, the same Truth of God holds good with regard to the universal Church of God. I do not know whether you may have noticed that the devil, in his wisdom, has just tried to pervert all our services. My heart has been made glad by the opening of Exeter Hall for the preaching of the Gospel! Never did my heart so leap for joy as when I heard that our Brothers of the Church of England had to begun to preach in Exeter Hall, though I felt sad when those doors were shut against them. Now our joys are blasted and our happiness is clouded. It appears that because some have lately endeavored to turn to good account the earnestness of the people to hear the Word in their own churches and chapels, next Sunday we shall see the lamentable spectacle in this great metropolis of a place, not open simply for the preaching of the Word, but actually for a Sabbath Concert.  
[MR. SPURGEON was referring to the arrangements which had been made for a sacred concert and a Gospel address combined at the Alhambra Palace. Happily, the minister who took the service abandoned it after one attempt, being convinced that more harm than good would result from it. But, unhappily, since then, not only have sacred concerts been regularly established, either with or without Gospel addresses, but many places are open on the Lord’s-Day for secular concerts, at which there is not even the pretence of any religious service. Our comfort still is, as it was MR. SPURGEON’S over 40 years ago, that “the Lord reigns,” and He will get the victory over all His adversaries.]  
We shall read of multitudes assembled in a building, the property of one connected with a theatre. We shall hear of people being gathered together and there will be a person found who will profess to preach the Gospel to them, and the “Messiah” will be performed as the great inducement for attracting them. Perhaps there is no person who feels more sorrow than I do that this fearful cloud has fallen upon us. The devil may one day open the Crystal Palace, the Museum and every other place on Sunday—but the Lord reigns—and if this nation shall be given up to Sabbath-breaking, let us not despair! God sits as the Ruler in Heaven and, as surely as He is God, He will get the victory! The devil will outwit himself, as he has always done—Satan will fall into his own pit. I hope, however, that the Christians of Great Britain will be very earnest in calling upon God. Pray continually to the Most High, that He will prosper the preaching of the Gospel to the multitude, but that He will never allow our entering into unconsecrated places to be twisted and turned to unhallowed uses! And pray that God will bring forth greater good out of the great evil, and so glorify Himself, and thus show us great and mighty things that we know not.  
I can only now beseech the Lord to pour His blessing upon each of you. May you be earnest in prayer and constant in supplication. And if you have yet never known Christ, may He soon be made known to you by the Holy Spirit and may your prayers be lifted up to Heaven that He may show you His salvation—which is one of the “great and mighty things” which you know not now!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER

NO. 619

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”  
Jeremiah 33:3.**

SOME of the most learned works in the world smell of midnight oil. But the most spiritual and most comforting books and sayings of men usually have a savor about them of prison dampness. I might quote many instances—John Bunyan’s Pilgrim may suffice instead of a hundred others. And this good text of ours, all moldy and cold with the prison in which Jeremiah lay, has nevertheless a brightness and a beauty about it which it might never have had if it had not come as a cheering word to the prisoner of the Lord shut up in the court of the prison.

God’s people have always, in their worst condition, found out the best of their God. He is good at all times, but He seems to be at His best when they are at their worst. “How could you bear your long imprisonment so well?” said one to the Landgrave of Hesse who had been shut up for his attachment to the principles of the Reformation. He replied, “The Divine consolations of martyrs were with me.”

Doubtless there is a consolation more deep, more strong than any other which God keeps for those who, being His faithful witnesses, have to endure exceedingly great tribulation from the enmity of man. There is a glorious aurora for the frigid zone. And stars glisten in northern skies with unusual splendor. Rutherford had a quaint saying that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he remembered that the great King always kept his wine there and he began to seek at once for the wine bottles and to drink of the “wines on the lees well refined.”

They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls. You know, my companions in affliction, that it is so. You whose bones have been ready to come through the skin through long lying upon the weary couch. You who have seen your earthly goods carried away from you and have been reduced well-near to penury. You who have gone to the grave these seven times, till you have feared that your last earthly friend would be borne away by unpitying Death. You have all proven that He is a faithful God and that as your tribulations abound, so your consolations also abound by Christ Jesus!

My prayer is, in taking this text this morning, that some other prisoners of the Lord may have its joyous promise spoken home to them! That you who are shut up and cannot come forth by reason of present heaviness of spirit may hear Him say, as with a soft whisper in your ears and in your hearts, “Call upon Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”  
The text naturally splits itself up into three distinct particles of the

Truth of God. Upon these let us speak as we are enabled by God the Holy Spirit. First, prayer commanded—“Call unto Me.” Secondly, an answer promised—“And I will answer you.” Thirdly, faith encouraged—“And show you great and mighty things, which you know not.”

I. The first head is PRAYER COMMANDED. We are not merely counseled and recommended to pray, but bid to pray. This is great condescension. An hospital is built—it is considered sufficient that free admission shall be given to the sick when they seek it. But no order in council is made that a man must enter its gates. A soup kitchen is well provided for in the depth of winter. Notice is promulgated that those who are poor may receive food on application. But no one thinks of passing an Act of Parliament compelling the poor to come and wait at the door to take the charity.

It is thought to be enough to proffer it without issuing any sort of mandate that men shall accept it. Yet so strange is the infatuation of man, on the one hand, which makes him need a command to be merciful to his own soul! And so marvelous is the condescension of our gracious God on the other—that He issues a command of love without which not a man of Adam born would partake of the Gospel feast, but would rather starve than come! In the matter of prayer it is even so. God’s own people need, or else they would not receive it, a command to pray.

Why is this? Because, dear Friends, we are very subject to fits of worldliness, if indeed that is not our usual state. We do not forget to eat—we do not forget to take the shop shutters down—we do not forget to be diligent in business—we do not forget to go to our beds to rest—but we often forget to wrestle with God in prayer and to spend, as we ought to spend, long periods in consecrated fellowship with our Father and our God. With too many professors the ledger is so bulky that you cannot move it! And the Bible, representing their devotion, is so small that you might almost put it in your waistcoat pocket.

Hours for the world! Moments for Christ! The world has our best and our prayer closet the remnants of our time. We give our strength and freshness to the ways of mammon and our fatigue to the ways of God. Therefore it is that we need to be commanded to attend to that very act which it ought to be our greatest happiness, as it is our highest privilege to perform—to meet with our God! “Call upon Me,” He says, for He knows that we are apt to forget to call upon God.

“What do you mean, oh, Sleeper? Arise and call upon your God,” is an exhortation which is needed by us as well as by Jonah in the storm. He understands what heavy hearts we have, sometimes, when under a sense of sin. Satan says to us, “Why should you pray? How can you hope to prevail? You say in vain, ‘I will arise and go to my Father,’ for you are not worthy to be one of His hired servants! How can you see the King’s face after you have played the traitor against Him? How will you dare to approach unto the altar when you have, yourself, defiled it and when the sacrifice which you would bring there is a poor polluted one?”

O Brothers and Sisters, it is well for us that we are commanded to pray, or else in times of heaviness we might give it up! If God commands me, unfit as I may be, I will creep to the footstool of Divine Grace. And since He says, “Pray without ceasing,” though my words fail me and my heart itself will wander, yet I will still stammer out the wishes of my hungering soul and say, “O God, at least teach me to pray and help me to prevail with You.”

Are we not commanded to pray, also, because of our frequent unbelief? Unbelief whispers, “What profit is there if you should seek the Lord upon such-and-such a matter? This is a case quite out of the list of those things wherein God has interposed and, therefore, (says the devil), if you were in any other position you might rest upon the mighty arm of God. But here your prayer will not avail you. Either it is too trivial a matter, or it is too connected with temporals, or else it is a matter in which you have sinned too much, or else it is too high, too hard, too complicated a piece of business—you have no right to take that before God!” So suggests the foul Fiend of Hell.

Therefore there stands written as an everyday precept suitable to every case into which a Christian can be cast, “Call unto Me.” “Call unto Me. Are you sick? Would you be healed? Cry unto Me, for I am the Great Physician. Does Providence trouble you? Are you fearful that you shall not provide things honest in the sight of man? Call unto Me! Do your children vex you? Do you feel that which is sharper than an adder’s tooth—a thankless child? Call unto Me! Are your griefs little, yet painful, like small points and pricks of thorns? Call unto Me! Is your burden heavy as though it would make your back break beneath its load? Call unto Me! Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you! He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

In the valley—on the mountain—on the barren rock—in the briny sea! Submerged beneath the billows and lifted up by-and-by upon the crest of the waves—in the furnace when the coals are glowing—in the gates of death when the jaws of Hell would shut themselves upon you—cease not, for the commandment forevermore addresses you with, “Call unto Me.” Prayer is still mighty and must prevail with God to bring you your deliverance. These are some of the reasons why the privilege of supplication is also in Holy Scripture spoken of as a duty—there are many more—but these will suffice this morning.

We must not leave our first part till we have made another remark. We ought to be very glad that God has given us this command in His Word that it may be sure and abiding. You may turn to fifty passages where the same precept is uttered. I do not often read in Scripture, “You shall not kill.” “You shall not covet.” Twice the Law is given, but I often read Gospel precepts, for if the Law is given twice, the Gospel is given seventy times seven. For every precept which I cannot keep by reason of my being weak through the flesh, I find a thousand precepts which it is sweet and pleasant for me to keep by reason of the power of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the children of God!

And this command to pray is insisted upon again and again. It may be a seasonable exercise for some of you to find out how often in Scripture you are told to pray. You will be surprised to find how many times such words as these are given—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.” “You people, pour out your heart before Him.” “Seek you the

Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near.” “Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Come boldly unto the Throne of Grace.” “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” “Continue in prayer.”

I need not multiply where I could not possibly exhaust. I pick two or three out of this great bag of pearls. Come, Christian, you ought never to question whether you have a right to pray—you should never ask, “May I be permitted to come into His Presence?” When you have so many commands, (and God’s commands are all promises and all enablings), you may come boldly unto the Throne of Grace by the new and living way through the rent veil. But there are times when God not only commands His people to pray in the Bible—He also commands them to pray directly by the motions of His Holy Spirit.

You who know the inner life comprehend me at once. You feel suddenly, possibly in the midst of business, the pressing thought that you must retire to pray. It may be you do not at first take particular notice of the inclination, but it comes again and again and again—“Retire and pray!” I find that in the matter of prayer I am myself very much like a water-wheel which runs well when there is plenty of water, but which turns with very little force when the brook is growing shallow. Or, like the ship which flies over the waves putting out all her canvas when the wind is favorable, but which has to tack about most laboriously when there is but little of the favoring breeze.

Now it strikes me that whenever our Lord gives you the special inclination to pray that you should double your diligence. You ought always to pray and not to faint—yet when He gives you the special longing after prayer and you feel a peculiar aptness and enjoyment in it, you have, over and above the command which is constantly binding, another command which should compel you to cheerful obedience. At such times I think we may stand in the position of David to whom the Lord said. “When you hear a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself.”

That going in the tops of the mulberry trees may have been the footfalls of angels hastening to the help of David and then David was to smite the Philistines. And when God’s mercies are coming, their footfalls are our desires to pray. And our desires to pray should be at once an indication that the set time to favor Zion is come. Sow plentifully now, for you can sow in hope! Plow joyously now, for your harvest is sure! Wrestle now, Jacob, for you are about to be made a prevailing prince and your name shall be called Israel! Now is your time, spiritual merchantmen! The market is high, trade much—your profit shall be large. See to it that you use right well the golden hour and reap your harvest while the sun shines.

When we enjoy visitations from on high we should be peculiarly constant in prayer. And if some other duty less pressing should have first place for a season, it will not be amiss and we shall be no loser—for when God bids us specially pray by the monitions of His Spirit, then should we bestir ourselves in prayer.

II. Let us now take the second head—AN ANSWER PROMISED. We ought not to tolerate for a minute the ghastly and grievous thought that God will not answer prayer! His Nature, as manifested in Christ Jesus, demands it. He has revealed Himself in the Gospel as a God of love, full of Grace and truth. And how can He refuse to help those of His creatures who humbly, in His own appointed way, seek His face and favor? When the Athenian senate upon one occasion found it most convenient to meet together in the open air, as they were sitting in their deliberations, a sparrow, pursued by a hawk, flew in the direction of the senate.

Being hard pressed by the bird of prey, it sought shelter in the bosom of one of the senators. He, being a man of rough and vulgar mold, took the bird from his bosom, dashed it on the ground and so killed it. Whereupon the whole senate rose in uproar and without one single dissenting voice, condemned him to die, as being unworthy of a seat in the senate with them, or to be called an Athenian if he did not render succor to a creature that confided in him. Can we suppose that the God of Heaven, whose Nature is love, could tear out of His bosom the poor fluttering dove that flies from the eagle of Justice into the bosom of His Mercy?

Will He give the invitation to us to seek His face and when we, as He knows, with so much trepidation of fear, yet summon courage enough to fly into His bosom—will He then be unjust and ungracious enough to forget to hear our cry and to answer us? Let us not think so harshly of the God of Heaven! Let us recollect next His vast Character as well as His Nature. I mean the Character which He has won for Himself by His past deeds of Grace. Consider, my Brothers and Sisters, that one stupendous display of bounty—if I were to mention a thousand I could not give a better illustration of the Character of God than that one deed—“He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” And it is not my inference only, but the inspired conclusion of an Apostle—“How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

If the Lord did not refuse to listen to my voice when I was a guilty sinner and an enemy, how can He disregard my cry now, that I am justified and saved? How is it that He heard the voice of my misery when my heart knew it not and would not seek relief, if after all He will not hear me now that I am His child, His friend? The streaming wounds of Jesus are the sure guarantees for answered prayer. George Herbert represents in that quaint poem of his, “The Bag,” the Savior saying—

*“If you have anything to send or write  
(I have no bag, but here is room)  
Unto My Father’s hands and sight,  
(Believe me) it shall safely come.  
That I shall mind what you impart  
Look, you may put it very near My heart,  
Or if hereafter any of friends  
Will use Me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open; what he sends  
I will present and somewhat more  
Not to his hurt.”*

Surely, George Herbert’s thought was that the Atonement was in itself a guarantee that prayer must be heard—that the great gash made near the

Savior’s heart which let the light into the very depths of the heart of Deity—was proof that He who sits in Heaven would hear the cry of His people! You misread Calvary if you think that prayer is useless. But, Beloved, we have the Lord’s own promise for it and He is a God that cannot lie— “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer you.” Has He not said, “Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believe that you shall have it and you shall have it”? We cannot pray, indeed, unless we believe this doctrine—“for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

And if we have any question at all about whether our prayer will be heard, we are comparable to him that wavers—“for he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” Furthermore, it is not necessary, but still it may strengthen the point if we add that our own experience leads us to believe that God will answer prayer. I must not speak for you, but I may speak for myself. If there is anything I know, anything that I am quite assured of beyond all question, it is that praying breath is never spent in vain. If no other man here can say it, I dare to say it and I know that I can prove it.

My own conversion is the result of prayer—long, affectionate, earnest, importunate. Parents prayed for me! God heard their cries and here I am to preach the Gospel. Since then I have adventured upon some things that were far beyond my capacity, as I thought. But I have never failed, because I have cast myself upon the Lord. You know as a Church that I have not scrupled to indulge large ideas of what we might do for God. And we have accomplished all that we purposed. I have sought God’s aid and assistance and help in all my manifold undertakings! And though I cannot tell here the story of my private life in God’s work, yet if it were written it would be a standing proof that there is a God that answers prayer!

He has heard my prayers, not now and then, nor once or twice, but so many times that it has grown into a habit with me to spread my case before God with the absolute certainty that whatever I ask of God, He will give it to me. It is not now a, “perhaps,” or a possibility—I know that my Lord answers me and I dare not doubt! It were, indeed, folly if I did. As I am sure that a certain amount of leverage will lift a weight, so I know that a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God. As the rain cloud brings the shower, so prayer brings the blessing. As spring scatters flowers, so supplication ensures mercies. In all labor there is profit, but most of all in the work of intercession—I am sure of this—for I have reaped it.

As I put trust in the queen’s money and have never failed yet to buy what I want when I produce the cash, so I put my trust in God’s promises and mean to do so till I find that He shall tell me just once that they are base coins and will not do to trade with in Heaven’s market. But why should I speak? O Brothers and Sisters, you all know in your own selves that God hears prayer! If you do not, then where is your Christianity? Where is your religion? You will need to learn what are the first elements of the Truth of God, for all saints, young or old, set it down as certain that He does hear prayer!

Still, remember that prayer is always to be offered in submission to God’s will. When we say, “God hears prayer,” we do not intend by that that He always gives us literally what we ask for. We do mean, however, this—that He gives us what is best for us. And that if He does not give us the mercy we ask for in silver, He bestows it upon us in gold. If He does not take away the thorn in the flesh, yet He says, “My Grace is sufficient for you,” and that comes to the same in the end. Lord Bolingbroke said to the Countess of Huntingdon, “I cannot understand, Your Ladyship, how you can make out earnest prayer to be consistent with submission to the Divine will.”

“My Lord,” she said, “that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king and he gave me permission to ask any favor I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus, ‘Will Your Majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such-and-such a favor—but at the same time, though I very much desire it, if it would in any way detract from Your Majesty’s honor, or if in Your Majesty’s judgment it should seem better that I did not have this favor, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.’ So you see I might earnestly offer a petition and yet I might submissively leave it in the king’s hands.”

So with God. We never offer up prayer without inserting that clause, either in spirit or in words, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. Not my will but Yours be done.” We can only pray without an “if” when we are quite sure that our will must be God’s will, because God’s will is fully our will. A much-slandered poet has well said—“Man, regard your prayers as a purpose of love to your soul. Esteem the Providence that led to them as an index of God’s good will. So shall you pray aright and your words shall meet with acceptance. Also, in pleading for others, be thankful for the fullness of your prayer. For if you are ready to ask, the Lord is more than ready to bestow. The salt preserves the sea and the saints uphold the earth. Their prayers are the thousand pillars that prop the canopy of Nature.

“Verily, an hour without prayer, from some terrestrial mind, were a curse in the calendar of time, a spot of the blackness of darkness. Perchance the terrible day when the world must rock into ruins, will be one unwhitened by prayer—shall He find faith on the earth? For there is an economy of mercy, as of wisdom and power and means. Neither is one blessing granted unsought from the treasury of good—and the charitable heart of the Being, to depend upon whom is happiness, never withholds a bounty, so long as His subject prays. Yes, ask what you will, to the second throne in Heaven, it is yours, for whom it was appointed. There is no limit unto prayer—but if you cease to ask, tremble, you self-suspended creature, for your strength is cut off as was Samson’s—and the hour of your doom is come.”

III. I come to our third point, which I think is full of encouragement to all those who exercise the hallowed art of prayer—ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH. “I will show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” Let us just remark that this was originally spoken to a Prophet in prison, and therefore it applies, in the first place, to every teacher and, indeed, as every teacher must be a learner, it has a bearing upon every learner in

Divine Truth.

The best way by which a prophet and teacher and learner can know the reserved Truths of God—the higher and more mysterious Truths of God— is by waiting upon God in prayer. I noticed very specially yesterday in reading the Book of the Prophet Daniel, how Daniel found out Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The soothsayers, the magicians, the astrologers of the Chaldeans brought out their curious books and their strange-looking instruments and began to mutter their abracadabra and all sorts of mysterious incantations, but they all failed.

What did Daniel do? He set himself to prayer, and knowing that the prayer of a united body of men has more prevalence than the prayer of one, we find that Daniel called together his brethren and bade them unite with him in earnest prayer that God would be pleased in His infinite mercy to open up the vision. “Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”

And in the case of John, who was the Daniel of the New Testament, you remember he saw a book in the right hand of Him that sat on the Throne—a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open or to look upon. What did John do? The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who had prevailed to open the book. But it is written, first, before the book was opened, “I wept much.” Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Brethren in the ministry, you who are teachers in the Sunday school and all of you who are learners in the college of Christ Jesus, I pray you remember that prayer is your best means of study—like Daniel you shall understand the dream and the interpretation when you have sought God. And like John you shall see the seven seals of the precious Truth of God unloosed after you have wept much. “Yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding: if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures: then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Stones are not broken except by an earnest use of the hammer. And the stone-breaker usually goes down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence and let the knees of prayer be exercised, too, and there is not a stony doctrine in Revelation which is useful for you to understand which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. “Bene orasse est bene studuisse” was a wise sentence of Luther which has been so often quoted that we hardly venture but to hint at it. “To have prayed well is to have studied well.”

You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayers. Thoughts and reasoning may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into the Truth of God. But prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery so that we may get at the treasure that is hidden there for those who can force their way to reach it. The kingdom of Heaven still suffers violence and the violent takes it by force. Take care that you work always with the mighty implement of prayer and nothing can stand against you.

We must not, however, stop there. We have applied the text to only one case—it is applicable to a hundred. We single out another. The saint may expect to discover deeper experience and to know more of the higher spiritual life by being much in prayer. There are different translations of my text. One version renders it, “I will show you great and fortified things, which you know not.” Another reads, “Great and reserved things, which you know not.” Now all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance and faith and joy and hope which are enjoyed by the entire family—but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion and conscious union with Christ—which is far from being the common dwelling place of Believers.

All Believers see Christ, but all Believers do not put their fingers into the prints of the nails, nor thrust their hand into His side. We have not the high privilege of John to lean upon Jesus’ bosom, nor of Paul to be caught up into the third Heaven. In the ark of salvation we find a lower, second and third story. All are in the ark, but all are not in the same story. Most Christians, as to the river of experience, are only up to the ankles. Some others have waded till the stream is up to the knees. A few find it chest high. And a few—oh, how few!—find it a river to swim in, the bottom of which they cannot touch.

My Brethren, there are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle’s eye of acumen and philosophical thought has never seen. And there are secret paths which the lion’s whelp of reason and judgment has not as yet learned to travel. God alone can bear us there, but the chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged are prevailing PRAYERS. Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of Mercy. “By his strength he had power with God: yes, he had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us.” Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel and enables him to cover Heaven with clouds of blessing and earth with floods of mercy.

Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah and shows him the inheritance reserved. Yes, and it elevates him to Tabor and transfigures him, till in the likeness of his Lord, as He is, so are we! In this world, if you would reach to something higher than ordinary groveling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you and look with the eye of faith through the windows of importunate prayer. To grow in experience then, there must be much prayer.

You must have patience with me while I apply this text to two or three more cases. It is certainly true of the sufferer under trial—if he waits upon God in prayer he shall receive much greater deliverances than he has ever dreamed of—“great and mighty things, which you know not.” Here is Jeremiah’s testimony—“You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul. You have redeemed my life.” And David’s is the same—“I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me and set me in a large place...I will

praise You: for You have heard me and are become my salvation.”

And yet again—“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” “My husband is dead,” said the poor woman, “and my creditor is come to take my two sons as bondsmen.” She hoped that Elijah would possibly say, “What are your debts? I will pay them.” Instead of that, he multiplies her oil till it is written, “Go and pay your debts and”—what was the “and”?—“live you and your children upon the rest.” So often it will happen that God will not only help His people through the miry places of the way so that they may just stand on the other side of the slough—but He will bring them safely far on the journey.

That was a remarkable miracle, when in the midst of the storm, Jesus Christ came walking upon the sea! The disciples received Him into the ship and not only was the sea calm, but it is recorded, “Immediately the ship was at the land where they went.” That was a mercy over and above what they asked. I sometimes hear you pray and make use of a quotation which is not in the Bible—“He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think.” It is not so written in the Bible. I do not know what we can ask or what we can think. But it is said, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.”

Let us, then, dear Friends, when we are in great trial, only say, “Now I am in prison. Like Jeremiah I will pray as he did, for I have God’s command to do it. And I will look out as he did, expecting that He will show me reserved mercies which I know nothing of at present.” He will not merely bring His people through the battle, covering their heads in it, but He will bring them forth with banners waving to divide the spoil with the mighty and to claim their portion with the strong! Expect great things of a God who gives such great promises as these!

Again, here is encouragement for the worker. Most of you are doing something for Christ. I am happy to be able to say this, knowing that I do not flatter you. My dear Friends, wait upon God much in prayer and you have the promise that He will do greater things for you than you know of. We know not how much capacity for usefulness there may be in us. That ass’s jawbone lying there upon the earth—what can it do? Nobody knows what it can do. It gets into Samson’s hands—what can it not do? No one knows what it cannot do now that a Samson wields it! And you, Friend, have often thought yourself to be as contemptible as that bone and you have said, “What can I do?” Yes, but when Christ, by His Spirit grips you—what can you not do?

Truly you may adopt Paul’s language and say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” However, do not depend upon prayer without effort. In a certain school there was one girl who knew the Lord. She was a very gracious, simple-hearted, trustful child. As usual, Divine Grace developed itself in the child according to the child’s position. Her lessons were always best said of any in the class. Another girl said to her, “How is it that your lessons are always so well said?” “I pray God to help me,” she said, “to learn my lesson.” “Well,” thought the other, “then I will do the same.” The next morning when she stood up in the class she knew nothing. And when she was in disgrace she complained to the other, “I prayed God to help me learn my lesson and I do not know anything of it. What is the use of prayer?”

“But did you sit down and try to learn it?” “Oh, no,” she said, “I never looked at the book.” “Ah, then,” said the other, “I asked God to help me to learn my lesson—but I then sat down to it studiously and I kept at it till I knew it well and I learned it easily, because my earnest desire, which I had expressed to God was, help me to be diligent in endeavoring to do my duty.” So is it with some who come up to Prayer Meetings and pray and then they fold their arms and go away hoping that God’s work will go on. Like the Negro woman singing, “Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel,” but not putting a penny in the plate—so that her friend touched her and said, “But how can it fly if you don’t give it wings to fly with?”

There are many who appear to be very mighty in prayer, wondrous in supplications! But then they require God to do what they can do themselves and therefore God does nothing at all for them. “I shall leave my camel untied,” said an Arab once to Mahomet, “and trust to providence.” “Tie it up,” said Mahomet, “and then trust to providence.” So you that say, “I shall pray and trust my Church, or my class, or my work to God’s goodness,” may rather hear the voice of Experience and Wisdom which say, “Do your best. Work as if all rested upon your toil—as if your own aim would bring your salvation. And when you have done all, cast yourself on Him without whom it is in vain to rise up early and to sit up late and to eat the bread of carefulness. And if He speeds you give Him the praise.”

I shall not detain you many minutes longer, but I want to notice that this promise ought to prove useful for the comforting of those who are intercessors for others. You who are calling upon God to save your children, to bless your neighbors, to remember your husbands or your wives in mercy may take comfort from this! “I will show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” A celebrated minister in the last century, one Mr. Bailey, was the child of a godly mother. This mother had almost ceased to pray for her husband who was a man of a most ungodly stamp and a bitter persecutor.

The mother prayed for her boy and while he was yet eleven or twelve years of age, eternal mercy met with him. So sweetly instructed was the child in the things of the kingdom of God that the mother requested him— and for some time he always did so—to conduct family prayer in the house. Morning and evening this little one laid open the Bible. And though the father would not deign to stop for the family prayer, yet on one occasion he was rather curious to know, “what sort of an out the boy would make of it,” so he stopped on the other side of the door and God blessed the prayer of his own child under thirteen years of age to his conversion!

Said the mother, “I might well have read my text with streaming eyes and said, ‘Yes, Lord, You have shown me great and mighty things, which I knew not! You have not only saved my boy, but through my boy You have brought my husband to the Truth.” You cannot guess how greatly God will bless you! Only go and stand at His door—you cannot tell what is in reserve for you. If you do not beg at all, you will get nothing. But if you beg He may not only give you, as it were, the bones and broken meat,

but He may say to the servant at His table, “Take that dainty meat and set that before the poor man.”

Ruth went to glean. She expected to get a few good ears—but Boaz said, “Let her glean even among the sheaves and rebuke her not.” He said, moreover, to her, “At mealtime come here and eat of the bread and dip your morsel in the vinegar.” She found a husband where she only expected to find a handful of barley. So in prayer for others, God may give us such mercies that we shall be astounded at them since we expected but little. Hear what is said of Job and learn its lesson, “And the Lord said, My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like My servant Job...And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Now, this word to close with. Some of you are seekers for your own conversion. God has quickened you to solemn prayer about your own souls. You are not content to go to Hell. You want Heaven. You want washing in the precious blood—you want eternal life. Dear Friends, I pray you take this text—God Himself speaks it to you—“Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” At once take God at His Word. Get home—go into your chamber and shut the door and try Him!

Young man, I say, Try the Lord! Young woman, prove Him—see whether He is true or not! If God is true, you cannot seek mercy at His hands through Jesus Christ and get a negative reply. He must—for His own promise and Character bind him to it—open Mercy’s gate to you who knock with all your heart! God help you, believing in Christ Jesus, to cry aloud unto God and His answer of peace is already on the way to meet you! You shall hear Him say, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.” The Lord bless you for His love’s sake. Amen.

[NOTE—In a former sermon, while denouncing the error of the “nonconfession of sin by Believers,” we wrongly imputed that gross heresy to the Plymouth Brethren. We have since learned that the persons to whom we alluded have been expelled from that body and we therefore desire to exonerate the community from a fault of which they are not guilty. We are sorry to have made this charge, as it is far from our wish to speak evil of any, but we were not aware of the expulsion of the guilty persons.]

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CHASTENED HAPPINESS

NO. 1636

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER. 25, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” Jeremiah 33:9.**

GOD’S ancient people sadly provoked Him with their idolatries from age to age. He was longsuffering to them to the last degree, but at length He grew weary of them and, according to His own words, “He abhorred His own inheritance.” He caused them to be carried away into captivity and their land became a desert, or the heritage of strangers. Israel became a scattered people on the brink of national extinction, for their iniquities had hidden the face of the Lord from them. Yet the Lord, even Jehovah, had entered into a Covenant concerning them with Abraham, His friend, which Covenant He had afterwards renewed with His servant David.

This latter Covenant the Lord is said, by the Prophet Jeremiah, to remember even when Jerusalem is desolate. We read in the 20th verse and onward these words—“Thus says the Lord: If you can break My Covenant of the day, and My Covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My Covenant be broken with David, My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.” Even in Israel’s worst days, when her representative man was the weeping Prophet Jeremiah, and when her sorrows were greater than even he could express, yet the Lord revealed His love and promised that blessed days should dawn for the seed of Abraham!

These days have not yet come, but they shall surely arrive, for God has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow. There is yet a history for Israel—her sun is clouded, but it has not set. As surely as stands the Covenant with day and night, so surely shall the chosen people return from their captivity and possess the land which the Lord has given them. In those days the Lord will build them as at the first and cleanse them from all their iniquities. Then they shall not be proud or arrogant, for His goodness shall startle and astound them and they shall be amazed, even, unto trembling when they see what great things Jehovah has done for them! The memory of their great national offenses and especially of their long rejection of the Messiah shall cause them to wear their high dignity without pride—they shall be subdued by love to a child-like fear of again offending—they shall tremble as they see the Lord God of their fathers glorifying all His Grace in them. Thus much for the strict context of the text.

At this time we shall loosen the verse from its stall and bring it forth to our own pastures. Its primary significance is not only its teaching, for the words of the Lord are full of eyes and look in many ways. We may use this promise in reference to all the Lord’s people, for the promise is sure to all the seed. That which is true of the Jew, one way, is true of all the chosen seed in the same sense or in another. No privilege of the Covenant is absolutely private, either to Jew or Gentile, but in its highest form, if not in its lowest, it is the common property of all the heirs of salvation. We are joint heirs with Christ Jesus and as He inherits all blessing, so, also, do we. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, has well said, “If you are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Let me, then, read the text, again, and let us appropriate it to ourselves—“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” Such honor and blessing have all the saints! Our text suggests, at the outset, the remark that all the good things which make up prosperity are to be traced unto the Lord. Woe unto us if we receive good and perfect gifts and yet forget the Father of Lights from whom they come! These benefits are not from beneath, but from above—let them not be passed by in ungrateful silence—but let us send, upward, humble and warm acknowledgments. He who forgets mercy deserves that mercy should forget him. God grant we may never be such practical atheists as to receive daily bounties from God and not return a daily song.

As each gleaming wave of the sea reflects the light of the sun, so let each ripple of our life flash with gratitude for the benediction of Heaven. All good comes from the Altogether Good, who is of good the essence, the Creator and the Giver. Especially is this true of all spiritual blessings—of such goodness as comes not so much from benevolence to creatures as from mercy to sinners. As a being, I am grateful that my Creator is kind to me. But as a sinner, if my Judge smiles upon me, I admire His exceeding Grace! His justice had left me unblessed to perish through my sin if His mercy had not found a way to spare and to cleanse. You who know not only your insignificance, but also your unworthiness, are held under special bonds to lift up your hearts in fervent gratitude to the Lord.

I remark, next, that temporal mercies are always best when they come in their proper order. I have no doubt our text includes both temporal and spiritual good, but certainly the temporals are arranged in the second rank, for the eighth verse runs—“I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me.” And after this we have mention of goodness and prosperity. After pardon, peace and plenty are golden blessings—without which they might prove a curse. To an unforgiven sinner the richest enjoyments of this life are as the food which fattens the bullock for the slaughter. But when sin is pardoned, common mercies become tokens of a Father’s love and ripen beneath the sun of Divine Love into an inexpressible sweetness!

The children of God bless God for bread and water because God has made these things matters of promise and they come as Covenant provisions. Cheered by Grace, the child of poverty finds contentment in that which otherwise might seem but prison fare. Much or little must depend upon the way in which you look upon it and what to the Believer is enough, might be to the worldling a mere pittance because Grace has not trained his mind to rejoice in the will of the Lord. Blessed be God if He has given us first, the fruits of the sun of Grace, and then the fruits put forth by the moon of Providence! The main thing is to be able to sing, “Bless the Lord who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases,” and after that it is most pleasant to add, “who satisfies your mouth with good things.”

What shall I say of the happiness of those persons who have spiritual and temporal blessings united, to whom God has given both the upper and the nether springs, so that they possess all things necessary for this life in fair proportion and then, far above all, enjoy the blessings of the life to come? Such are first blessed in their spirits and then blessed in their basket and in their store! In their case, double favor calls for double praise, double service, double delight in God! Let them take for their example the Psalmist in the 71st Psalm, who found himself increased in greatness, comforted on every side and then exclaimed, “I will also praise You with the psaltery, even Your truth, O my God unto You will I sing with the harp, O You Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You; and my soul, which You have redeemed.”

And yet, and yet, and yet—if we are very happy, today, and though that happiness is lawful and proper because it arises both out of spiritual and temporal things in due order—yet in all human happiness there lurks a danger! There is a wealth which has a sorrow necessarily connected with it. And I think that even when God makes rich and adds no sorrow therewith, yet He makes provision against an ill which otherwise would surely come. Let me remind you of that memorable passage, “There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.” The Lord is all that to His believing people. But then, broad rivers and streams have a danger appertaining to them, for these are waterways by which the pirates of the sea approach a city and plunder it—and hence for Zion’s protection it is added, “Wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.”

Thus the Lord gives the benefit without the danger naturally attendant upon it! He gives peace, but prevents carnal security. And He gives happiness but prevents the pride and presumption which are too apt to grow out of it. The text speaks of goodness and prosperity procured for us and then tells us that all danger which might arise out of it is averted by a gracious work upon the heart. The Lord sends a chastened joy—“They shall fear and tremble.” Instead of unduly exulting in their possessions and becoming high-minded and vain-glorious, the Lord’s people are kept lowly and self-distrustful, O Glory to God! The Lord’s Word is, and thus their happiness brings Glory fulfilled, “It shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them.”

This, then, is our subject—the sanctifying and mellowing of our joy. We shall try to see the Lord’s loving wisdom in this matter, that we may the more wisely love Him and the more intelligently estimate His prudent conduct towards us. We shall first notice this toning down of our joy. And then, in the second place, we shall observe the feelings by which this chastened effect is produced. And thirdly we shall look to the measure in which most of us can enter into this experience of a joy, toned and tinted by fear and trembling.

I. Let us think a little about THE TONING DOWN OF OUR GREAT JOYS. As I have said, we need Grace in enjoying both temporal and spiritual prosperity and, therefore, I shall speak upon them both. Even when we are filled with holy delight it is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand. When most lifted up with spiritual joy, we are not beyond gunshot of the enemy. We need the armor of God on the right hand as well as on the left. Even when we serve the Lord, it must be with fear and in His glorious Presence we must rejoice with trembling. In the cup of salvation there are drops of bitterness and so must it be—for unmixed delight in this world would be dangerous.

Unbroken prosperity in worldly things has proved perilous to many Christians. It is no theory, but a matter of sad fact, that many men, as they rise as to one world, sink as to another. I am even afraid that longcontinued health of body is not always for the health of a man’s soul and that to be without care and trouble is not the best way to soul-prosperity. When the sea is smooth, the ship makes poor sailing. Men are bird-limed by their rest and ease and have small care to fly Heavenward. We are apt to lose our God among our goods! Is it not so? If the world’s roses had no thorns, should we not think it Paradise and forego all desires for the gardens above?

If Israel in Egypt had dwelt luxuriously, would a cry for deliverance have ever gone up to Heaven? And had Pharaoh been content to ease their burdens, would they ever have marched for Canaan? Alas, we are apt to chill in our desires for Heaven when we get to the warm side of the hedge and hear the smooth side of the world’s tongue. When the flowers of earth charm us, we cast our eyes downward and forget the stars of Heaven—at least the danger lies that way. Wise men dare not ask for unmingled prosperity, for they are not sure they can bear it! When first we travel to the south and escape this land of fog, we delight without measure in the sunshine and are anxious to bask in it throughout the whole day. Do you wonder?

Yet, before long, experience suggests a sunshade, for the stranger finds that his head cannot endure the full rays of the sun! In the same way, many a man has suffered a sunstroke in his mind, heart and character, by making money too fast and prospering too much. There is a danger of another kind in a spiritual experience which is all smooth and pleasant. You all remember the fate of Moab who had been at ease from his youth and had become settled upon his lees—may it never be ours. Yet I have seen professors lose their balance while filled with delight. I am not one of those who would speak evil of excitement in religion—men get excited about politics—why should they not be excited about eternal things? Still, there is a kind of delirious religion abroad which I would have men avoid. Its joys are not calm and quiet, but fanatical and noisy. Be sober! Do not give up the reins of your judgment and permit your feelings to run away with you.

Some Christians have been so uniformly joyous that they have grown elated and self-conceited, even as Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. A few have even supposed themselves to be absolutely perfect while in the flesh—a mere supposition, disproved by their own need of modesty! We have seen brethren carry their heads so high that they could hardly understand a poor Believer who was wrestling against sin and in the strength of God overcoming his corruptions—they have become censorious and have condemned their brethren as if they had been appointed to be judges in Israel to set up whom they would, and put down whom they chose. Repose of mind, caused as much by sound bodily health as by spiritual joy, has made men think uncharitably of sick and sorrowful saints who have been very dear to Jesus, though very doubtful to themselves. Alas, a succession of excitements has, in some cases, bred selfsufficiency. And this has made men light-headed and they have been carried away by different heresies.

Ecclesiastical history will tell you that some who have boasted of their high spiritual delights have gone far in vain imaginings and have ended in the worst forms of immorality. It is an extraordinary fact that superspirituality has often been found to dwell next door to sensuality—and men have turned the wine of holy love into the vinegar of lust. I need not go to ancient chronicles to prove this—a word to the wise suffices. Even spiritual joy needs a dash of salt, if not of wormwood, to be mingled with it. Holy delight needs to be coupled with sacred grief. Repentance must go with faith, patience with hope, humility with full assurance and conscious self-emptiness with a sense of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

I would remind you, next, that unmixed joy would be fallacious because there is no such thing here below. If a man should become perfectly content with the things of this world, it would be the result of a false view of things. This is an error against which we should pray, for this world cannot fill the soul—and if a man thinks he has filled his soul with it—he is under a gross delusion! The best thing of earth is but a bubble, tinted with rainbow hues and unsubstantial as a dream! Every earthly joy has within it, the seeds of its own destruction! Oh Man, if you did but know yourself, much more your God, you would be assured that visible things can never satisfy the desires of a spiritual being!

As to spiritual joy, I say that in no man’s experience can it be long without admixture and yet be true. Never, at any moment, can a Christian be in such a position that he has not some cause, either for dissatisfaction with himself, or fear of the tempter, or anxiety to be faithful in service. Our streams of joy blend with currents of fear. Blessed be God, my sin is forgiven me—this joy calls up its balancing thought—Oh that the Spirit of God may help me not to sin again! Again I sing—Blessed be God, I have gotten the victory over an evil habit. But my song is followed by the prayer—Lord, enable me to conquer all evils, even those which as yet I know not. Thus joy and fear hang like the two scales of a balance—I mean not the fear which love casts out, but the filial fear which love fosters.

If God has preserved His servant in the day of battle, he has no room to boast, for here comes another enemy. Temptations come wave after wave and, having breasted one, we prepare for another. We cannot yet shout the victory, for, lo, the foes advance, squadron upon squadron! Their routed battalions are succeeded by new armies and it behooves us to quit ourselves like men. We dwell where, in our God, we have the utmost reason for delight, but where, in all things, we perceive the most weighty arguments for solemnity. Rejoice always, but cease not to fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that the Lord has procured for you.

Once more, unmixed delight on earth would be unnatural. We are not in Heaven, yet, and perfect bliss lives not beneath these cloudy skies, nor within the pale sway of the moon. While we are in this body we groan, though we have the first fruits of the Spirit, for we are in a creation which together groans and travails in pain until now. Our years must have their winters while the world revolves. When the Dutch had the trade of the East in their hands, they were accustomed to sell “birds of paradise” to the untraveled people of these realms. These specimen birds had no feet, for they had craftily removed them. The merchants declared that the species lived on the wing and never alighted. There was so much of truth in the fable, that had they been really and veritably, “birds of paradise,” they would not have found a place for their feet upon this globe! Truly, birds of paradise do come and go, and flit from Heaven to earth, but we see them not, neither can we build cages to detain them!

While you are here, expect reminders of the fact that this is not your rest. If you could attain to perfect joy on earth you might be justified in saying, “I have no longing for Heaven. I am perfectly clear of sin, care and trouble—I may as well stay where I am. What need to go further if I can fare no better?” Let no man dream that things will ever come to this with him. Ah, yon lovely flowers of spring this year, you have looked forth too soon! It is strangely mild weather for December, but Spring has not yet arrived. Possibly it is so with some of my hearers—because the Lord is smiling upon you it is very mild weather with your souls—and you dream that the winter of trouble is ended and that your Heaven has begun. Be not deceived! You are not yet—

*“Where everlasting spring abides*

*With never-withering flowers.”*  
Perhaps a touch of frost may do you good by preventing your getting into an unnatural and unsound condition!

Thus much, then, upon the first point, the toning down of our joys which is wisely managed by our Father’s wisdom and prudence.  
II. Secondly, we are to see how this toning down is done and observe THE FEELINGS BY WHICH THIS SOBERING EFFECT IS PRODUCED— “They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” Why fear and tremble? Is not this, in part, a holy awe of God’s Presence? Remember that text, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” The argument for fear and trembling is the work of God in the soul! Because God is working in you, there must be no trifling. If the eternal Deity deigns to make a workshop of my nature, I, too, must work, but it must be with fear and trembling. So, then, the blessed Presence of God is the Believer’s joy, and the very fact that He has worked it in him is a cause for the fear and trembling which comes over the spirit of the joyous Believer. That, I think, is the first meaning of our text.  
God has been very good to me, unspeakably good to me, and I have plainly seen the traces of His fatherly hand in my life. Yes, I have so seen them that I have cried out with adoring amazement in many a Bethel, “How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven.” So has it been with you, dear Friends. When God has come very near to you in a blaze of mercy. When He has done things that you looked not for when your mouth has been filled with laughter and your tongue with singing because of His goodness, have you not, at the same time, felt overcome by the excess of His favor? Have you not been able to sympathize with Peter when, at the sight of his boat full of fish, he cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”? Have you not felt a solemn trembling like Manoah when he feared that he must die because he had seen an angel of the Lord?  
I know it has been so with you! A little mercy would have made you sing, but a great mercy has made you sit in silence before the Lord, or fall on your knees in adoration! A common Providence would have charmed you, but an extraordinary Providence has overwhelmed you. You have lain in the dust at Jesus’ feet, feeling yourself to be but dust and ashes—and yet every particle of dust has been full of wondering love to God. This is one way in which God keeps His people right in the days of their joy— where a shallow drink might have intoxicated—He gives so deep a draught that the danger is past and holy wonder takes the place of unholy pride!  
But next to that, there rises up in the mind of every favored Christian a deep repentance for past sin. He asks himself this question, “How could I have lived as I have done when God has entertained such love towards me?” When I discovered the election of God’s Grace and when I saw at what a price I had been redeemed by our Lord Jesus, I was ashamed of all my evil ways. When I read my name inscribed on the palms of Jesus’ hands; when I understood that I was united to Him by a union that never could be broken, I said to myself, “What a thousand fools I have been to have lived forgetful of my highest glory, unmindful of my dearest Friend!” To have lived year after year in open enmity against my Lord seemed like a grim and ghastly dream—almost too horrible to be true!  
Have you not felt the same? Have you not felt ashamed and confounded at the memory of your former life? Have you not felt as if you could never open your mouth any more because of all your unkindness to your heavenly Friend? Such penitent reflections keep the Lord’s people right, by creating a fear and trembling in the presence of His overflowing goodness. Let me ask you another question. Has not your deepest sense of unworthiness come upon you when you have been conscious of superlative mercy? When the Lord has scourged and chastened you, you have seen your sins, in your sorrows, and have been ashamed, but, by the memory of His great goodness, you have been far more corrected and humbled.  
When our secret sins are set in the light of God’s countenance, it is a light, indeed! Oh, the shame my soul has known when the Lord has caressed me, when He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth! Then I have said, “Ah, Lord, why this to me? What am I that you deal thus lovingly with me?” It was when Jehovah came and showed Himself to Job, not in chastening, not with fire of God, or whirlwind, nor with sore boils and blains, but as His own dear Covenant God—it was then that Job said—“Now my eyes see You, therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” Love makes the crimson of sin more red than ever! Blood-bought pardon makes sin look black as sackcloth of hair! I tell you, Sirs, it is not the flames of Hell, but the glories of Heaven that most of all fill us with trembling before the Lord!  
Nothing touches the heart like undeserved and unexpected love. Love’s glance flashes to the very core of the heart and makes the offender, like Peter, go forth and weep bitterly. Do we not each cry, “Would God I could never sin again! Oh, that I could perfectly serve my God without a slip, even to my last day, because of His great love for me”? We tremble and are afraid because of the unutterable Grace which has met our utter unworthiness and rivaled it, until Grace has gotten unto itself the victory! Have you never noticed how the Lord brings His people to their bearings and keeps them steady, under a sense of great love, by suggesting to their hearts the question, “How can I live as becomes one who has been favored like this?”  
Did you ever feel that the glory of the palace of love made you afraid to dwell in it? When you have put on your best apparel, those garments which are whiter than any fuller on earth could make them—the matchless righteousness of God—have you not felt fearful of defiling your robes? Did you ever see yourselves adorned as a bride for her husband in all the gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit and have you not said to yourselves “What manner of people ought we to be?” You have scarcely known which way to turn, or how to move! You feared to walk lest you should defile those silver sandals and those feet so newly washed! You did not know what to touch for fear you should stain those hands which Christ had jeweled with His love and made white as ivory with His effectual cleansing! Have you not felt as if you dared not speak till you had prayed, “Lord, open You my lips”?  
You have been afraid to look for fear your eyes should glance on evil and, therefore, you have prayed, “Turn my eyes away from beholding vanity.” There has been such a fear, such a caution, such a holy jealousy upon you that instead of being lifted up by favor, you have been humbled by it! Grace never makes a man vain. When a soul is adorned with glory and beauty and made to shine like the star of the morning, it acknowledges its borrowed comeliness and brightness—and is mildly radiant with reflected rays. When raised up by the special favor of our God into communion with Himself, we are afraid of trespassing against the decorum of almighty love, fearful of violating the propriety of Sovereign Grace!  
The Lord our God is a jealous God and He will be had in reverence by those who are around Him. This fact has made us feel like those Apostles who were filled with fear as well as with great joy. To know how to behave ourselves in the House of God has been our anxiety! We have felt like a poor countryman, bred and born in the wilds, who finds himself in a court and feels strange in such a place. Thus have we been clothed with humility as we have worn the garments of praise. Exalted to be kings and priests, our kingdom and priesthood have called forth our careful thought and vainglory has thus been banished.  
And have you never felt a fear lest God’s goodness should be abused by you? I have been smitten to the very heart as with a secret blow in moments of delight when I have thought, “And suppose, after all, I should not serve God faithfully in my favored position and should not be approved of Him at the last? What if I should seem to be an Apostle and prove to be a Judas? What if I should speak of Christ and yet be nothing better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal?” That heart-piercing fear will wound pride if anything will! Have you never been thus put to the question by your conscience? Have not other questions arisen of a similar character? You have seen your children around you and you have been happy with them, but have you not thought, “What if I should not train them aright and they should grow up to be a sorrow to me and a dishonor to the Church of God?”  
When prospered in business, have you never said to yourself, “What if I should become a worshipper of the golden calf? What if covetousness should eat out the heart of my devotion? What if, when my Master calls me to account for my talents, He should cast me away for having hid them in a napkin?” Have you never been tried by such thoughts? If you have never thus examined yourself, you had better do so at once! He who has never questioned his own condition had better make an immediate enquiry. He who has never felt great searching of heart needs to be searched with candles. It is idle to take things for granted, for all of us must be tried by fire and even “the righteous scarcely are saved.” No man’s Hell shall be more terrible than that of the self-confident one who felt so sure of Heaven that he would not take the ordinary precaution to ask whether his title deeds were genuine or not.  
One more thought may also occur to the most joyous Believer. He will say, “What if after rejoicing in all this blessedness I should lose it?” “What,” cries one, “do you not believe in the final perseverance of the saints?” Assuredly I do, but are we saints? There’s the question! Moreover, many a Believer who has not lost his soul has, nevertheless, lost his present joy and prosperity, and why may not we? The good man has shone as a star of the first magnitude, but suddenly he has dwindled into darkness. He has been unwatchful and in consequence, by the dozen years together, he has had to go softly in the bitterness of his soul.  
We have known fathers in Israel who have stepped aside and though they have, by deep repentance, found their way to Heaven, they have gone sorrowing there. Look at David’s history! Who was happier all the early part of his life? Note that one sin with Bathsheba and ask who was more tried and troubled than David throughout the rest of his pilgrimage? The doctrine of Final Perseverance was never intended for the comfort of any who are afraid of self-examination, or who are not watchful—for it is by no means at variance with the other doctrine that many who are sure of Heaven in their own minds will never enter there because Jesus never knew them! Great joy may be only a meteor, great excitement may be a mirage of the desert, great confidence may be a will-o’-the-wisp luring to destruction! The highest seats in the synagogue do not secure for their occupants a place among the shining ones above.  
Many rejoicing professors will yet discover that their spot was not the spot of God’s people and their song was not the new song which God puts into the mouth. And what if that should be your case and mine? So, when I stand upon my high mountain, let me pray, “Lord, hold You me up.” Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall, for he is the man who is most in danger. He who is most full of holy delight is still to watch, for did not Jesus say, “What I say unto all, watch”? God grant that we may be helped to watch against the arrow which flies by day as much as against the pestilence which walks in darkness!  
Thus you see how the Lord, by working upon our innermost feelings, sobers us in the hour of joy, even as the text has it—“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”  
III. By way of practical application, let us now consider THE MEASURE IN WHICH YOU AND I CAN ENTER INTO THIS EXPERIENCE. I thought to myself, if I begin to make individual applications I shall have before me a never-ending task because every man has had a distinct experience of this Truth of God if he has safely stood upon the high places of joy. We have, hundreds of us, perceived the benefits of the dark lines and shades of life’s picture, and we see how fit and proper it is that trembling should mingle with transport. As the fruit of experience I have learned to look for a hurricane soon after an unusually delightful calm. When the wind blows hard and the tempest lowers, I hope that before long there will be a lull— but when the seabirds sit on the waves and the sail hangs idly, I wonder when a gale will come.  
To my mind there is no temptation so bad as not being tempted at all. The worst devil in the world is when you cannot see the devil at all because the villain has hidden himself away within the heart and is preparing to give you a fatal stab—  
*“More the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests thundering overhead.”*  
This general statement may suffice and as I cannot make an application to each one, personally, I think I will apply the truth to this Church as a whole. When this building was not yet ready for opening, we held a meeting in it and I remember among the speakers there was one who is now with God, Mr. Jonathan George, of Walworth. He made use of this text in a little speech that he made—he said, “It would be well for us all to remember when God blesses us with any measure of prosperity, that prosperity is very hard to bear. How is that? Cannot Christianity or the Grace of God bear it? No, it is because of the extreme carnality and pride of our hearts. Here is a portion of Scripture we should all remember—‘They shall fear and tremble for all the prosperity that I send.’  
“It is a blessing when God has succeeded our poor efforts and poured out a blessing upon us, if we are jealous of our own hearts and fear and tremble! Oh God, how rich, how beneficent You are! Let us not lose Your full blessing by our own pride, by pointing to some second cause and saying, ‘It was I. It was ourselves. It was our ministers.’” Verily I say unto you, the words of the man of God have been fulfilled! How I have feared and trembled because the Lord’s mercy to us has been so extraordinary! As a Church we have enjoyed so many years of growth, prosperity, unity and happiness, that one is apt to fear that it cannot last much longer! Certainly it cannot be perpetuated except by fresh power from the Lord who is wonderful in working.  
One begins to think, “Must not something happen to spoil our concord? Will power always continue with the preached Word? Will not the candle burn low in the socket? Such holy jealousy, if faith is also active, will help to keep us right. Evils may be prevented by the foresight of them. Through Grace, by our fear of falling, we may be helped to stand. Brothers and Sisters, we are just now in a critical time of our life as a Church. Whatever of novelty there was about our movements has long since vanished—and those who came among us from curiosity know us no more. Your pastor’s ministry cannot be expected to be as fresh and vigorous as it used to be, for upon his head the gray hairs far outnumber the darker ones—and perhaps gray hairs are stealing over his preaching, too! If natural vigor fails, now is the time to see whether the power which has sustained us is of God or not! We know what the answer to the text will be—out of weakness we shall be made strong!  
Besides, my Brethren, certain invaluable helpers who were with us in the beginning—and rare men they were—are going Home. One by one our leaders are being called away—will more be found? Will they be of equal worth and weight? I know they will, yet these are solemn questions. We are in the middle of the river, now, and in the middle the river is deepest and hardest to ford. Now we need that underneath us there should be the everlasting arms! I am weaker than ever. You, also, are weaker than ever—but the eternal God faints not! We have the same old Gospel and you will not grow tired of it, though it is preached by the same old Spurgeon. The Holy Spirit will abide with us and that will make up for the weakness of our spirit! You who have been earnest at prayer will not, I hope, lose your zeal, for the Mercy Seat is still accessible. To persevere is the difficulty.  
It would be easy to burn at a stake for five minutes, but to be surrounded with smoldering firewood of green wood and to burn by slow degrees would be torture, indeed! Yet such is the patience of saints. Keeping up your burning zeal, your personal holiness, your evangelizing efforts and all your spiritual works after 27 years is no mean test of your faith! He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, these are the thoughts that come into my mind and prevent my saying we have done well and may rest on our oars. Far from anything like exaltation or self-congratulation, I feel more than ever inclined to lie low at the feet of my Master and kiss the very dust He stands upon! I feel more disqualified, more unsuitable, more unable for my Lord’s work than ever—and yet I am glad in the Lord and find joy in His name! Since there is an everlasting arm that never can be palsied—since there is a brow that knows no wrinkle and a Divine mind that is never perplexed—we go forward in hope and cast ourselves upon our eternal Helper once again!  
You have heard of the ancient giant, Antaeus, who could not be overcome because as often as Hercules threw him to the ground, he touched his mother, Earth, and rose renewed. Such is your lot and mine, often to be cast down, and as often to rise by that casting down! “When I am weak then am I strong.” Let us glory in infirmity because the power of Christ does rest upon us! Let us be content to decrease, that Christ may increase—to be nothing that Jesus may be All-in-All! If we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God has procured for us, it is not a fear that He will change, or a trembling lest He should be defeated. The fear and trembling are for ourselves—not for Him! I have no fear and trembling about the Gospel! I have preached it many years in this place and its attractive perfume is undiminished.  
I read the other day of a grain of musk which had been kept for 10 years in a room where the air was perpetually changed—it scented that chamber from year to year—and yet when it was weighed by the most delicate scales—no diminution of its bulk was apparent! So the Gospel continues to be as ointment poured forth, savoring the thousands that come here year by year—and yet it is as full of fragrance and freshness as ever—and so shall it be even if, for a thousand ages, it should be our theme!  
Come we, then, with comfort back to the unalterable Gospel, to the undying Spirit, to the unchanging God—here is room for joy unspeakable and full of Glory! Up with your banners, then! Forward to new victories! In the name of the God of Jacob let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Amen.

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END OF VOLUME 27 Sermon #2178 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ZEDEKIAH—OR, THE MAN WHO CANNOT SAY, “NO”  
NO. 2178

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 21, 1890.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1890.

**“Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hands: for the king is not he that can do anything against you.”  
Jeremiah 38:5.**

“PUT not your trust in princes.” Zedekiah professed to be a friend to Jeremiah, but when the princes sought permission to put the Prophet to death, Zedekiah’s friendship was not worth much. He said, “He is in your hands: for the king is not he that can do anything against you.” Instead of protecting his friend and adviser, he gave him over at once and left him as a lamb at the mercy of wolves. It seems very natural for men to trust in men and yet the Scripture warns us that, “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” He that makes a mortal man his confidence will find that his anchor has no grip. Even good men are but broken reeds and cannot bear the strain of the day of trouble—while the bad are like sharp spears that prick the man who dares to lean upon them.

But, if we cannot trust in men, we think that surely we may trust in princes. If honor were banished from all the rest of the world, it ought to find a home in the breasts of kings! Great men, noble men, men of renown, men of high standing—may we not trust in them? Brethren, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes,” for princes are but men, and sometimes hardly that. Princes are not always the truest of men—they are seldom the best of men to trust. Many have had to say at the end of life what Wolsey is represented as saying to Sir William Kingston, “Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in my age have left me naked to my enemies.” If “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown,” certainly uneasy is the heart which rests on the wearer of a diadem!

Trust in God and you have trusted in the true King, “the King immortal, invisible.” Trust in the Christ of God and you have trusted in the only Prince who can never falter, fail, or forget. I think that is clearly a lesson of the text. We all know someone who, to us, is as a prince—let us not rest too much on a wealthy uncle, or a generous friend, or a capable patron— but let our trust be in the Lord, alone. Had Jeremiah been trusting in Zedekiah, he would have been sorrowfully deceived. Yet this is not the lesson that I am going to teach at this time.

Zedekiah was a gentleman of a sort wonderfully common nowadays. A good-natured, easy man. His nobles could get anything they liked from him. He would not act amiss of his own self, but he would follow the lead of others, wherever that might lead him. He had a great respect for the Prophet—he liked to visit him and know what message he had received from God. He did not wish to have it known that he consulted him, but still he liked to steal away in private and have a talk with the man of God. He much respected the man so sorrowful and yet so heroic. But when the princes came round him, though he was an autocratic king and could have snuffed out those gentlemen at once, yet half-a-dozen of them, all very glib of speech, most easily persuaded him.

He did not want to have any bother—he would do anything for a quiet life. “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” As much as to say—“I cannot say, ‘No,’ to you, if you wish it. I am sorry—I think you are wrong, but I will not insist upon my own idea. If you wish it, although I am a king and perhaps ought not to be so yielding, yet I so much wish to please everybody that I cannot refuse you anything. You may take the Prophet and, if you like, you may put him into a dungeon where he will die. I think you are too hard on a good man, for whom I have a great respect, but at the same time, gentlemen, I am not a man that can stand out against you—so take him and do as you please.”

This is that king, Zedekiah—he does not rule, but is ruled by the princes whom he ought to command. “Oh,” says one, “you do not mean to insinuate that we have any Zedekiahs about now?” I shall not insinuate anything, but boldly declare that these soft, molluscous beings make up a large proportion of the population, and I think it is highly probable that some of them are here now! I shall be very glad if what I say should make them feel much ashamed and should cause them to cry to God to give them new hearts and right spirits!

It shall not be my fault if they do not feel their seat grow hard and the house grow warm. I would gladly make them pray to God to put some kind of moral backbone into them so that, when they know the right, they may stand up for it and may not weakly yield to the persuasions of those who tempt them. May the Holy Spirit be here to convict men of sin in this matter!

I. I am going, first of all, to DESCRIBE THE LIKES OF THIS MAN ZEDEKIAH that I may deal plainly with such. This softness of character takes different shapes, but it is the same base metal, the same worthless dross in every case. In some it takes the form of enquiring into what religion is fashionable when they settle down in a district. They have a pretty good idea of what the Truth of God is. They were taught it by their parents. They have read it in God’s Word. They have made up their minds with some distinctness as to what is the correct thing according to Holy Scripture—but they waive their judgment and prepare to compromise.

You see, if you want to get on in business, the best thing is to join with those religious people who are the wealthiest and most respectable—and the most fashionable. If you have prospered in business and have saved money, well, the girls want to be married and the family requires to get into “society,” whatever that may mean—so the best thing is not to enquire, “Who preaches the Gospel in this district?” But, “Where will it be most for our commercial advantage, or best for our position in society and most eligible for the girls? Children of Judas! Thus you soil your Master for 40 pieces of silver and perhaps for less! Iscariot’s tribe is a large one! Not that they want to be wrong, they would prefer to be right! Not that they wish to take up with false doctrine, they would much rather take up with right doctrine, but, you see, they must be “respectable.”

Sound doctrine in preference, but good society at any price! They cannot be expected to go with the poorest and the least educated class of people, they must be respectable! And so, when they are asked to worship in a fine architectural building, though they know that it is not where their souls will profit, they will make no bones about doctrine or practice, but go at once. By their conduct they say, “I am by no means so bound up with any religious views as to love anything for their sake. I am not one that can refuse a kind invitation from people of fashion.” Did you ever meet with such folk? I have met them frequently. I know that soft fellow, Zedekiah—I have seen him a great many times and I have no very great liking for him. Is he here before me? My dear Sir, be not offended with your own portrait!

Another one is of this kind. He is a Christian—at least he hopes that he is—and, on examining his own heart, he trusts that he is. But he has never made any profession—he never intends to do so, because, you see, if you make a profession, then you are distinctly coming out from the world and declaring yourself to be on the side of Christ and holiness—and a great deal will be expected of you. This may involve you in a good deal of trouble. Is there not an easier path than this? The strait way, the narrow way, is described in the Word of God as, “the way which leads unto life.” But can you not keep as near the way as possible without going into it? Can you not travel along on the other side of the hedge?

The grass is very nice there. The primroses are coming up. You can look over the fence and keep the high road in view so as not to wander far from the track! Why should you choose an unpopular way which will cost you many a friendship and a good deal of enjoyable company? If you openly follow the narrow way you will be pointed at—people will expect you to be so very careful and so very holy—and this will cost a deal of painful self-denial. Why should you expose yourself to all that trouble when there are so many friends on the sheltered side of the hedge who assure you that their path will lead to the same end?

It is not quite what it ought to be. Still, God is very merciful and you may hope to come out right in the long run if you are careful to pick your way and do not get into the worst of the ditches. Is it not always a good thing to take a short cut? Well, I used to think so once but now, whenever I am in the country, I always scrupulously avoid short cuts, for they almost always get you up to your ankles in mud and often land you further off than you were when you started. And you may depend upon it that, in this life, the man who thinks that he is not going to make a profession, but will go to Heaven secretly by the new cut, will find himself, before long, much farther off from God and Christ than he ever thought to be!

The way to Heaven, according to Scripture, is, “With the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” and, “What God has joined together let no man put asunder.”

It is written, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The inward faith and the public avowal of it, must never be divided. Do you dare to remove even a linchpin from the Gospel chariot? Mind what you are doing! O you cowards, you think to make a new way to Heaven—to make the walk more pleasing to your taste and more gratifying to your pride—but you will ruin your souls! Do you hope to be allowed to sneak into Heaven by a back door! Take heed to yourselves lest you be deceived in this!

This Zedekiah—I know that he is here tonight—means to join the Church any time within the next 60 years and he has always meant that for the last 30 years that I have known him! I wonder whether he will live till the time comes! I am in great fear about him and I pray him to consider what is now said and no longer be ashamed of Christ!

Another form of Zedekiah is not uncommon. It is the man who is on both sides. A Christian? Yes, by all means! He takes a class in the Sunday school. “Certainly, Sir. Would you not have me active in the cause of Christ?” Of course. He talks to others about the necessity of being found in Christ and of the excellence of Christian endeavor. We like this young man. But tomorrow night there will be an entertainment of a loose character and he will be asked to go. Will our virtuous young gentleman yield to the invitations of his worldly friends? Assuredly he will, for he is like putty and you can mold him at will! “Well,” he says, “you know we must not be too strict”—and off he goes! Another time there will be sung, in his presence, a song which is a little loud—and others laugh and he laughs, too. He says that he did not quite like it, yet I do not hear any difference between his laugh and the laugh of others.

He is a gentleman who is, “Hail fellow, well met!” with any company that he gets into. A most genial man, is he not? He never raises questions. He is far from squeamish, for that might land him in difficulties. “The king is not he that can do anything against you”—he will do everything for you. He holds with the hare. Poor thing, it is a shame to hunt so timid a creature! But his sympathy is not worth much, for he runs with the hounds as fast as any dog among them and he would be glad to get the hare by the nape of the neck if he could do it and not be seen. Do you not know the gentleman? You know him, but you do not esteem him. Who could? To me he is a frequent sorrow. God deliver us from duplicity! Of all things that must be accursed in God’s sight, the chief must be this—to pretend respect to our holy faith and then to live in constant opposition to it. “If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him,” but do not attempt to worship Jehovah and Baal at the same altar and bring them the same sacrifice, for this must not be! No man can serve two masters!

Then we have another class of Zedekiahs who are of a better sort, but none too good. I trust that they wish to be true at heart, but they are very weak and apt to yield. If they live in a godly family they will be pleased to be there and they will be happy and develop into something very good in its way. But if, in the order of Providence, they should be cast in a family where there is no religion, certainly they will not attempt to alter the state of things except it be in the mildest half-hearted manner! The family will still be without religion though they are there. And if they happen to move to a circle openly opposed to godliness—well, it will grieve them very much at first and they will be rather restless. It will not grieve them quite so much, by-and-by, and after a while they will, themselves, become as much opposed to the thing they now admire as the rest of the folks.

O dear Friends, we have a number of Christians—I will not condemn them—but they are very feeble! They give way in the day of temptation. They cannot stand alone—false doctrine, cleverly spoken—carries them clean away. These are the prey of wolves in sheep’s clothing. They have no stamina, no backbone, no inward root. Be you not of this sort! Oh, pray every morning, “Lead us not into temptation,” and when you have breathed that prayer to God, add the other, “But deliver us from the Evil One.” If we must be tempted, let us not fall under the temptation. In these perilous days we need men who have put on the whole armor of God! It is not every child that can wear armor. We need men strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, who, having put on armor, are not afraid to come to the front of the battle where the arrows fly thickest—for they know that their armor is mail of proof and will throw off all the poisoned darts of the enemy.

But alas, we have many whom we love, and for whom we pray, who are so apt to yield, so ready to give way, that they fall in battle at the very first assault of the deceiver! They get with persons of cunning character and commanding mind and they fly like feathers in the wind, having no power to resist even the breath of a childish foe. Thus I have described Zedekiah in four of the forms which he commonly takes. If the cap fits any one of you, pray wear it! If I have made a photograph of you, put it in the album of your meditation and look at it till you loathe your own likeness!

II. Now, very briefly, let me SEARCH OUT THE CAUSE OF THIS ERROR which spoils the character of Zedekiah. Maybe we may put our finger on an evil which may be cured by Divine Grace. It is not always the same in everybody, but with some there is a general softness of character. I do not say that they have a soft place in their head! Possibly I may not say the whole truth if I suggest that they have a soft piece in their heart, but they are altogether soft—fine material for a potter to work upon. You can cast them into any shape you choose.

Remember one whom Mr. Bunyan graphically describes. His name was Pliable. Evangelist and Christian told him about the Celestial City. “Yes, yes,” Pliable said. Oh, yes, he would go to the Celestial City. Of course he would go to the Celestial City! He liked the idea. It was a beautiful thing to start for Heaven and Glory and escape from the City of Destruction which was to be burned up. Of course, he quite agreed with his friends and he would start with them on pilgrimage. He went on with his companion, Christian, till they came to the Slough of Despond. Suddenly in they went, up to their necks in the mire!  
Christian made desperate efforts to get out on the farther shore, nearest to the city that he sought. But Pliable had never reckoned upon any such floundering—if there was to be a slough, he thought it would not be so deep as this one—and that the mud would not be quite so foul. Finding it to be a horrible bog, he turned round and as he was not very far from the spot at which he entered, he scrambled out on the side nearest home. And as he climbed the bank, he said that as far as he was concerned, whoever liked might have the Celestial City, but he would not venture again into such a slough, even though 50 Celestial Cities should tempt him before, and 50 Destructions should threaten him behind!

So we have fluid people like that—nothing in their character is substantial. I will tell you what has often happened in this Tabernacle. A man has come into this place and stood in the aisle, hating the very thought of true religion with a heart like a flint. And when I have been busy with my hammer, by God’s Grace I have come down on that flint and the flint has gone to pieces in a minute, broken to shivers! But others are here who are India-rubber men and when I am hammering they yield to each blow. I can mold them as I please, but when the sermon is done, they always get back into the old shape. There is a vast difference between the honest obstinacy of the one and the trivial submission of the other! Without any gracious yielding of the heart to the force of Divine Truth, many encourage us for a time, but deceive us in the end. Zedekiah talks very pleasantly and hopefully, but betrays those who seek his good, for he is unstable and not to be depended on.

Another reason for this softness is a selfish love of ease. Sluggards are by no means an extinct race. Many will pay any tax if they may but dwell at ease. Beware of this in your personal character! A man says, “I admit that I ought to have spoken right out and denounced evil.” “Why didn’t you?” “Well, I did not want to.” The next time that he is asked to do a wrong thing, he will yield and turn with his company like a vane in the wind! He knows that he ought to resist, but he does not. And why not? “Well, you see, I do not like offending people.” Lazy, lazy lover of yourself! That is all it comes to. His wish to please his fellows is only a phase of his desire to please himself! The coward wishes to save his precious carcass from trouble and let himself go sauntering along the road of pleasure without distressing exertion, so he says, “Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Well, yes, Sir,” to everybody!

He destroys his soul for the sake of taking things easy. Do I not speak to a great many here who are of this kind? Some are sharp, decisive—too sharp, perhaps—but they have minds and mean what they say. Others are always afraid to speak the truth unless it is popular. Contending for the Truth of God is a thing they cannot endure, for it involves too much effort. They are especially afraid to say that little word, “No,” a word which I strongly recommend to every young man. “No” is one of the most useful words in the world! A man is more than half-educated when he can say, “No,” distinctly. He has not much more to learn after that. There are great men and wise men, so called, who cannot say, “No.” They say, “N—n—no, perhaps.” They get the word out without meaning it or, possibly, in the middle of their attempt at saying it, they break down and end with the admission, “I am not one that can tell you no.” Thus they copy Zedekiah when he said, “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” Dear Friends, peace at any price is peace bought too dearly. Will you fling away your souls, your Heaven, your all, for the sake of ease? Selfish love of a quiet life, what a folly you are!

Some others, I must say, are, if possible, even more contemptible than these. They are cowards. I will not run the risk of being attacked by an angry hearer, when the sermon is over, for calling him a coward. But I do believe that such people are about, and that some of them are here. Men that would face a dragon, or go up to the cannon’s mouth, I have known to be afraid of a woman, or of some idle reprobate whose opinion was not worth the breath he used in speaking it. You remember how Peter was terribly put out because a maid said to him, “You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee”? A maid! What was it to Peter what that maidservant thought about him? But poor Peter was all in a heat and was so frightened that he denied that he even knew his Lord! Do not condemn his weakness, but remember your own! Have not some of you been frightened by a silly maid, or by a foolish boy? Are there not some here that have thought about eternal life and would long ago have given serious consideration to their soul’s affairs, but they are afraid of—well, I will not mention him— you know who it is that you are afraid of!

And so it is the world over. I have known a man afraid of his daughter! I have known many more daughters afraid of their fathers! Many a wife afraid of her husband and some husbands afraid of their wives, their employers, their brothers, their friends. Soldiers in the barracks are often fearful of their messmates and workmen down at the shop are alarmed because there is one sharp fellow in the room who is an infidel and would give them no peace if they made an avowal of their faith! It would demean a great many if we were to expose their petty cowardice. Are you not ashamed of yourselves if it is so?

The bottom of all is, however, that when a man is thus timid about doing right and can be easily persuaded to do wrong, there is a lack of the fear of God in him. He that fears God is under no necessity to fear anybody else. True godliness infuses courage into the heart—in this respect, also, “perfect love casts out fear.” If you have learned to tremble before the great, almighty, living God, you have ceased to tremble before a living man! I must correct myself—before a dying man—for in very truth, life is in God, but man is a creature that will die and perish like the moth. “Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgets the Lord your Maker?”

If we had a sense of God’s Presence everywhere, we should not dare consent to sin, whoever it was that bade us do so. We should be like the three holy children who stood for God. “Do you see that burning fiery furnace?” “Yes, we see it, but we also see the living God.” “It shall be heated seven times hotter,” said Nebuchadnezzar. “Do you hear that?” They hear the furious threat of the despot, but they also hear a voice which Nebuchadnezzar did not hear—the voice of God bidding them serve Him and strengthening them to do so! I remember in the life of my dear friend, Mr.

Oncken, of Hamburg, when he began to baptize people in the Alster contrary to the law. He was brought up before the burgomaster and that worthy magistrate put him in prison several times.

At last Mr. Burgomaster said, “I tell you what it is, Mr. Oncken—the law must be obeyed. Do you see that little finger of mine? As long as that little finger will move, I will put you down in your illegal Baptisms.” “Well,” said my brave old friend, “Mr. Burgomaster, with all respect to you, I do see that little finger of yours. But do you see that great hand of God? I am afraid that you do not see it as I do. But, as long as that great hand of God is with me, you cannot put me down.” I opened Mr. Oncken’s chapel in Hamburg some years afterwards and I had a most respectable audience gathered together to hear me preach the Gospel—and in the center of that audience sat the Burgomaster! He was far more rejoiced to be there than to be carrying out an oppressive law. His little finger had ceased its movements against the Baptist and there he sat to show what the power of God’s right arm could do—for he was listening to the Word of God from a Baptist preacher in a meeting house built by the man whom he had been called upon to put down!

Oh, why are we afraid of men? Six feet or less of bone, blood and flesh—and you are afraid of it! Yet, yonder is the eternal God that fills all things and you are so little afraid of Him that you disobey Him though He can cast both body and soul into Hell! “I say unto you,” said Christ, “fear Him.” So say I, His unworthy servant! And when you once fear Him, you will lose the Zedekiah weakness and become strong for God. But I must not stay. May the good Spirit bless these searching words!

III. I want, in the next place, to show YOU WHERE THIS KIND OF SOFTNESS LEADS. When a man is like Zedekiah, who cannot say anything against the princes, but must let them have their own way, what comes of it? Certainly nothing that is good! First, I think that such an easy-going creature dishonors himself. Does yonder young man confess that he cannot say, “no,” that he must do as he is asked and cannot stand out against even a wicked request? Then I am sorry for him. Is he a man? Is he not lowering himself beneath the dignity of manhood? I do not know, dear Friends, what you think about the opinions of others, but I have always felt that if I could keep a good opinion of myself, so far that my conscience could not accuse me of doing wrong, I was not particularly anxious about what anybody else’s opinion of me might be.

“But,” said one to a good man, “if you do that one pleasant thing nobody will know of it and so you will not be disgraced in the eyes of anybody.” “No,” said the good man, “but I should be disgraced in my own eyes if I did it and I have more respect for my own judgment of myself than I have for other people’s opinion of me.” This is not egotism, but uprightness of heart! The world’s poet makes Brutus say, “I had as life not be, as live to be in awe of such a thing as I myself.” What? Creep and cringe and beg leave to do right and crave permission to believe the truth and speak it? Ask another man’s leave, or some woman’s leave to obey my God? Not I! No, let the worms eat me before it comes to that! O Sirs, it is a fearful thing for a man to get into that humiliating state that he has no mind of his own. Call such a creature a spaniel that must fetch and carry at his lady’s bidding—but call him not a man! He has reduced himself to nothing! From such dishonor, great Lord, deliver us!

Again, dear Friends, such trimming brings dishonor upon one’s position. Only think of this. “The king—the king,” says, “The king is not he that can do anything against you.” And further on we read, “Zedekiah the king said, I am afraid.” Pretty king, that! His kingship was defiled and his crown was stained when he came into that condition of bondage! King? Call him “slave!” Yet, remember, this also may apply to yourself. You, too, may hold a position which you degrade. You are a father yet you fear your boys and girls! You have no family prayer—you do not know how your children might like it. You are a father, are you? Do you obey your own children and call yourself a father?

You are a master, but you never speak to your servants or your workpeople about religion. You do not know how they might take it! You are some master! Names are strangely given nowadays—there is not much that is masterly about you. Poor slave! Is there not many a person in this world who labors to gain an office and then is afraid to carry it out? God intended us, when He gave us a position in life, to live worthy of that position and rightly to exercise the authority and influence which it brings. Think of a king saying, “I am afraid”—but that is what the French king said to Bernard Palissy, the potter.

As nearly as I can remember the story, the monarch said, “Palissy, you must go to mass.” “That I never will,” said Palissy. “Then I am afraid that I shall have to give you up to be burnt.” “There,” said Palissy, “your majesty could not make me say such a word as that with all the power you have. I am no king, but only a poor potter, but nobody ever made me say, ‘I am afraid.’” Oh, that fear of men, that dread of ridicule, that wishing to avoid sarcasm! How it has made a man come down from the dignity of his office, from the honor of the position which God has conferred upon him and has made him baser than the menials about him! Will men never learn to honor themselves and their position by a dignified resolve to do the right at all costs?

Shall I tell you what this will still further lead to? Well, you will demean yourself, degrade your position and then the day will probably come when you will give up all religion. I have seen it actually done. Yes, I have seen a young man who has been at home almost all that you could desire—and he has come up to London and dropped into a warehouse where there was no Christian feeling. At first he has gone to a place of worship and written home to his mother to tell her the text, as you are going to do tonight, Mr. John. But after a while he has gone wandering out for a little excursion on the Sabbath and by-and-by he has become a ringleader among those who dare to laugh at sacred things!

One has a tower of observation here and sees sad sights perpetually! Little by little every gracious habit is trampled on through fear of man. The weak young man slides down, down, down. By easy descents his life vessel has glided down the rapids with the current, till at last, he that bade fair for Heaven, shoots over the dread Niagara of everlasting ruin! I

am afraid, young man, that your easy compliance with bad companions will ultimately lead to your giving up all religion. I pray you, pause.

Then it will come to your doing injustice to God and good men. The king did not like it, but he gave Jeremiah over to the cruel princes. “He is in your hands.” You do not believe that you could ever come to treat God’s minister with derision and God’s cause with contumely? I think I hear you say, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this great thing?” No, if you were a dog you would not do it, but, being something worse than a dog, if left to yourself, you will do it! If you have not courage to stand fast, now, and say, “I will serve the Lord,” you will drift and drift till you will become an enemy of the cause of Christ. If Jeremiah had died in that dungeon, Zedekiah would have been an accomplice in his murder. So it has happened with young men and young women who were once, apparently, godly and inclined to better things—they have gradually gone aside, through the softness of their character, till they have become foes of Christ—and have dared defy the God whom they once feared.

At last, it gets to this, that men who trifle with their consciences, as Zedekiah did, are unable to get any good out of God’s Prophets any more. Zedekiah was well admonished and advised by the Prophet, but nothing came of it. I am sadly fearful that you, dear Friends, who are not converted, who have heard me a long time, will soon be unable to get any blessing out of anything I say. I may even become a savor of death unto death to you! I am told that the good people in the valley of Ohio, whose houses have been swept away by the tornado, had a warning that the storm was coming. The storm drums were out and the newspapers announced that a great depression was coming their way. They did not take any notice of that information—it did not seem very threatening, for they had grown used to paragraphs about the weather.

If it were only once in a year that the weather could be fairly predicted, we should be needing to buy the Gazette! But now, as we get it every morning, we do not take any particular or practical notice of it. These poor Ohio friends, therefore, took no warning and were by no means prepared for the tornado. Familiarity breeds neglect. People live close under the big bells of the cathedral and sleep well at night—and people who have houses where the train passes just under the bedroom window seldom trouble themselves about the whistling or the rumble, but sleep right on. You may continue to listen to the earnest warnings which I endeavor to give and after hearing me for years, your hearing will come to nothing if you get to be good, easy people, who say, “Yes, yes, yes,” to everything and there let it end.

I endeavor to be earnest and to give striking calls to repentance, but I fear lest you should grow so used to me that you will take no more notice of me than of a noise in the street. You may look on the sun till you become blind and hear the Gospel till you grow deaf to it. God save you from that and save you at once, on the spot, beyond all fear of such a calamity! Oh, that the Lord would grant me my request and by His mighty Grace bring you at once to His Son Jesus!

IV. I will finish with this. I would LABOR TO FREE MEN FROM THIS COMPLAINT. I would labor to free them from it by the Grace of God. First, I would say to you, remember, dear Friend, if you continue in this undecided, yielding condition, you will miss your way altogether. You must grow firm, for without it you cannot be a Christian. It is necessary, in order to obey Christ, that you should take up your cross and follow Him. He will never number you among His disciples if you say “yes,” and yet do, “no”— if you call Him Master and Lord—and yet try to please the world. “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

You must come out on the Lord’s side. The promise is, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” You cannot be Christians without being decided—without having your minds made up for righteousness and faith in Christ. Therefore hesitate no longer. “How long will you halt between two opinions?” How long will you be in this fluid state, taking no permanent impression? May God Himself in mercy make you to believe in Christ and become His faithful followers! May His Holy Spirit work in you to this end!

Christ deserves this . If He died for me, shall not I acknowledge Him as my Savior? If He has bought me with His precious blood, shall I not confess my faith in Him? O dear Hearer, if you have learned to stand at the foot of the Cross and say, “Jesus died for me,” I am sure you will feel that if it cost you a thousand deaths, you must confess your obligations to Him and declare that, living and dying, you will be His! Do not make any mistake about it! Whatever you seem to gain in personal ease by halting and hesitating now, it will dearly cost you in the end. If a man takes his stand and says, “I am a Christian,” it is the best thing to do in the great battle of life. If you yield a little you will have to yield more and, having yielded more, you will have to yield altogether.

If ever the Spirit of God should fetch you out to be clear and decided, it will be awfully hard work to escape from the nets and traps which you are creating by your present yielding. To say, “No,” however difficult, is an easier thing than to trifle and hesitate and almost comply. You lose even when you seem to gain if you let the Tempter have his way. Do not think, dear Friend, that you are gaining anyone’s esteem by sinful compliances, for you are doing the reverse—you are lowering yourself before the Philistines. Your example is ruined. Your influence is destroyed. You are doing harm and not good. The men that the world thinks most of are the men that stand up, stand straight, stand firm!

I heard one say of a preacher the other day, “I can hear him with pleasure, for he is not an echo, but a voice.” That is to say, he was not a mere copyist, a being made to be dragged like a tin kettle at the tail of a cur— but one who had a mind of his own and dared to express it! He wins respect who, knowing his mind and having his mind fixed on Christ and Divine Truth, becomes a voice for Christ and speaks plainly and boldly! Men despise you otherwise. If you have no manliness, how can you have any godliness?

And oh, what will it be in the hour of death to lie dying, racked with pain and then to have conscience whispering, “You were a coward. You were afraid to come out for Christ. You hid your light under a bushel. You chose to comply with the temptations of the world”? In that dread hour, when the death sweat is on your brow, you will have enough to think of without having remorse to sting you—the remorse of a false and cowardly heart! Oh, if you can then say, not boastingly, but truly, “I did follow my Lord. I trusted in Him alone and I did not blush to confess it”—this, with God’s Grace, will make dying to be easy work!

In the next world what must be the doom of the man who was ashamed of Christ, when the Lord Himself will say, “I am ashamed of him! I am ashamed of him!” The Lord Jesus is not ashamed of the penitent drunkard—for He cleanses him. He is not ashamed of the repenting harlot, but permits her to wash His feet with her tears. But in that day He will be ashamed of all those who have been ashamed of Him! He cannot claim us if we deny Him. May God bless this word of mine! I have not so much preached the Gospel as shown you your need of the Grace of God to make you decide for Jesus. May that Grace be sought and found at once, for His dear sake! I have worn out all my strength in pleading with you. May the Lord Himself take you in hand! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 38:1-23.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—674, 671, 678.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
DEAR FRIENDS—Thanks for your prayers and to the Lord, who hears them. Your preacher is free from pain and hopes now to rest and recover strength. This sermon will, I trust, be suitable for giving to those who are hesitating between two opinions—and if well salted with prayer, may prove salutary to the fickle ones who abound around us. Is not this an occasion for seeking out persons of your acquaintance and aiming at their good by putting this discourse in their way? If one preaches and another gives the sermon currency, the workers may yet rejoice together! Forgive any egotism which appears in this suggestion—what is worth preaching is worth scattering.  
Mentone, December 12,1890.  
Yours, for Jesus’ sake,

*C. H. SPURGEON.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #2684 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

TWO ARGUMENTS AGAINST SIN  
NO. 2684

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS-DAY, JULY 22, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 29, 1881.

**“However I sent unto you all My servants the Prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!”  
Jeremiah 44:4.**

THIS verse portrays what a minister should be and the picture is a burden upon my heart and conscience, for it shows that the true preacher, or Prophet, or man of God, should be one whom God sends early to do His work. It is, as it were, as though his Master were up early in the morning, bidding him make haste to go to His service and not let the grass grow under his feet, for men are sinning—and to suffer them to continue in sin unrebuked, even for an hour, is truly dreadful. It is as though one were to leave a house burning without giving an alarm and calling the firemen, or to see a person in imminent peril in the street without immediately attempting to do something for his rescue. Notice that in this verse God represents Himself as rising early, to show how He realized the greatness of man’s danger and the importance of his being speedily delivered from it. The Lord said that He rose early in order that He might send His Prophets—of course that they might go early, that they might go at once and waste no time—but be instant in season and out of season to warn men not to do the abominable thing which God hated! A minister, then, is one who should be diligent in his Master’s business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord by endeavoring to warn men of the terrible nature and consequences of sin.

He is also to be one who speaks as God’s representative. Not only speaking God’s Truth, but, as it were, speaking it with God’s mouth, for these Prophets were not to say, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that God hates,” but they were to personify God, to put themselves into His place and to say as though He said it, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” What a responsible and privileged position is this for any man to occupy, to have to speak for God in this fashion! Paul referred to it when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be you reconciled to God.” It is a high honor but a tremendous responsibility to have to do Christ’s pleading, to be intercessors for the Intercessor, and to stand up and speak God’s thoughts as though He had set us to be His spokesmen for a time—to plead with the sons of men on His behalf. As I have realized this responsibility, I have sometimes dreaded my office with an unutterable dread, though I would not change it to become ruler of all the empires of earth, or even to be an archangel in Heaven, for I reckon that to be even first among the angels is nothing compared with being an instrument, in the hand of God, of saving the souls of men! Yet how awful and how solemn a thing it is for any man to be called to stand and speak as though God did speak by him and say, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

There is another lesson to be learned from this picture—not only that the minister should rise up early to meet an early God, and should speak in God’s name, but he is also to speak in God’s style—that is, pleadingly and pathetically. I count it an easy thing to proclaim the Truth of God as one might do it from the desk of a classroom, or to be oratorical and to wax eloquent over the great themes we have to make known. But it is quite another matter to plead with men, to be pathetic and to speak as God does here, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” This is the work and this is the difficulty which often burdens our spirits. You remember that the disciples said to Christ, on one occasion, “Lord, teach us to pray,” for they felt as if the strong desires that burned within His heart might well burn in theirs, and that they had even greater necessities than He had. But when they heard Him preach, they felt at once that He outsoared them all. When they saw the tears of pity stream from His eyes and listened to His lament over the doomed city of Jerusalem, then they realized that He overmatched them and they felt, if they did not say it, “Never man spoke like this Man!” And they did not cry, “Lord, teach us to preach as You do!”

They could not hope to rise to that great height and we feel just as they did. Oh, that these lips could use language borrowed from the lips of the Well-Beloved! Oh, that these eyes could run with tears like those that welled up from the great heart of the loving Savior of sinners! His sermons show us what true preaching is—it should be the highest form of persuading, it should be really, only in a better sense than that in which the term is generally used, special pleading—a pleading with men, by weighty arguments, that they would leave their sins and turn to God! Christ’s sermons show us a pleading in which God the Holy Spirit exercises His own supreme office and works upon the minds of the hearers through the utterances of Him who speaks to them. As this is what a minister ought to be, may God help us poor creatures to attain to this high standard! You who are His people can also help us by your prayers, which we greatly need.

Now, turning from my text as it especially related to the Jews in Jeremiah’s day, I want to apply it to you, dear Friends, who are still unconverted. In this verse God tells certain people that He had risen early and sent unto them His servants, the Prophets, one after another, to plead with them on His behalf. Will you, if you can, kindly recollect when your consciences were first touched? Can you remember when that happened? It is highly probable that the sweet tones of your mother’s voice were associated with your first religious thoughts, or, perhaps, there was a godly man—your father—since passed into the skies, who pleaded with you, his son, in Christ’s name. These were your Prophets sent from God—could there be any better messengers from Him than a gracious mother or grandmother, or a godly father?

Why, some of you were plied with the Gospel almost before you knew anything else! Before you had committed any overt act of sin, you heard of Jesus’ wondrous Grace and dying love! And, since then, you have not been without messengers from Heaven who have brought you loving entreaties and invitations. How have you treated them? If you are still unconverted, I am sure that you have not dealt with them as they ought to have been received—you have turned a deaf ear to the voice of love and mercy, or else you would not now be without God, without Christ and without hope! So I come once more, in my Master’s name, as His messenger—will you slight me and reject my message? If you do, I must sorrowfully endure it and cry, with others of my Master’s servants, “Who has believed our report?” Yet I pray you, do not do it, for, though I speak but feebly, no man more sincerely or more heartily desires the good of his hearers than I do. And I ask you who do know the Lord to join me in pleading that God, the Holy Spirit, will bless the message I am about to deliver in Christ’s name.

In our text there are two arguments against sin. What God has to say to unconverted men is here put in very few words—“Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.” This short sentence contains the two arguments against sin upon which I am going to speak. The first is, from the nature of sin itself—“this abominable thing.” and the second is, from the feeling of God towards sin—“this abominable thing that I hate.”

I. The first argument in our text against sin is DERIVED FROM THE NATURE OF SIN ITSELF—“this abominable thing.”  
The particular sin of which the Prophet was speaking was that of idolatry. Those Jewish people would make idol gods in some form or other and they would bow down before them and neglect the worship of the one invisible Jehovah. And God calls their idolatry “this abominable thing.” It is rightly so called, for it is abominable ingratitude. That a man should not worship his Maker, that he should refuse obedience to his Creator, that he should say to Him who made the heavens and the earth, and who also made him and keeps him in being, “I will not worship You! I refuse to bow down before You. I choose to adore another god—Baal, Ashtaroth, Venus, Bacchus, anything but the one true God—and I will not worship You, O Jehovah, the Creator of all worlds!” This, I say again, is shameful ingratitude!  
It is also an abominable thing because it is so degrading and debasing. Everybody ought to be able to see that for a man with intellect and mind to bow himself down before a carved image is most degrading. That he should worship that which is made of wood, or stone, or metal is practically to make himself inferior to the dead thing which he worships! I know of no act in which a man seems to bring himself lower than when he prostrates himself before a material object and says, “This is my god,” or, “This is what I worship.” So God truly calls idolatry an “abominable thing.” And it will appear to you all the more so when you recollect the kind of gods that these people’s images represented. They did, in effect, say to Jehovah, the Maker of Heaven and earth, the good and gracious God, “We will not worship You, but we will worship that golden calf, or those images that have eyes but see not, and hands but feel not, and ears but hear not. We would sooner bow down to these dull dead blocks of wood than worship You.” Oh, this is abominable! I know no more appropriate word than that which God has here used—“this abominable thing.” An immortal being prostrating himself before a piece of wood! A man, created by Jehovah, bowing down before an image which he has, himself, made! This is indeed loathsome! It is insulting to God and provokes Him to the highest degree.  
“We are all agreed about that,” you say. I am glad to hear you say so, yet you may be idolaters, for all that. Have you never heard of those concerning whom Paul wrote to the Philippians, “whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”? Did you ever hear of “the self-made man who worships his creator”? I have heard of him and seen him, too! And I confess that I have more respect for a man who worships a god shaped out of the filth of the kennels than for the one who worships himself because, to worship one’s own self seems to me to be the nethermost depth of degradation! For the Israelites to say of the golden calf, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,” was degrading—horribly so! But for a man to say to himself, practically, if not in so many words, “I am my own god”— surely this sinks him still lower!  
There are some who worship strong drink and who offer themselves as a sacrifice at its shrine. There are many who immolate upon the altar of Bacchus, wife, children, home, character and life itself—and they go down to their dishonored graves, not burnt in the arms of Moloch, but drowned in their own cups. When you talk of idolaters and abominable things, is there any worse form of idolatry than this? Then look at the various forms of covetousness which the Apostle Paul says, “is idolatry.” Think of the guilt of the men who grind the faces of the poor and, perhaps, even pinch themselves so that they may amass more gold and have it written concerning them at the last, “He died worth so much,” when he was really utterly worthless! He who worships the little round images of the Queen is as gross an idolater as the man who bows down before Juggernaut or Baal! The sin of idolatry is still abundant everywhere and it is always, in its nature and essence, a degrading thing to man and an insult to God and, therefore, He continues to say to all idolaters, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”  
There are many other sins, besides idolatry, which are abominable in the sight of God. And there is one point about them that hampers a preacher very much. That is, he cannot bear witness against them, because even to speak of some sins is to help to spread them. It is dangerous work to handle gunpowder and, even when we need to move it from the magazine, we feel that we must do it with great fear and trembling. Alas! Alas, there are abominable sins that are terribly common in this awfully guilty London—sins of unchastity that defile the body and pollute the mind. I fancy that I can see God standing by some young man who is about to go into this kind of sin and I seem to hear Him say, “Oh, do not this abominable thing!” I think I also hear God crying out to some woman who has turned aside from the paths of purity—“Oh, do not this abominable thing!” It may not appear at the time, when the mind is under the spell of the serpent’s fascination, to be so abominable as it really is, but, soberly thought of, what a curse it is to this city and what a curse it is to each individual who is contaminated by it! Young man, keep far away from the house of the strange woman—yes, I must say it plainly—God would have me say it, for He, Himself, says, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”  
There are other abominable sins besides these fleshly lusts which war against the soul, such as the tempting of others to sin. It is an awful fact that there are some people who seem to set themselves deliberately to instruct others in vice and transgression. They will defile the imagination and the heart of children and of growing young men and women—this is a dreadful thing. If any of you are in the habit of singing low songs, or of talking ill-savored language, I would have you hear my God say to you through my lips, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate,” for it is a horrible evil for you to be spoiling these fair flowers while yet they are in the bud! Then there is the habit of using profane and filthy language which is so common in this city—I think more prevalent than ever it was. It is a most senseless as well as wicked practice. There is nothing to gain in it. George Herbert quaintly and wisely wrote—  
*“Take not His name, who made your mouth, in vain— It gets you nothing, and has no excuse.  
Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain— But the cheap swearer, through his open sluice, Lets his soul run for naught, as little fearing. Were I an Epicure, I could bate swearing.”*  
There are many who sin greatly by slandering others. They lie against their neighbors’ characters and they are never better pleased than when they can, by exaggeration, make some little flaw into a grave fault. God says to all who slander, and lie and speak not the truth, “Do not this abominable thing that I hate!” Then there is hypocrisy which is always far too rife—the making of a profession when there is nothing at the back of it—the pretending to be gracious when there is no Grace in the heart, and to be faithful when there is no faith in the soul. O Sirs, if you will be lost, I pray you, do not be lost as hypocrites! If you are determined to perish, choose some other way of perishing than that which Judas took when he joined himself to the Apostles and yet sold his Master for 30 pieces of silver. God says to you, with a special emphasis, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”  
Another aspect of the abominable character of sin will be apparent if I remind you that there are some persons in whom sin—any sin—is peculiarly abominable. If you were privileged, as I was, to be born into a Christian family, having had a grandfather and a great-grandfather and other ancestors all walking in the ways of God, and having a father and a mother whose first and chief desire was to train you in the fear of God, you know that for you to do wrong under such circumstances is, indeed, an abominable thing! Poor gutter children and persons who dwell in the worst dens and slums of London—and who have never been taught as you and I were—cannot sin to the same extent as we can who have so long known better and who have been trained aright from our earliest days. O you children of godly parents, I pray you look well to your walk and hear the Lord say especially to you, “Do not this abominable thing that I hate!”  
There are also some persons who are gifted by Nature, or by that Grace which God sometimes intertwines with Nature, with a tender conscience. Some seem, from the very first, to be more callous and hardened than others, but there are some of us who, from our very childhood, remember how we could not sleep unless we had said our prayers, or, if we had told a lie, we could not rest till we had confessed it. And if we had disobeyed our parents, we were tormented with remorse even though they did not know what we had done! Chastening was not needed to bring us to repentance, for we chastened ourselves. It is a great mercy to have a tender conscience—but to sin against it is a peculiarly abominable thing.  
Mind, my young Friend, you who are sorely tempted just now, I charge you not to do violence to your conscience! Whatever you do, be sure to keep it tender, for it is one of your best friends and it will, by God’s Grace, be the means of guiding you to Heaven! Do not trifle with its warnings. Do not sear it with the hot iron of even an occasional transgression, but, at once, obey the Savior’s call and trust to Him for the salvation only He can give! It is an abominable thing for any man to sin, but it is a hundred times worse in some than it is in others because they have clearer light and a plainer perception of what sin really is.  
And, sometimes, sin becomes an especially abominable thing to a man who has previously committed it and smarted from it, and who has escaped as by the skin of his teeth—and yet goes back to indulge in it again. Have you ever tried to save a poor moth, on a summer’s evening, when you have been sitting at work or reading by the light of the gas or a candle? It comes dashing towards the light and singes its wings—and there it lies, helpless, on the table. You have taken it up very tenderly and put it away from the light in the hope that it might, perhaps, escape. But the very first thing it has done, when it has recovered even the partial use of its wings, has been to fly back into the flame again! You have said, “There is no saving you, poor silly thing, for you are determined to die by your own folly. You will not let me rescue you.” And it is just so with some sinners whom we try to rescue—they will go back to the very thing that has already burnt them!  
Perhaps I am addressing one who, but a little while ago, was on a bed of sickness and, as you were lying there looking into eternity, you cried, “Lord, save me. If You will but spare me, I will turn from sin and I will seek the Savior until I find Him.” Yet you are not doing anything of the kind though the Lord did spare you! Peter’s solemn words might be repeated to you, “You have not lied unto men, but unto God.” Remember what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they sinned thus. I pray God not to visit you in judgment, but, in His great mercy, to lay all your sin as a heavy burden upon your conscience that you may feel the evil of having broken your vows and your promises, for this is, indeed, an abominable thing in the sight of God—and also an abominable thing in the judgment of all honest, right-thinking men!  
Thus might I continue to point out various circumstances which increase the guilt of sinners, but I will only say one more thing and then I shall have finished the consideration of this first part of our subject. The observation I wish to make is this. There are some of us to whom sin has become such an abominable thing that we can honestly say we would sooner suffer every pain of which the body is capable than we would willfully commit sin. There are various things in this world which are loathsome to all our tastes, but we would be willing to have them all around us, however distasteful they might be, rather than be in the presence of moral evil. It grates upon our ears, it galls our mind, it frets our heart, it aggravates all our spiritual senses to be brought into contact with sin! Sin is to us more horrible than death, more diabolical than the devil, more hellish than Hell, itself, for the pains of Hell would lose their sharpness if it were not that sin is the undying worm that causes them. Sin, transgression, iniquity, evil in all its forms, untruth, every violation of God’s Law—all this is an abominable thing which every right-minded man is bound to hate, to loathe, to detest with all the energy of his being! One great reason why we implore men to forsake sin, and pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to do so, is because it is an abominable thing.  
“Oh,” someone says, “sin is a sweet thing!” No, no, it is an abominable thing! “It is a delightful thing,” says another. No, it is an abominable thing! “Oh, but it is a fashionable thing—you can see it in courts of kings and princes—and the great men of the earth love it.” Even though they do, it is an abominable thing! Though it should crawl up to a monarch’s throne and spread its slime over crown jewels, it would still be an abominable thing. It once entered Heaven, itself, and befouled and defiled a mighty angel and all who followed him—and you can see what an abominable thing it is when you realize how it degraded them and cast them down from their high estate to be, “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”  
II. Now, for a little while, I will speak to you upon the second reason why sin should be repented of and forsaken. That is because of THE FEELING WHICH GOD HAS TOWARDS IT. Note how strongly He puts it. “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”  
God hates all evil, all injustice, all wrong-doing, all immorality, all sin of every kind. He hates it! He is not indifferent to it, nor tolerant of it, but His whole soul goes out in righteous indignation against it. And He hates it, first, because He is infinitely pure. If He were not, Himself, perfectly pure, He might tolerate or excuse sin, but the delicate, matchless purity of His Nature causes His holy anger to burn with a fierce flame against everything that is unrighteous. A pure and holy God must hate sin.  
He hates it, too, because it is such an injury to you, His creatures, and, therefore, He says to you, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” He hates it because it so grievously mars what He made perfect. Sin has spoiled all the beauty of God’s highly-favored creature, man. I cannot tell what a perfectly lovely being Adam was before he fell, but I am sure that both Adam and Eve, in their unfallen state, must have had about them a matchless grace to which their loveliest sons or most beautiful daughters cannot now attain. And this also I know, that if you have a face most exquisitely fashioned and well proportioned, yet when evil passions rage behind it, it looks positively diabolical! On the other hand, a man who is truly converted to God and living to bless his fellow men, even though he has only ordinary features, has real beauty about him which we can all perceive. I have seen a very plain woman who has been full of love to Christ and who has consecrated herself to His service, look quite lovely when the Grace of Christ has shone through her face and illuminated her whole life.  
But God hates sin because it spoils men and women, not only in face, but especially in heart. Men and women, as God sees them, are rendered ugly through sin. Any beauty that the sinner may possess is marred in the sight of the Most High and He cannot look upon it except with abhorrence. Besides, where does the sweat on our brow come but from our sin? Where do these aches and pains come but from our sin? Where do the thorns and thistles come, which we must dig up with hard toil, but from our sin? Where do yon hillocks in the churchyard come, those graves that cause so many hearts to break, but from our sin? And because sin works such havoc upon the creatures He has made, God hates

it. God hates it, too, because it drives Him to do what He dislikes doing. Isaiah tells us that judgment is, “His strange work,” a work at which He is not so much at home as in His works of mercy and Grace. and His own words confirm the Prophet’s testimony—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” Though He must smite the guilty, it is, as it were, with His left hand that He smites, for He would far rather that they turned to Him and lived. Yet God must be just, for He would cease to be God if He were not just—and if He did not punish sin. But, in effect, it is sin that has put the sword into God’s hand and made the chains that men must wear forever, and lit the eternal fires that never can be quenched. O Souls, God hates sin for your sakes and He cries to you, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!”

To me, the most touching thing in my text is God’s pleading with men—“Oh, do not do it; do not do it. Do not live any longer in sin. ‘Do not this abominable thing that I hate!’” It is such wondrous condescension on God’s part to thus plead with sinners. It is the act of a king to command, but here it is more like a father who persuades, expostulates, implores, entreats. “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” It is God solemnly dealing with men in earnest—a Suppliant to them, as it were, saying to them, “Oh, do not this abominable thing!” This kind of language is suitable for us to use towards God. We may well cry, “Oh, do not smite me! Do not condemn me!” But, here, God takes the Suppliant’s place and cries to us, “Oh, do not destroy yourselves! Do not force Me to punish you! Do not reject My love! Do not despise My Son! Do not refuse My mercy! Do not neglect My call! Do not continue in sin—‘this abominable thing that I hate!’”

It is as though God had such sympathy with men that He stood and pleaded with them, as a man’s own mother or father might with him. Have you ever heard a mother or a father, when a child has seemed to be determined to follow an evil course, saying, “Do not so, my child! I pray you, do not so”? Will such wrong-doing hurt the father? Not personally. Will it injure the mother? No, not in her own person, but, somehow, parents so identify themselves with their children that they suffer when their children sin—and they say to them, “Do not so! Oh, I beg you, do not so, lest, in injuring yourselves, you also bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” It is amazing that God, whose thunders shake the heavens, should say to His fallen, rebellious creatures, “Do not so.” I wish I knew how to repeat these words, but my tongue may not even attempt the impossible task, for I cannot speak as God did when He said, “‘Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!’ I hate it for your sake. I hate it for its own sake. Do not grieve Me. Do not vex Me. I grieve because it injures you and I am vexed because of the misery and woe it will surely bring upon you unless you repent.”

The greatest wonder of it all is—and with this I must close—that God not only pleaded thus with men, once, but He did it many times, for He sent Prophet after Prophet and this was always the message He gave to each of them, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” I can conceive of a prince, in very great pity to an erring subject, saying to him, “Do not so! Do not so!” But I cannot conceive of a great potentate again, and again, and again, and again, and again, with tears, coming to a subject and saying, “Oh, do not break my law! Do not this abominable thing!”

But hear it, O you heavens, and be astonished, O earth, as this strange story is told to you! God has pleaded with some here for 20 years—twenty years of patience—twenty years of rejected love! Twenty years, did I say? With many of you it is thirty, or even 40 years! You know it is so. Forty years was the Lord tried by the children of Israel in the wilderness and 40 years has He been tried by many who are still alive! Would you have had patience with anybody who had vexed you for 40 days? Some of you cannot keep your tempers for 40 seconds! Certainly you boil over in less than 40 hours! Yet God has had patience with you for 40 years! Yes, and all that while some of you have been hearers of the Gospel or, if you have not regularly gone to hear it, you might have done so, for it has been preached quite close to you. The most of you have been living in a city that is well provided with the means of Grace. I said 40 years, but in some cases it is 50 years—and there is one, over yonder, with whom it is now 60 years of slighted love and Divine compassion. Is there one with whom it is 70 years? Seventy-five years? Eighty years? Perhaps it is even so and yet you are still despising your God and neglecting your own soul!

How I wish that I knew how to say to you, in God’s name, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!” Come, Friend, give up your sin! Renounce your folly! Trust in Christ—ask God to receive you. Say, “I will arise and go to my Father and will say to Him, Father, I have sinned.” If you go to Him with that confession, you may be sure that He will receive you! Otherwise He would never have sent you tonight’s pleading message. He would not have spared you to be here if He had not meant to accept you when you seek His face! Remember, the way of salvation is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. You trust Him and then, by His Grace, He helps you to overcome sin! He gives you a new nature and you become saved. Trust Him now! The service is almost over and the clock has struck the hour for closing, but Mercy’s hour has not yet struck. God still waits to be gracious! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust Him now. May He enable you to do so by His infinite mercy! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JEREMIAH 1.**

Verses 1-3. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. Jeremiah was a young man when he was called to the prophetic office and he was sent of God, as a young Prophet, to help the young king, Josiah. His public life, therefore, opened somewhat happily. But, after the death of Josiah, wicked kings sat upon the throne and it was the painful lot and yet, in some respects, the choice privilege, of this weeping Prophet to be sent upon his Master’s errand, time after time, to a disobedient and gainsaying people who repaid him only evil while he sought their good. The Holy Spirit, you see, is careful to note important dates in the history of God’s servants—and you and I should also keep a record of the times when God sets us to work and when He gives us special Grace for the service to which He has called us.

4-6. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a Prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. He was but young and, when young men are called to be ambassadors for God, it behooves them to feel the weight of the responsibility that rests upon them—and to be conscious of their lack of experience and of their need of fitness for the work. In that consciousness of unfitness, there often lies the evidence of their fitness for the task entrusted to them! Perhaps out of weakness they shall be made strong, but if they do not feel their weakness, they are not likely to cry to God for help, or to receive it from Him. “Ah, Lord God!” said young Jeremiah, “behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.”

7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Now, even a child can often speak anything that has been said to him. To repeat what he is told to say is not beyond his capacity and, after all, this is a Christian minister’s principal work! Somebody says, “We need thinkers.” Yes, so we do, but we need men whose thoughts shall be subordinate to the thoughts of God—ministers who do not come to utter their own thoughts, but to deliver their Master’s message—to tell to us what He has told them. Is that sermon merely what you think, Sir? Then, what do I care what you think? What is that to me anymore than what I think may be to you? If, however, you can come to me and say, “Thus says the Lord,” I will give diligent heed to your message and I am bound to receive it—but woe be to that minister whose word shall be other than this!

8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD. When a king sends an ambassador to a foreign court, he cannot usually go with him, but God’s ambassador always has his King with him. Oh, what courage he ought to have with such a Companion!

9. Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth. For you young Brothers who are to be preachers of the Gospel, I cannot wish anything better than that the Lord may touch your mouth in this way. In the old times that some of us remember, godly men used to pray that the Holy Spirit would be “mouth, matter and wisdom” to the preachers of the Word. It was not at all a bad prayer, for it was a petition that He would give to His servants the right subject, the right spirit and the right utterance—that He would teach them how to speak, what to speak and in what spirit to speak it.

9. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. That is a true picture of a Spirit-sent preacher of the Gospel—a man who has God’s words in his mouth. I said before that the minister must not utter his own thoughts, but here we see that he must not even utter his own words! God’s thoughts are best delivered in God’s words— and the more of Scripture there is in our teaching, the more true, the more Divine and the more powerful will it be.

10. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. What a mysterious power rested on this God-sent messenger! Poor Jeremiah was often in prison, frequently at death’s door, yet he was the master of nations and kingdoms and the Lord gave him authority to root them up or to plant them, to throw them down or to build them up! What wondrous power God gives to those who faithfully preach His Word! Well might Mary, Queen of Scots, say that she was more afraid of John Knox’s preaching than of all the armies that came against her!

11-14. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And I said, I see a branch of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, You have seen well: for I will hasten My word to perform it. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What do you see? And I said, I see a boiling pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. The Chaldeans and the Babylonians were like a great cauldron, boiling and seething, sending forth smoke and steam over the nations and ready to scald Jerusalem to its destruction!

15, 16. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set, everyone, his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter My judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. God tells Jeremiah that He was about to destroy Jerusalem because of the people’s sin. Jeremiah was not merely to foretell their doom, but he was also to tell the reason of it—that it was the result of their sin and especially of the sin of idolatry, to which mankind is always exceedingly prone. It is most difficult to keep men to pure spiritual worship—the worship of the unseen God in spirit and in truth. They will get away, if they can, to some outward form or another. They will take the very bread of communion and worship it! Or the image of the bleeding Savior and make an idol of that. Somehow or other, they will have something visible, or tangible, as the object of their adoration. Men will fall into idolatry of one kind or another even to this day—and this is a God-provoking offense from which may the Lord, in His mercy, graciously preserve all of us perfectly clear!

17. You, therefore, gird up your loins. “You have a hard task before you, Jeremiah, a stern life’s work cut out for you—‘therefore gird up your loins.’”

17. And arise. “There must be no waiting, no idleness—‘Arise.’”  
17. And speak unto them all that I command you. “Do not trim it at all, or pare it down, or omit distasteful portions, but, ‘speak unto them all that I command you.’”  
17. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them. We ought to be so afraid of God that we are afraid of nobody else— *“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then Have nothing else to fear.”*  
Send all your fears to Heaven and there let them stay there!  
18, 19. For, behold, I have made you this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE TENDER ENQUIRY OF A FRIEND  
NO. 2025

BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“How long will you cut yourself?”  
Jeremiah 47:5.

TRAVELERS in the East tell us that among the most melancholy scenes they witness is the following: Men inflict upon themselves very grievous voluntary wounds and then exhibit themselves in public. They even disfigure themselves with gashes and cuts in the presence of excited throngs. I am speaking of what has occurred even within the last few years among the Muslims. When some great Prophet or emir is coming that way, a certain number of fanatical Muslims take swords, spears and other sharp instruments and gash themselves terribly, cutting their breasts, their faces, their heads and all parts of their bodies.

Frequently they have taken care to dress themselves in white sheets so that as the blood flows copiously from their bodies, it may be the more clearly seen, that they may become the more ghastly spectacles of misery, or more fully display the religious excitement under which they labor. As everything in the East remains forever the same, this Muslim superstition carries us back to the olden times whereof we read in the Old Testament when the priests of Baal, having cried in vain to their idol, cut themselves with lances and with knives. Our translators were probably afraid to write the harsher words and so they translated the passage “knives and lances,” but they might have written swords and spears—sharp instruments of a desperate character.

Thus they displayed their inward zeal and thus, perhaps, they hoped to move the pity of their god. Eastern fanaticism surpasses belief—you would suppose that the raving creatures were about to commit suicide and yet there is a method in their madness. You could hardly think that men possessed of reason would torture themselves and disfigure themselves as they do. But they know what they are doing and are only carrying out their plans. The Lord expressly forbade His people, the Jews, to perpetrate such folly. They were not even to shave the corners of their beards, or to hack their hair, as the Orientals do in the hour of their grief.

And then they were further prohibited from injuring their bodies by the command, “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:28.) Men in Eastern lands, not only in connection with fanaticism but in reference to domestic affairs, will cut themselves to express their grief and anguish—or to make other people believe that they are feeling such grief and anguish. We may congratulate ourselves that we are free from at least one foolish custom.

The Prophet here speaks to the Philistines who were about to endure the tremendous judgments of God and, indeed, to be crushed as a nation by the Egyptians and the Chaldeans. And he says to Philistia, “How long

will you cut yourself?” Gaza was to be made bald by the smiting of Pharaoh. Ashkelon was to be shorn away. And the whole nation was to feel the sword of the Lord, which would not rest in its scabbard. How long would they continue to bring upon themselves such terrible judgments?

The expression is used, first, almost in despair. The question is asked with little hope—as if the self-torturer would never have done but would go on to mutilate himself without end. I intend to use it at this time, in the second place, as a question asked instructively and hopefully, in the hope that some, who have practically been cutting themselves, will cease from this self-torture and find rest and peace where it is to be had and to be had at once and forever. May the good Spirit grant our desire!

I. First, dear Friends, I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION VERY DESPAIRINGLY—“How long will you cut yourself?”—for many are cutting themselves very terribly and will have to feel their wounds for a long, long time—neither can we induce them to cease.

I allude, first, to some professors of religion who have been Church members for ten, twenty, or more years and yet have practically done nothing at all for the Savior. If they were really to awaken to a sense of their neglect, I do not know how long they would be in anguish, or how deep would be their distress. For if Titus mourned that he had lost a day when he had done no good action for twenty-four hours—and he but a heathen—what would happen to a Christian if he were really to see his responsibility before God and to feel that he has not only lost a day but a year—perhaps many years?

Have not some of you well-near lost a whole lifetime? What hosts of opportunities you have thrown away! What multiplied responsibilities you have incurred! Favored as you have been and so ungrateful! Comforted as you have been and yet keeping the comfort to yourself and never seeking out other lonely hearts to share with them the heavenly balm. Instructed as you have been and yet instructing none in return! With Divine light shining upon you and yet never giving that light to others!—

*“Can we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can we, to men benighted,  
The lamp of life deny?”*

The good Bishop’s hymn asks the question as if it were impossible. But, Sirs, it is not impossible. It is sadly true. And alas, commonly true! Our Churches are made up largely of barren members and of cumber-ground trees that bring forth no fruit. Oh, if I am addressing such—and honestly in the sight of God I fear I am—then how long will you chasten yourselves for your neglect? It must be long before you can forgive yourselves for such wicked indolence. How long will you afflict yourselves to think that you should have suffered time which you can never recall and opportunities which you will never enjoy again, to go by you wasted?

The miller puts his wheel hard by the stream and uses its constant flow to grind his corn. But you have a stream of opportunity and power flowing by you which you have turned to no practical service. Your tears might well be as plentiful as the drops of the wasted stream of life. Some of you stand by and listen to the hum of the wheel and admire the liquid music of the falling waters. But nothing practical comes of it. Your taste is gratified and your conscience is eased by attending religious services but there is nothing done for Christ—nothing done for the souls of men.

Like little children with their toy windmills you are amused with that which, if you were true men, you would turn to good account. Are you not ashamed to have been playing, while God and Heaven and even Satan and Hell are all so terribly in earnest? You have come to years of discretion, when “life is real, life is earnest,” and you have still trifled. Can you ever be sorry enough for this? How long will you cut yourself? Ah, me! I think I should eternally regret it if up till now I had never preached the Gospel of the Grace of God. Ah, me! If it had not been God’s good pleasure to let me break out as a soul-winner while yet a boy, I could lay me down upon my bed and wish that I had never been born.

If I had reached the very center of life and yet had done nothing to reclaim and restore the sons of men and glorify the Lord my Redeemer, I should tear my hair. Do I address any who have come to the noon of life and have not yet done a hand’s turn in my Lord’s vineyard? The dew of the morning is gone and the best hours of the day have glided away—why do you stand here all the day, idle? Do I make you feel uncomfortable? I shall thank God if I do. And I shall be happy, indeed, if, instead of cutting yourselves with vain regrets, you lacerate yourselves with my sharp remarks as with spears and knives and then gird up your loins and say, “God helping me, there shall never be another wasted year, no, nor another wasted day!”

Then I shall be rejoiced, indeed. Oh, how I wish each one of you would pray—  
*“Let every flying hour confess  
I bring Your Gospel fresh renown,  
And when my life and labors cease  
May I possess the promised crown!”*

But, lazy Professors, when will you have done with your regretting if your conscience is once aroused? If you are once moved to see what cause you have for shame, surely you will never leave off cutting yourselves with regrets? But what will be the use of your lamentations unless they lead you to amendments and from sluggards you become laborers? Let us hope it will be so. But I am not very hopeful, for it is hard to make long habits of indolence yield to diligence.

The same may be applied and applied very solemnly, too, to those who backslide—who, in addition to being useless, are injurious because their example tends to hinder others from coming to Christ. Oh, if any of you that name the name of Jesus and have been happy in His service and have enjoyed high days and holy days in His presence, turn aside, I shall use this lamentation over you! You will do yourselves terrible injury and I shall shudder as I see the edged tools of sin in your reckless hands. Every sin is a gash in the soul. The Lord will bring you back and save you, as I believe. But oh, how long will you cut yourselves? You will feel in after life how grievously you have injured your souls.

David’s great sin was put away so that he did not die but he was never the same David as before. The Lord’s people seem to have shunned him for a time while the adversary found occasion to blaspheme. He offers a remarkable prayer in the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm when he says, “Let those that fear You turn unto me” (v. 79). I think they had, in a measure, turned away from him in horror at his great sin. They began to stand in doubt of him. They had loved him as their champion in his earlier days, when he led the van of the armies of the Lord of Hosts and when as a youth he returned from the battle bringing the head of Goliath.

They had looked up to him when he was in the wilderness because of his integrity. Though hunted like a partridge by the ungodly party, yet he was the hope of Israel and the joy of all the saints. With what delight did they gather round him at Hebron and Jerusalem when he was crowned their king! They felt that God had blessed His people in giving them such a leader. But when it was whispered that he had defiled his neighbor’s wife, then the godly shuddered. They knew what blasphemy and rebuke would come of it and they kept out of his way. They must have been deeply grateful when they found him truly penitent. When he was crying to God for mercy, probably some of them would know it and perhaps step in to cheer him.

But still David was scarcely David again, either to the people of God or to himself. The Lord, out of very love to him, chastened him sorely and pursued him with plague upon plague. His family became his dishonor and his sorrow. He went with broken bones to the grave—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. How grievously he had injured himself! How long he had to cut himself with anguish for that one sin! His life, surely, from the time when he fell with Bathsheba, was penitential sorrow rather than confident delight. And though the Lord left him not but brought him to much maturity of Divine Grace out of his brokenness of heart, still, as often as he went to his couch, the memory of his great transgression would cut and wound his heart.

What is true of David applies also to others who have in any great measure turned aside. Solomon, in a high degree, hurt himself by his terrible follies. In the New Testament Peter is a conspicuous example. It is a tradition that whenever Peter heard the cock crow he used to weep. And I do not wonder at it. Alas, If you and I should ever be suffered to fall into grievous sin, it may be all done in ten minutes but it cannot be gotten rid of in fifty years. We shall bear the scars of that ten minutes’ sin until the Lord shall take us home and permit us to wake up, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” in the full likeness of our perfect Lord.

Oh, my Brethren, watch anxiously lest you have to mourn for years over the sin of an instant! God grant that all His servants may be kept both from the sin of omission, of which I spoke at first, which leads to neglect of duty—and also from the sin of commission which leads to actual backsliding and practical departing from the living God.

There is one thing which comes after these and comes in connection with them. If you and I should know that souls have been lost—lost as far as we are concerned—through our neglect, how long shall we cut ourselves on that account? A dear soul said to me yesterday, “My husband died. He had been a sad drunkard but in his last illness, through the blessing of God upon those who visited him, I trust he found peace. He said that he believed in the Lord Jesus and there is my comfort. But oh, if he had died without finding Christ, I should have been indeed a widow! I know not what could have comforted me.”

I am grateful that our Sister called in her Christian friends and that, by their efforts and her prayers, she was spared the keenest edge of sorrow. “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” But suppose you were to lose your son and that your son should die in sin which he learned from you? Or in sin which you saw in him and never rebuked? Suppose, I ask, your son should die in his iniquity? What if he should have been your favorite child and you should have tolerated much evil in him which you would not have suffered in another? What if you pampered and indulged him and gave him liberty to make himself vile?

Shall I tell you how you will behave yourself when the news comes to you that he is dead? You will get by yourself alone and cry like David, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” You can lay your children down upon the bed all stark and cold and follow them to the tomb and even sing as you commit their mortal remains to the grave, when you know that they die in hope. But if they perish in their sin, guilty, red-handed, unforgiven, what will you say to yourselves?

Fathers, if you have never sought to bring your children to repentance, how will you excuse yourselves? If you have never prayed with them, or wept with them—if you have never even instructed them in the things of God, what flattering unction will you lay to your guilty consciences? What will you say, Mother, if your daughter passes into eternity unforgiven and you have never tried to lead her to Jesus? What shall I say of you, my congregation, if I waste your Sabbaths with fine shows of oratory but do not seek your souls? When next the knell is heard and there is another gone who constantly listened to my voice, if I have not been faithful with you and persuaded you to lay hold on Christ, how long must I tear my hair and cut myself for very anguish because my garments will be spotted crimson with your blood?

These are solemn things but there are deep Truth of Gods in them and they ought to be considered by all of you who profess to be Christians. I knew one who used to have a man calling upon him in the way of business and bringing certain articles which he bought across the counter. This tradesman said one day to himself, “I have dealt with that man for nine or ten years and we have scarcely passed the time of day. He has brought in his work and I have paid him across the counter but I have never tried to do him any good. Surely this cannot be right. Providence has put him in my way and I ought at least to have asked him whether he is saved in Christ.”

Well, the next time the man came, our good Brother’s spirit failed him and he did not like to begin a religious conversation. The man never came again but a boy brought in the next lot of goods. “How is this?” said the shopkeeper. “Father is dead,” said the boy. My friend, the shopkeeper,

said to me, “I could never forgive myself. I could not stay in the shop that day. I felt that I was guilty of that man’s blood. But I had not thought of it before. How can I ever clear myself from the guilty fact that, when I did think of it, my ungracious timidity prevented me from opening my mouth?”

My dear Friends, do not bring upon yourselves such cutting regrets! Avoid them by daily watching to save men from the second death. Will you let them die? Will you let them die? If so, when you wake up to the sense that you have suffered them to perish, then this dreadful question may well be put to you, “How long will you cut yourself?” How long will you feel remorse and regret that your hopeful opportunity was allowed to pass by unimproved?

One other most solemn use may be made of this question—God grant that it may never be so but if anyone of you should die in his sins, how long will you regret it? It looks dreadfully possible that some of you will perish forever since you have so often been entreated to come to Christ and have never come. For the moment, suppose that there is no Hell but if you are only shut out of Heaven, how long will that be a subject of grief? If you should only hear the King say, “Depart, you cursed!” and should only have to depart and keep on departing, oh, the wringing of hands and the anguish! O you who have lost eternal life, how long will you cut yourself?

If you should miss Christ and miss mercy and miss Heaven and miss eternal glory—if there were nothing else—how long will you bemoan yourself? With what depth of anguish will you smart to have lost all this—to have, in fact, lost all which makes up life and joy! What if, after all, I come short of the kingdom, I that had my Sabbaths but never found rest in Christ? I that heard the Gospel but never took Christ to be my Savior? I that was almost persuaded and yet never yielded my heart to Divine Grace? I that was almost in the ark and yet, not being altogether in it, was left to drown? I that had so much about me that was hopeful? I that would, as I said, in a short time, concern myself about Divine things—I—I am cast out, left with the tares, not gathered with the wheat?

What if I find myself on the left hand, condemned and cast away? What regrets will such a calamity cost me if it is so! O souls, how long—how long will you grieve and mourn when it shall come to this? According to my reading of this Book—and I would gladly read it otherwise if I did not feel that truth and honesty forbid me to do so—your loss, your anguish will be forever. Forever you will cut yourselves. Forever will you lament that when the opportunity was so near you, you put it away from you and when Christ was ready to receive you, you would not be received but chose your own delusions and committed eternal suicide.

O Friends, do not trifle with that which is and must be eternal! Make not a dreadful choice which can never be altered. Be solemn, be intense when you are dealing with matters which for good or bad will be past changing when death comes to you.

II. I leave this very painful use of the text now, to try and use it at greater length in a happier sort, by way of consolation and hopeful comfort, to those who will, we trust, be soon brought to receive the Lord Jesus. “How long will you cut yourself?” I SHALL ASK THIS QUESTION HOPEFULLY, trusting that in many their sorrow is nearing its end.

This text may be very profitably and prudently applied to those who have been bereaved and who, being bereaved, sorrow and sorrow to excess. I hope that I am not about to say a harsh word. But I would deal faithfully with rebellious repining. “Jesus wept.” And he that does not weep when he loses a dear one must be something less than a man and unworthy to be called a Christian. But there is such a thing as carrying to an extreme our sorrow for those we lose till it becomes rebellion against God.

You remember the Quaker saying to the lady who was wearing very deep double mourning attire years after one of her children had died, “Madam, have you not forgiven God yet?” And there is a truth about that remark. Some do not forgive God for what He has done. Their sorrow amounts to this—that they have a quarrel with God over His dispensations. “How can He be good and have taken away my mother?” said one to me. “How can God be good and have taken away my child?” cried another. There is a want of faith, a want of reverence, a want of love, a want of many sweet and placid graces in such mourning as that.

And, without dwelling long upon it, I beg to put that question to any mourner here who is mourning with the ungodly sorrowing of the heathen—as if there were no hope. “How long will you cut yourself?” Is not your child in Jesus’ bosom? Has not your friend gone among the angels, to join the sweet singers of God? Is it not a gain to the departed, though it is a loss to you, that they are translated to the place of everlasting bliss? Would you have them back again? Dare you wish such a thing even for a moment? If they are supremely blessed, is there no blessedness to you in their blessedness? Are you so selfish that you would tear a star from Heaven that you might have the light of it all to yourself?

Come, be reconciled, not only to your grief but to your God who sent it! It has come to be now like a fretting canker within you—will you not end it? As the moth eats the garment, so does this grief eat you up. Therefore arise and shake yourself from it. Know you not that their Redeemer lives and your Redeemer, too? And will you not now yield up to Christ what is infinitely more His than yours and cheerfully say, “Let Him have those whom He has purchased with His blood and for whom He prayed, ‘Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am’ ”? “How long will you cut yourself?” Put away your disputing and murmuring and either, like Aaron, hold your peace, or better still, like Job, bless the name of the Lord and rejoice in your God.

But now, turning to quite another character, I would use the same expression for another purpose. There are some persons with whom God is dealing in great love and yet they are very rebellious. They persevere in known sin although the evil way has become exceedingly hard on them. They seem as if they would walk over red-hot plowshares to Hell. I have known some who have found the pleasures which once delighted them to become a nuisance, a trouble, a pain, a disgust and a weariness. And yet

they continue in their unprofitable course.

You remember Saul of Tarsus, to whom the Lord said, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks”—he was acting as though with a naked foot he kicked against iron nails, or like the bullock when it is struck with the ox-goad and kicks back, driving the goad much deeper into itself than otherwise it would have gone. Certain men are doing just that—how I wish they could see that it is so! They are following a wild course of life and they are losing money at it and they are likely to lose much more. They are plunging down. What are they thinking of? “How long will you cut yourself?” Already they have met with great disasters and misfortunes— they will meet with many more. When the dogs are out hunting, they run in packs. The plagues of Egypt are ten, at least, and everyone who plays the Pharaoh may expect the full number.

O you to whom the Lord is sternly kind—by terrible things in righteousness He will chasten you to your right mind! If the Lord means to have you at His feet, He will bring you there. By hook or by crook He will bring you there, depend upon it. And if you will not come by gentle means, you shall come by some other means. But He will break you down in due time. I know that already certain of you have had stroke upon stroke. From wealth you have descended to poverty, from health you have come down to sickness, from honor you have fallen to obscurity. Is not this enough to humble you before God?

You will come down lower yet. As surely as you live, you will be made to feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God. My heart’s desire is that it may be so—that by this painful method you may be saved. I spoke some time ago with the son of a very godly man. He seemed to be an infidel outright and had taken to horseracing and the like. My inmost soul was grieved concerning him—I could have wept. As he talked very largely, and mild words were lost on him, I said to him, “Keep as many racehorses as you can and go in for gambling most heartily, for thus the sooner you will lose all your money. Some prodigals never come back to the Father’s house until they sink as low as the pig’s trough and that is probably the way for you. When you get a hungry belly, I trust you will come home.”

He knows what my warning meant and I fear he intends to make it true. The way of transgressors is hard. And it is a mercy when it becomes so hard that they are resolved to quit it for another and a better way. Is this happening to anybody here? Have you spent your money riotously? Are you getting into trouble? I half congratulate you. I congratulate the angels who watch your course—I hope that the probabilities are that you will soon say, “How many hired servants of my Father’s have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my Father.” But do not make the process too long, I charge you. “How long will you cut yourself?”

Have you not had enough of the consequences of your folly? Will you not turn at the Lord’s rebuke? Will you not yield under the strokes you have already felt? “Turn you; turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?” Why should you be stricken any more? Have you not played the fool long enough? “How long will you cut yourself?”

I might use this expression even to the Jewish nation itself. Ah, my God, through what seas of trouble have they had to swim since the day when they said, “His blood be on us and on our children”? Alas, the story of Israel is enough to make one’s blood turn to ice within his veins! And will they not come back? Will they not come back? Must they be hunted in Germany and hounded in Russia? Shame on the countries that dare do such things! But must it be so? God grant that they may no longer provoke their Holy One to indignation against them! How long will they cut themselves? For still these great evils happen to them according to the eternal counsels of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because of their unbelief.

When they turn to the Messiah, their glory shall return, also, and the crown God crowned His people shall again be set upon their head and their ancient city shall again be “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” Assuredly the Lord gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed forever—how long will they shut themselves out of it?

But, now, all this has rather kept me from my main design which is to speak to those dear Friends of ours who are afflicting their souls with needless fears. No good can possibly come by a continuance in their unhappy moods—they are cutting themselves quite needlessly. They might at once have peace and rest and joy if they were willing to accept the Lord’s gracious way of salvation. You who are burdened with sin and are trying to get rid of it but will not come to Christ for deliverance—I want to ask each one of you, “How long will you cut yourself?”

Why, there are some persons who think that before they can believe in Christ they must undergo a world of torture! From where do they derive the notion and what Scripture do they twist to support it? My commission runs thus, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I do not find that I am to look out for those who have undergone a long probation and then tell them to believe in Christ. But every creature is to hear the good news that whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life and shall never come into condemnation. So far the Gospel message gives no hint of a sort of purgatory in this life. It deals with every creature as it finds him.

Now, you think, “Well, I must not—I really must not lay hold upon this salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus. I dare not be so greatly blessed. I must first of all be tortured with conviction and afflicted with despair.” Alas, that you should thus choose to be miserable and refuse to be made happy! I am forced, again, to put to you the question, “How long will you cut yourself?” Find me, if you can, any place where the Lord requires this at your hand—that you should be dragged about by the devil—that you should be despairing, that you should be tempted to blaspheme and all that. I know that some who have come to Christ have endured such misery but I defy you to prove that it is any part of the Gospel and that we are to preach such an experience as a necessary preface to believing in Christ. The case is far otherwise.

Hear me, I beseech you, and be not obstinately wedded to your wretchedness. You are a sinner—you cannot question that fact. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If you trust Him you are saved. This, in brief, is the glad tidings of salvation. This is the Gospel way. Who has required at your hands that you should despond? That you should despair? That you should deny the promises of God? That you should put from you the invitation of mercy? That you should remain outside the Gospel feast, and say, “I dare not enter, for I am not hungry enough, nor poor enough, nor ragged enough, nor filthy enough”? Oh, that you were wise and would cut yourself no more with these absurd objections to infinite Grace!

How can this cutting of yourself, this tearing of yourself with anguish, bring you any benefit? Do you think that God delights in it? Is He a God who delights in the misery of His creatures? Will it not be joy to Him that you should believe in His Son and find peace? He wills not the death of any but that they should turn unto Him and live. “Oh,” said one to me, “I cannot think that the way can be so plain, for my grandfather was so miserable for years that they had to put him into a lunatic asylum before he found the Savior.” You smile but the good woman who told me this was in terrible earnest. I cannot help quoting what she said, for it was the natural and outspoken form of an error which lurks in thousands of minds.

I believe that many think they must be driven near to madness or they will not be able to come to Christ. But what benefit could this despair possibly be to you? If the Gospel were, “Doubt and be saved,” I would bid you doubt. And if it were, “Despair and be saved,” I would preach despair to you with all my might, though it might go a little against the grain. But it is not so written. The Scripture is, “Believe—trust—confide—rely. Trust in Jesus—and you are saved.” Despairing and desponding are not commanded in the Gospel but they are forbidden by it. Do not cultivate these gross follies, these deadly sins. Do not multiply these poisonous weeds— this hemlock and this rye grass—as if they were fair flowers of Paradise.

How long do you mean to continue in this wretched condition? Have you set yourself a certain point of anguish up to which you will go and then you will trust Christ? The sooner you reach that point the better. But suppose that, in reaching that point, you should grow hardened in sin and perish? Suppose that in striving to be more tender, the very skin of your soul should turn hard, so that you no longer feel anything? I have known that to occur. I have known persons attend places of worship many years and always say, “I do not feel tender enough and penitent enough,” and all the time they have been growing invulnerable to the shafts of God’s Word till they have perished in an unfeeling, indifferent, immovable condition.

They have hugged a sort of self-righteousness of feeling and would not give it up to believe in Christ and that self-righteousness has been their destruction. Beware lest you lose all feeling because you idolize feeling. Beware lest your heart turn to an adamant stone because you prefer your own feelings to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

Why, my Friends, if you are allowed to follow up this despairing policy much further, some of you will go out of your senses! Those who love to take up a reproach against the Lord Jesus frequently declare that religion has deprived many people of their reason. But the fact is that many lose their senses because they refuse true religion and then take to sullenness and morbid feeling. Why blame Jesus for the fact that men refuse Him and so find no rest? I do fear that many have fought against believing in Christ till their uneasiness has weighed them down and so they have lost their reason. They have been indulging their pride. And, not yielding themselves up to Jesus has cost them dearly. I am afraid that some of you, who now feel God’s hand heavy upon you, will come to utter hopelessness unless you yield to the Lord Jesus very soon. Therefore, I pray you, make haste about it and may the blessed Spirit lead you to obey the Gospel—believe in Jesus and enter into rest!

Besides all this, remember that you may die while you are, as you think, getting ready for the Savior. The Savior never told you to get ready for Him. Have we not preached to you continually that you are to come as you are? Alas, you will not come just as you are but will try to mend and improve. And I have a dreadful fear upon me that you will die in the process of mending and improving. If it should be so, where will you be? Why, you will be guilty of having set up your mending and improving in the place of Christ and that is a serious insult to the great God and His dear Son! You will have taken more notice of your own efforts to save yourself than of Christ’s atoning death. Will not this seal your condemnation?

Jesus will save you, if you will have Him, just as you are, whoever you may be. But if you reply, “Not just as I am. I must be somewhat better before I can trust Him.” Then, if you perish while you are getting somewhat better, who shall be to blame? A sick man is dying and the physician says, “Here is medicine that will restore you. Will you take it?” The dying man answers, “Sir, I believe in your medicine but I will not take it till I feel better.” If that man dies, who murders him? Shall the physician be blamed? Surely not. On his own head his death must lie. And recollect that it will be as certainly your ruin to refuse Christ because you want to be better, as it will be to refuse Him from any other reason. Any reason which leads you to reject the Lord Jesus is a bad one.

One man refuses Christ because he hates Him and he blasphemes Him. Another refuses Him because he thinks that he must be a little better. There may be a difference in the motive but the result will amount to the same thing. Take heed, I pray you, lest through your pride in refusing to receive the Gospel just now and just as you are, you should put it away from you till you get where there will be no Gospel preaching and no invitations to Christ and you are cast away forever.

Now let me ask you this question—what good have you got by all this up till now? O you, good Sir, who always mean to have Christ by-and-by— how much farther have you got after all your good intentions and painful waiting? You used to sit in that pew twelve, fifteen, twenty years ago. And even then you had hopeful resolves. Are you any nearer Christ now than you were then? Say, does the preaching affect you any more than it did

in those bygone days? “No,” you say, “not half so much.”

This is a dangerous symptom—what does it mean? Has the preacher changed? I will take my share of the blame. I grow older, I know. Perhaps I get more stupid, too. But still, when I sat yesterday to see the converts coming to join the Church, I saw them till I had not physical power to see any more, for God had brought so many to come and tell me that I had led them to the Savior. Therefore I think that there cannot be much difference in my preaching. It must be I that is getting hard! I fear you are getting chilled into indifference and I pray that the deadly process may go no further.

Therefore I pray God that you may end this mischief, this death, this ruin to your soul. And may you be driven or drawn—whichever God pleases—to say at once, “I will immediately cast myself on Jesus. If I perish, I will perish clinging to His Cross. If there is power in trusting Christ to give a man peace, liberty, salvation, holiness, then I will have it. And if there is not this power, I will at least know by personal trial that it is not so and that Free Grace is not for me.”

Would to God that you, my dear Hearers, would leave all else and just come and cast yourselves on Jesus! If you will not, I must again persecute each one of you with this enquiry, “How long will you cut yourself?” How long must you go on with your piteous prayers and get no answer? Must you have more tears, more groans, more cries, more despairs, more regrets, more broken vows? How long will you cut yourselves with these vain attempts to be your own Savior? How long must you shut Heaven’s door against yourself by a horrible resolve to disbelieve? How long will you be so diligent to pull down an avalanche of wrath upon your own head?

How long will you refuse the bread of Heaven, and determine to perish with famine, while all the plenty of God’s Grace is round about you? How long? How long? God end it ere you cross the portal of this House of Prayer and go down those stone steps, which will again conduct you to the level of a careless world! Stop here till you have yielded yourself to Jesus. I beseech you not to go home a stranger to eternal life. The Lord grant that you may now throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, for His dear name’s sake!

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THE SHRILL TRUMPET OF ADMONITION

NO. 761

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 21, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. ‘Therefore, behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander,  
and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.’” Jeremiah 48:11, 12.**

FOR a considerable season the country of Moab had been free from the inroads of war and the terrors of pestilence. The nation had, therefore, become so conceitedly secure, that the Lord said, “We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceedingly proud), his loftiness, and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.” The people became vain, dominating, boastful, and mocked at their afflicted neighbors the Israelites, manifesting ungenerous joy in their sorrows. “For was not Israel a derision unto you? Was he found among thieves? For since you spoke of him, you skipped for joy.”

From this pride sprang luxury and all those other vices which find a convenient lair in the repose of unbroken prosperity. The warriors of Moab said, “We are mighty and strong men of war.” As vainglorious sinners they defied all law and power. Trusting in Chemosh, they despised Jehovah, and magnified themselves against the Lord. The Prophet compares that country to wine, which has been allowed to stand unstirred and unmoved—it settles on its lees, grows strong, retains its aroma, and gathers daily fresh body and spirit. “But,” he says, “the day shall come when God shall shake this undisturbed liquor, when He shall send wandering bands of Chaldeans that shall waste the country so that the bottles shall be broken and the vessels shall be emptied and the proud prosperity of Moab shall end in utter desolation.”

The unusual repose of Moab had been the envy of the people of Israel, but they might well cease to envy when they understood how suddenly a fire should come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon and devour the corner of Moab—and how soon the howling should be heard, “Woe be unto you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh perish: for your sons are taken captive, and your daughters captives.” The fact that continued prosperity breeds carnal security is not only proved by the instance of Moab, but is lamentably confirmed in the history of others.

In the first place, this is the common mischief of ungodly men. In the second place, this is the frequent danger of the most godly.  
I. I shall first speak to THE UNCONVERTED, THE GODLESS, THE PRAYERLESS, THE CHRISTLESS. Many of you, though not all, become like Moab. At ease from your youth you are not emptied from vessel to vessel but settled upon your lees, and therefore you grow careless and heedless. This is so common a mischief among the ungodly that the whole world was in this condition immediately before the great deluge which destroyed the ancient race.  
We read that “they married and were given in marriage.” They did eat and did drink, and were drunk even until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the floods came and swept them all away. The preacher of righteousness for 120 years warned them that their sins had become intolerable to Heaven, and that vengeance would surely be taken upon their devices, but they laughed the Prophet to scorn. They made “the old Fool,” as they doubtless called him, the butt of their ridicule. The wits quoted him as the chief of fools, and the drunkards in their songs spoke against him.  
The disobedient worldlings of those olden times went upon their way as though their jollity would last forever and their sin would go unpunished. How changed their notes when the rains descended with pitiless continuance—not in drops of mercy, fertilizing the thirsty earth, but in cataracts of vengeance, sweeping away every living thing! How deep their despair when the Lord drew up the sluices of the great “deep which lies under,” and bade the long imprisoned floods leap up from their dens and ravage the earth!  
Then, as the despisers saw the Prophet’s ark, alone, secure, and the Prophet’s family, alone, delivered, they beheld and wondered—and perished as their long prosperity and carnal ease gave place to utter desolation. The world, however, is so little changed today that if the Lord Jesus Christ should now come, as come He will “in such an hour as you think not,” He would find the mass of men still in the same condition. Even at this day the enquiry is made, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were.” Whenever our Lord shall come men will be unprepared for His advent, for “as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.”  
They shall still be given to their vanities and indulging themselves in their sins till He shall come in the clouds of Heaven to take vengeance upon the multitude who know not God. This is the abiding state of the world which lies in the Wicked One—settled on its lees, it is not emptied from vessel to vessel—and therefore it dreams itself into presumptuous peace. When pestilence or war do not stir the nations they soon grow bold in sin and provoke the Lord to jealousy.  
But, my dear Friends, it is generally very useless to talk about the world at large! Generalities have little effect upon our minds—we must come to particulars. We will draw one or two pictures which will represent some who are present here this morning. Perhaps there may be but very few of the first sort—the bold offenders who are at ease in open sin. They began life with iniquity and they have made terrible progress in it. They have taken their degrees in the college of Beelzebub. They have become Masters in the Art of Wickedness, Doctors in Belial, able to teach others also—corrupt and corrupting.  
These men are not disturbed in their sins. Their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron. Things which others would tremble at are to them a jest. They make a mockery of sin. They play with burning coals of lust and carry fire in their bosom and boast that they are not burned. They go from iniquity to iniquity, as the vulture from carcass to carcass. They labor in the way of evil, as men dig for hidden treasure.  
“And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” “And if He does know,” they say, “what do we care? Who is Jehovah, that we should obey Him? Who is the Almighty, that we should tremble at His word?” Throughout this wicked city there are hundreds and thousands who, having enjoyed until now an immunity in their sins, suppose that their transgressions are as light a thing with God as with themselves. These are they of whom David said, “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish...Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.”  
Yet, O you haughty ones, take heed, for Pharaoh, who was your prototype in the olden days, found the way of pride to be hard at the end. That haughty prince was like a great dragon with a neck of iron but the Lord tamed him at the Red Sea. When the wheels were taken off his chariots and they dragged heavily while the floods eagerly leaped upon him as their prey—then he knew that none exalts himself against Jehovah to prosper, for He breaks in pieces the mighty in His wrath and destroys them in His hot displeasure.  
O you haughty ones, remember the king Belshazzar! He was another of your tribe, and how he grew great with the spoils of the nations. Remember that night of feasting when he drank out of the vessels of God in his daring blasphemy and stained the holy things of Jehovah with his drunkenness. Read yonder handwriting on the wall. Even now, O Despiser, I can see it for you, though you see it not, and this is the interpretation: “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Your joy shall soon be taken from you, and your life also, and what shall you do in the day when the Lord requires your soul?”  
If there are any here this morning who have lived in sin and grown wanton and have altogether broken loose from Divine control, having taken out of their mouths the bit which restrains other men, let them be ashamed and abased this day, for as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if they will not tremble now, they shall tremble forever! If the voice of God’s ambassador shall not bring you to seek peace and forgiveness, the Lord shall send another herald, not of peace but of judgment who shall come with another voice than mine, a voice which shall make cold sweat stand on your brow and your pulse to wax faint and few, while the still small voice sounds terribly in your ear, “This night your soul is required of you.”  
A far more common form of that carelessness which is so destructive is that of men who give themselves wholly up to the world’s business. Such men, for instance, as one whom Christ called, “Fool.” You know the story—his fields brought forth plenteously, for he was a skillful farmer. He had bought the newest implements. He had tilled his ground after the most scientific fashion. He had doubled the crops, and increased his riches! This was the one object for which he lived. He was a grower of grain and a hoarder of gold, and nothing more. He said within himself that he must build a temple for his god—his god was himself—and his temple was his barn.  
“I will pull down my barns and build greater—there will I bestow my goods.” This man’s case is so common that if you were to purchase his likeness many of you might think it was your own photograph, for do you not, even those of you who come to our places of worship, live unto yourselves? This is the end and object of the most of mankind—to live “respectably,” to collect a “competence”—to provide, as they say, for their families, which is the Pharisaic cant phrase for selfishness. Do not the mass of men worship their belly and bow down before no other shrine than self? Is not the life of millions clear, transparent selfishness?  
“What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?” This is the grand object of human research. The religion of the multitude is, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.” Gain is the world’s summum bonum, the chief of all mortal good, the main chance, the prime object, the barometer of success in life, the one thing needful, the heart’s delight! And yet, O Worldlings, you who succeed in getting gain and are esteemed to be shrewd and prudent—Jesus Christ calls you fools—and He is no thrower about of hard terms where they are not deserved!

“You Fool,” He said, and why? Because the man’s soul would be required of him—and then whose would those things be which he had gathered together? Ah, you who have been prosperous all your days, and made money, and risen in the world, and gathered a competence, and lived to gather wealth—if this is the one thing you care about, tremble and expect your doom! O you careless ones, do you dream that you were made to live for yourselves? Was this the object of your Maker that you should live to gather gold for yourselves and for your children?

Did He send you into this world merely that you might scrape together yellow clay? Has your Maker no claim upon you? The Lord who preserves you in being—has He no demands upon you? And if you do not recognize His rights will He not enquire for them in the day when He makes visitation? I would read the text over to all of you unconverted prosperous people—“Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. ‘Therefore, behold, the days come,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.’ ”

Hear you yet again the word of the Lord by His servant Isaiah; “Rise up, you women that are at ease. Hear my voice you careless daughters. Give ear unto My speech. Many days and years shall you be troubled, you careless women, for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, you women that are at ease. Be troubled, you careless ones.”

A third case is more common, still—the man who forgets God and lives in slothful ease. There are many in the world who do not succeed in making money—who do not, indeed, make money their main object. They are content with what they have and go through the world with much satisfaction to themselves. They are well known for their easiness of temper and harmlessness of disposition, and therefore they think themselves better than others. Yet my text, if read correctly, is a dreadful warning for them!

Have you never read of the master who committed to his servants their various talents, giving to one five, and to another two, and to another one? Now the man with the five talents, and he with the two, went both into the market and doubled their master’s money, putting it out at interest. And when their Lord returned they presented him with their gains.

But the servant with the one talent was one who loved great ease of mind and did not wish to agitate himself with business. So he took his shovel, and having taken the talent and wrapped it in a clean napkin (for he would treat it with respect, and hide it decorously), he deposited the napkin and the talent in the earth. And having covered it up so that no one should see traces of the burial, he went his way, and was perfectly at ease—a fair picture, indeed, of many who ought to be serving God—but they think they have little ability and therefore do not strive even to do what they can.

They are not openly sinful. They are not at all objectionable in temper or disposition—they are quiet, easy-going, good-tempered souls—but the talent, where is it? Buried! Alas, it will have a resurrection, and when it rises, all rusty from that rotting napkin, what a witness will it bear and how will the Master say, “You wicked and slothful servant!” Some of you do not reflect enough upon that word—the Master did not say, “You wicked spendthrift!” or, “You base robber!” but, “You wicked and slothful servant.” May not that name apply to you?

The charge of sloth was quite enough. His doom was swift and terrible. The great sentence which our Lord will pronounce upon men at the last is not for doing wrong, but for not doing right. “I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me not in. Naked, and you clothed Me not. Sick, and in prison, and you visited Me not.” “Lord,” they might have said, “we were not immoral or dishonest!” That is not the question. You did no service to your Lord. It is not enough to abstain from outward sin and so to be negatively moral! Unless you bring forth fruits unto righteousness you have not the life of God in you! And however much you may be at ease, there shall come a rough awakening to your slumbers and the shrill sound of the archangel’s trumpet shall be to you no other than the blast of the trumpet of condemnation because you took your ease when you should have served your God.

A still more sorrowful thought burns its way across my mind. There are many in the professing Christian Church who are in the same state as Moab. They called to see the Church officers and asked if they could be accepted into the Church. No objection was made. The pastor conversed with them. They talked very fairly and they deceived him. They have been baptized. So often as the table of communion is spread they sit with God’s people and partake of the emblems of the Savior’s crucified body. But though their profession is a very comely one and their outward conduct exceedingly honorable, yet they lack inward Divine Grace.

They have the virgin’s lamp but they have no oil in the vessel with their lamps. And yet so comfortable are these professors that they slumber and sleep! I have known many a true Believer much troubled for fear he should be a hypocrite—while many a hypocrite has never asked a question! Thousands who have gone safely to Heaven, have, on the road, stopped many times and put their fingers to their brow and said, “Am I a true Believer? What strange perplexities arise! Have I really passed from death to life, or is it a fancy and a dream?”

And yet I say to you that the hypocrite has gone singing on his way, secure, as he thought, of passing through the gate of pearl—until he found himself at last dragged hack to the hole in the side of the hill— which is the secret gate of Hell! Many, who were fair to look upon have been rotten at the core—such fruit as the King could not accept at His table. O you who never ask whether you are Christians, begin to question yourselves! Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith! Let not presumption hold you in its deadly embrace! Remember, you may think yourself a Believer and everybody else may think so, too, and you may fail to find out your error until it is too late to rectify it! You may persevere for years in “the way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Be you not, O you professors, like Moab, that had settled upon his lees!

Equally true is this of the mass of moral men who are destitute of faith in Jesus. They hear of the convictions and troubles of an awakened conscience, and they inwardly sneer at such fanaticism and boast that they never stooped to such feelings. “Here is a man that snivels out,” as they call it, “a confession of his guilt. I never was so guilty as he,” cries the moralist! “I have no doubt but what it will be all right with me at last. I pay my neighbors their own. I give a guinea to a hospital when they ask me for it. I am a first-rate tradesman. Of course I have sown a few wild oats, and I still indulge a little, but who doesn’t? Who dares deny that I am a good-hearted fellow?”

Plainly this gentleman has not been into spiritual captivity. He has never felt the burden of sin, never known what the weight of guilt is. Do you envy him? You may sooner envy the dead in their graves because they suffer no pain. You may better envy the man who has fallen into insensibility, or the wretch whose limbs are mortified—how can he feel when death has marked him for its own? Those pangs and throes and bitter regrets, and tossing to and fro of a wounded conscience are signs of the dawn of spiritual life!

It is by such things as these that we are led to put our trust in Jesus— and those who have never felt them may well lament before the Lord and pray that they may experience them—that they may be brought soundly and safely out of their self-righteousness and led to rest upon the finished work of the dear Redeemer! Ah, my dear Hearer, if you, this morning, have been troubled in your soul, be thankful for it! If your circumstances are full of anxiety, if you are not reconciled to God you may be thankful for adversity, and ask that it may drive you to Jesus!

If sin has become nauseous to you. If the pleasures which once satisfied your spirit have now lost their savor. If you cannot enjoy yourself with the world as you did once, I am glad of it! God loves you too well to let you build your nest here. He means to flog you out of your sins if you will not be drawn out of them by the gentler cords of His love. He is putting thorns into the nest that the bird may mount up to Heaven! Fly to your heavenly Father as the prodigal of old when he could not fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat! Better to suffer a present disturbance which will end in life, than enjoy the ease which is, itself, a protracted death. God give you to be saved through Jesus Christ!

II. We shall pause a minute and then speak to THE BELIEVER. It is one of the most common and most dangerous of all evils that can happen to a Christian, to fall into a state of carnal security in which he grows selfconfident, insensible, careless, inactive, and worldly. Beloved in the Lord. My fellow Christians, I speak to you this morning very earnestly—the more so because I have experienced and I fear at the present moment I am suffering from the disease of which I am about to speak to you.

John Bunyan tells us that on many occasions he preached as a man in chains preaching to men in chains—that is to say—the evil which he warned them of he felt in his own soul. It is much so this morning with me. But before I plunge into the subject, let me utter one note by way of caution. These lips shall never say a word against the full assurance of faith and against the holy confidence which the Holy Spirit gives to the people of God!

You can not be too confident in God. You can not be too sure of your salvation if you base that salvation upon the work of Christ. Therefore I will not speak a syllable against holy quietness and assurance forever, which are the special privileges of the elect. The danger I am to warn you of I will now endeavor to describe. A Christian man finds himself for a long time without any remarkable trouble. His children are spared to him. His home is happy, his business extremely prosperous—he has, in fact, all that heart can wish. When he looks round about him he can say with David, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage.”

Now, the danger is that he should think too highly of these secondary things, and should say to himself, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” Some of God’s children are tossed to and fro, and vexed every morning. But if we are not, the flesh will whisper, “There must be something better in me than in them. Perhaps they are chastened on account of sins which I have not fallen into. I am a special favorite.”

And then, though the man would never dare to put it in words, yet an indistinct feeling creeps over him that there is no need for him to be so watchful as other people—he would be sure not to fall if he were tempted. In fact he wonders how some of his Brethren can live as they do live—he is sure he could not do so. He feels that he could fight with any temptation and come back more than a conqueror. He has grown so strong that he feels himself a Samson! He knows much more now than he used to, and thinks himself too old a bird to be caught with chaff, as he might have been some years ago. “Ah,” he thinks, “I am a model Christian.”

He does not say as much, but that lurks in his mind. His heart is much hampered with earthly things, and his mind much bloated with selfconceit. He has not been poured from vessel to vessel. He has not been sternly tried by Providence, or sorely tempted by the devil. He has not been led to question his own conversion. He has fallen into a profound calm, a deep, dead, peace—a horrible lethargy—and his inmost heart has lost all spiritual energy. The great disease of England is consumption, but I suppose it would be difficult to describe the causes and workings of consumption and decline.

The same kind of disease is common among Christians. It is not that many Christians fall into outward sin and so on, but throughout our Churches we have scores who are in a spiritual consumption—their powers are all feeble and decaying. They have an unusually bright eye— they can see other people’s faults exceedingly well—and sometimes they have a flush on their cheeks which looks very much like burning zeal and eminent spiritual life, but it is occasional and superficial. Vital energy is at a low ebb—they do not work for God like genuinely healthy workmen.

They do not run in the race of His commandments like athletic racers, determined to win the prize. The heart does not beat with a throb moving the entire man as a huge engine sends the throbbing of its force throughout the whole of the machinery. They go slumbering on, in the right road, it is true, but loitering in it. They serve God, but it is by the day, as we say, and not by the piece. They do not labor to bring forth much fruit—they are content with here and there a little shriveled cluster upon the topmost bough.

That is the state of mind I want to describe, and it is produced in 99 out of every 100 Believers by a long course of prosperity and absence of spiritual trouble. The rapid results of this consumption are just these—a man in such a state soon gives up communion with God. It is not quite gone at first, but it is suspended. His walk with God is broken and occasional. His prayers very soon suffer. He does not forget his morning and evening devotions—perhaps if he did conscience would prick him— but he keeps up that form. However, he has lost the soul of prayer and only retains the shell. There is no wrestling prayer now.

He used to rise in the night to plead with God and he would wrestle till the tears fell fast, but it is not so now. He does pray, but not with that Divine energy which made Jacob a victor at Jabbok’s brook. By degrees his conversation is not what it used to be. He was once very earnest for Christ and would introduce religious topics in all companies. He has become discreet now, and holds his tongue. He is quite ready to gossip about the price of wheat and how the markets are, and the state of politics, and whether you have been to see the Sultan—but he has no words for Jesus Christ, the King in His beauty.

Spiritual topics have departed from his general conversation. And now, strange to say, “the minister does not preach as he used to do.” At least, the backslider says so. The reason why I think he is mistaken, is that the Word of God itself is not so sweet to him as it once was and surely the Bible cannot have altered! He used to read it and feast on the promises. He used to carry a pocket Testament with him wherever he went, and take it out that he might have a sip by the way. Where is his Testament now?

As for going to hear the Word of God, now it is dull work. He does come, he would not like to be away—if David’s seat were empty, he would begin to be pricked in his conscience—he is there, but he is there in vain. There is little savor about the Word to him. Hymns which used to be delightful for their melody now pall upon his ears, and he is now noticing the tune or whether somebody else sings correctly. The prayers in which he used to join with so much fervency are very flat to him now. He is poring over his ledger even in the House of God.

These are the gray hairs which come upon a man, and sometimes, for want of self-examination, multiply rapidly, and the man knows it not till spiritual senility has come upon him. After awhile the professor slackens a good deal in his liberality. He does not think the cause of God is worth the expense that he used to spend upon it. And as to his own personal efforts to win souls, he does not give up his Sunday school class, nor his street preaching, nor distributing of tracts, perhaps, but he does all mechanically—it is mere routine. He might just as well be a robot and be wound up, only the fault is that he is not wound up and he does not do his work as he should. Or, if he does it outwardly, there is none of the life of God in what he does.

Do you know such a man? He who speaks to you knows him and has wept over him. That man has sometimes been himself! I do not think I am less earnest than the most of my fellow Christians, and indeed, I could not bear to be like some of them. But still, I am very far from being content with myself. I pray God that I may never sink down to the dishonorable depths of indolence which some Christians live in. Sooner may my right hand forget her cunning and my tongue speak no more my Master’s Word—I were utterly unworthy to be His minister if such were the case.

But oh, I pray to be baptized in fire and live in it as in my element, and breathe the immortal flame of zealous love to Jesus! But I cannot as I would. This heavy heart, this sluggish clay still make me move heavily when I would gladly fly as a seraph in my Master’s service. Brethren, do you ever feel the same? I know some of you do, for I can see the traces of it. Very much of this sluggishness is brought on by long-continued respite

from trouble— *“More the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests rolling overhead.”*

It were better to be in perpetual storms and to be driven to-and-fro in the whirlwind, and to cling to God than to flounder at sea in the most peaceful and calm days. I would sooner be blown to pieces in battling with the devil and his crew than be put out of commission and left to rot, plank by plank, and timber by timber, in inglorious ease.

Dear Friends, the great secret danger coming out of all this is that when a man reaches the state of carnal security he is ready for any evil! What heart-breaking news is sometimes brought to us who are set over the Christian Church. Such-and-such a man, whom we knew as a high professor and who has sat with us at the table of fellowship and seemed to be greatly advanced in spiritual things, has fallen into some act of vice which is positively disgusting—from which the soul revolts! And this is the very man with whom we took sweet counsel and went up to the House of God in company!

If the history of these great offenders could be traced, it would be very much like this—they began well, but they slackened by degrees—till at last they were ripe for foul sin. We have heard of two Negroes who were accustomed to go into the bush to pray and each of them had worn a little path in the grass. Presently one of them grew cold and was soon found in open sin. His Brother warned him that he knew it would come to that because the grass grew on the path that led to their place of prayer.

Ah, we do not know to what we may descend when we begin to go downhill! Down, down, down, is easy and pleasant to the flesh, but if we knew where it would end we should pray God that we might sooner die than live to plunge into the terrors of that descent! Who would think that David, the man after God’s own heart, should come to be the murderer of his friend Uriah, to rob him of his wife? O David, are you so near to Heaven and yet so near to Hell?

There is a David in every one of our hearts, and if we begin to backslide from God we do not know to what extent we may slip! Just as in certain constitutions there is a readiness for cholera and other pestilential disorders through their bad state of health, so there is a state of mind in which a professor is most likely to be betrayed into foul sin. When the seed of temptation is floating in the air, the backslider is the man who will receive it and nurture it in his soul till it brings forth evil fruit. God save us from this by His Holy Spirit!

I must pass on to observe God’s cure for this malady. His usual way is by pouring our settled wine from vessel to vessel. If we cannot bear prosperity, the Lord will not continue it to us. We may pamper our children and spoil them, but the Divine Father will not. If we cannot bear the sweets He will give us the bitters. When the Lord takes down His rod— earthly parents may play at chastening their children, but God does not— He is in earnest and I warrant you we smart when God lays on the rod! But we make the rod ourselves! We force our Father to smite us because we cannot be obedient and humble without it.

Staying for awhile in the valley of Aosta in Northern Italy, we found the air to be heavy, close, and humid with pestilential exhalations. We were oppressed and feverish—one’s life did not seem worth a pin. We could not breath freely. Our lungs had a sense of having a hundred atmospheres piled upon them. Presently, at midday, there came a thunderclap, attended by big drops of rain, and a stiff gale of wind which grew into a perfect tornado, tearing down the trees. Then followed what the poet calls “sonorous hail,” and then again the lightning flashes and the thunder, peal on peal, echoing along the Alps.

But how delightful was the effect! How we all went out upon the veranda to look at the lightning and enjoy the music of the thunder! How cool the air and bracing! How delightful to walk out in the cool evening after the storm! Then you could breathe and feel a joy in life!

Full often it is thus with the Christian after trouble. He has grown to be careless, lethargic, feverish, heavy and ready to die—and just then he has been assailed by trouble—thundering threats have rolled from God’s mouth. Flashes of lightning have darted from Providence! The property vanished, the wife died, the children were buried, trouble followed trouble—and then the man has turned to God—and though his face was wet with tears of repentance, yet he has felt his spirit to be remarkably restored!

When he goes up to the House of God it is far more sweet to hear the Word than before. He could not pray before but now he leans his head on Jesus’ bosom and pours out his soul in fellowship! Eternity now exerts its heavenly attractions and the man is saved from himself! Have you ever dreamed that you were trying to walk and could not? You felt as though you could not move a foot and someone was about to overtake you who would do you serious mischief—and you longed to run and could not stir an inch!

That is the state of mind in which we get when we would, but cannot pray. When we would, but cannot repent. When we want to believe and cannot. When we would give a world for one single tear, would almost pawn our souls to obtain a quiver of spiritual feeling, but are insensible,

still— *“If nothing is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find ‘I cannot feel.’ ”*

Do you ever sink into that petrified condition? It is horrible! Horrible indeed! Horrible! If you can be its victim and yet be happy, I tremble for you! If you see your danger and betake yourself to earnest prayer, you shall come off more than a conqueror—but it will need more than man to do this—it will need God within us to keep us from such a tremendous peril.

What ought we to do if we are prospering? We should remember that prevention is better than cure and if God is prospering us, the way to prevent lethargy is to be very grateful for the prosperity which you are enjoying. Do not pray for trouble—you will have it quickly enough without asking for it. Be grateful for your prosperity, but make use of it. Do all you possibly can for God while He prospers you in business. Try to live very closely to Him. It ought not to be so difficult for us to cling close to Jesus when Providence is favorable to us.

Some saints have dwelt at ease year after year and have been all the better for it. They have had few troubles and yet lived near to God and why not you? If you will take care that your wealth is laid out for God, that your prosperity is spent in His service, you may have a succession of bright days. Watch the very first symptoms of declining, and fly to Christ, the Great Physician! He will give you the balm of Gilead which will prevent the mischief and you may bear the heat of prosperity as safely as the chill blasts of adversity.

But if you have fallen into such a state, I should say to you, since you cannot use a preventative, now take to the cure—and the one cure is the Holy Spirit. Go to the Cross of Christ again, Christian, if you have fallen from your first estate. Go as you hope you went at first. Go with your deadness, and sloth, and lethargy—and put your trust in the precious blood and ask the Lord Jesus to fill you with the Spirit once again—that you may be renewed. Try to get a due estimate of your indebtedness to God’s Divine Grace. Try to see the danger of your lethargy. Think more of eternity and less of time.

Tear yourself away a little from your worldly engagements, if possible. If you can, get a day of fasting and of prayer, certainly of prayer, but the fasting will help you to school your body as well as your soul. Fetch the proud flesh down somehow—make a desperate effort! It were better for you to do this now than for God to do it by sharp affliction. Trouble yourself that He may not trouble you. Humble yourself that He may not humble you. Put away your fancied security, and by strong crying and tears turn again to your former state of nearness to the living God. May the Lord help you, dear Friends, in this.

I have thought that our text describes the state of our country just now, for we are getting into a perfect whirl of excitement. Gaiety and frivolity are leading to sad sin in high places and this is much due to our prosperity. I hope God may never send us war or pestilence, but religion never prospers more than in troublous times. There was never an age when England was so religious as during our Civil War. Perhaps no time when more people were in Church in the City of London since London was London, than during the Plague—for then they all crowded to hear the Gospel—and they would, again, if such a thing should come.

We are growing nationally rich and nationally luxurious. I fear that prophets of evil will soon be sent to us to utter bitter threats. May God have mercy upon us, pardon the horrible crimes done in the name of trade unions, and at the same time teach our princes to reign in righteousness and our great men to care less for vice and vanity and more for the cause of the poor! I am always afraid lest this should become the state of our Church, too. We have had 13 years of such prosperity that we have all wondered at it. And there is one remark that our dear friend, Jonathan George, made when this place was being built which I have never forgotten, and which often comes up in my mind.

He reminded us of this text, “You shall fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you.” We have had so much good, so many conversions, so much brotherly love, so much zeal for God that I am always afraid lest we should fall from our present happy state. And the sure way of doing so is by ceasing to labor for God—ceasing from zeal and industry. By the way, there are many of you who do not come to the Prayer Meeting as you ought to do. Some of you are getting very lax at week-night services and I know what will come when that is the case.

When week-night services are badly attended, farewell to the life of godliness! If you have good excuses, I need not remind you of them, you will remember them yourselves. But many of you have no justifiable excuses—you are becoming cold and indifferent. We are very much, in our position as a Church, as Esther was to the Jews. If she did not do her part, Mordecai told her, God would do it by somebody else and put her away. And so it is with us—if we lag and loiter in work for Christ, He will put us away as a Christian Church—depend upon it! Not from His eternal love, for that He never will do, but from our position of honor and usefulness.

May it please Him to remove me, His unworthy servant, and give me rest from my labors, before such a catastrophe as that should overwhelm us. My Brothers and Sisters, may we never be settled on our lees. May God always call us to fresh labor and inspire us with new zeal! Or, if He does not do that, may He send clap after clap of thundering affliction. Better that the Church should lose its leaders than lose its life! Better that the pastor’s coffin should be there before you. Better that many should fall into poverty than that this Church should become like so many other Churches—a mere sleeping place for those who need comfort, and a place for Sunday repose.

Eternal God, You who know what our heart feels, keep us from this evil and never suffer us, as a Church, to become like lukewarm Laodicea which You did spit out of Your mouth! Owing You so much, O Jesus, may we love You much in return and be found faithful when You shall come to reward Your people and to be glorified in Your saints. God bless us, dear Friends, according to this, our desire, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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DWELL DEEP, O DEDAN!  
NO. 1085

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan.”  
Jeremiah 49:8.

WE do not quite know who these inhabitants of Dedan were, but in all probability they were some Arabian tribe or tribes. Perhaps they were descendants of Keturah. This Arabian tribe probably dwelt in the rock city of Petra and were mingled with the Edomites. The Prophet warned them that God was about to destroy the Edomites—“For I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.”

And the text intends one of two things—either to inform these inhabitants of Dedan that, however deep in the cavernous rocks they should hide themselves, they would certainly be destroyed, or else it was a gracious warning to remove themselves from Edom, strike their tents, retreat into the depths of the wilderness and so escape from the invaders. I find the marginal reference of my Comprehensive Bible says, “This is an allusion to the custom of the Arabs who, when attacked by a powerful foe, withdrew into the wilderness. Always on their guard against tyranny, on the least discontent that is given them they pack up their tents, load their camels with them, ravage the country and, laden with plunder, they retire into the burning sands where none can pursue them, and so “dwell deep.”

We will take our text in the two senses I have indicated. “Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan.” This may be understood sarcastically and instructively—let us pray that to us, in both senses, it may be instructive. From ancient warnings let us gather present benefit.

I. Let us take it SARCASTICALLY. It is as though the Prophet said to these Edomites and those that dwelt with them—“You think you never can be destroyed for your city is situated in a rocky region where a handful of men can hold the pass. You suppose that the mightiest armies will fail to conquer you and therefore you are very proud. But your pride is vain.” “Your terribleness has deceived you and the pride of your heart, O you that dwell in the clefts of the rock, that hold the height of the hill: though you should make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there, says the Lord.”

That Word has been terribly fulfilled, for the ancient rock city stands as a wonder to all travelers and when they ride through it, which is not often, for it is with great difficulty that you reach the place at all, they find the city standing, but the houses desolate and without inhabitants. Edom is a perpetual desolation because of her sins. Though they carved their houses into solid rock and their city seemed out of the spoiler’s reach, God has laid His hands upon it and its life, as well as its beauty, is gone forever.

Thus said the Lord and so it has come to pass, “also Edom shall be a desolation: everyone that goes by it shall be astonished and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, says the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.” From the text I hear a cry, like the stern voice of Elijah, to every profane sinner who thinks that he will ultimately escape the wrath of God! You may dwell deep, O Transgressor, but God shall find you out. You say, “How shall He reach me?” The hand of Death has only to be stretched out and you are his captive at once!

And a little thing will do it—the wind has but to pass over you and you are gone. A drop of blood may go the wrong way, a valve may refuse to open, a vessel may burst, a band may snap and there you lie, beneath God’s avenging hands like a stag struck by the hunter. You are dust and a breath will scatter you to the four winds. Your spirit will be equally unable to escape from God. When it leaves this body, where will it fly? It finds itself naked—disembodied and straight before it is the Throne of God and the seat made ready for judgment!

Devils shall drag the guilty spirit down to Hell and bind it with links of infinite despair. And when the Day of Judgment shall have fully come and the body shall have risen and the entire man shall stand before God, there will be no escape for the sinner! The eyes of Christ will look into the face of every man of woman born that shall stand upon the earth and upon the sea in the dread day of wrath—and that will ensure the eternal condemnation of all the unbelieving. No one will be in so far off a country that the Judge will not see him, nor will he be able to find a cavern or deep mine where he shall be able to conceal himself from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne.

Then will the ungodly bitterly desire to dwell deep—they will call to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to fall upon them, but all in vain, for thus says the Lord—“Though they climb up to Heaven, there will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there. And though they are hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent and he shall bite them.” Darkness will not be able to conceal you! The glance of the Judge’s eyes shall shrivel up the vesture of night and lay all things bare. O, guilty, Christless Soul, there is no escape from God! Though you dwell deep as Hell—even there would He find you!

In the days of the old Roman empire the whole world was so completely under the Imperial sway that if a man once transgressed against Caesar he was imprisoned already, for all the nations were but one great Roman prison. If a man fled to the uttermost ends of the earth he would still find the Roman legionary to arrest and the Roman lictor to punish him. Behold the universe is thus surrounded by Jehovah’s Imperial forces! Earth, Hell and Heaven are the Lord’s! To where, then, can you flee? Do what you will, you are always before His eyes and always within reach of His hands. “Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan,” but in vain shall be all your craft and cunning concealments, for God will assuredly find you out. The same solemn warning may be applied to those who are selfrighteous and who think that they are forming a hiding place for themselves. I would turn to them and say, “You think that you will save yourselves by your works. Ah, labor mightily, for hard must be your toil if you think to finish a righteousness of your own! In the very fire must you labor. You would make a dwelling for yourself as secure as the Rock of Ages? You had need build anxiously. I do not wonder that you are ill at ease. I wonder you have any peace, for the labors which you propose are more stupendous than those of Hercules! You would work miracles without the God of miracles! Vanity of vanities, all is vanity! Like Babel’s tower, self-righteous efforts will end in failure and abide only as a monument of folly.”

I could gladly, if I were in that humor, speak to the self-righteous with bitter irony, as did Elijah to the false prophets when he said of Baal, “Cry aloud, for he is a god!” If, indeed, there is salvation by works, wear your fingers to the bone and your bodies to skeletons! Weep out your eyes with penances and furrow your backs with chastisements! You plow the desert sand and sow the salt sea. Plow on, sow on you fools and dotards! Rest in your sacraments and your priests! Be born-again in sprinkling! Be confirmed by Episcopal hands and then eat your bread god! Get up at the daily tinkling of your bell to adore the flour and water which you both worship and swallow!

Get on your knees and repeat your Paternosters and your Ave Marias— and count your beads! Fast not only on Fridays, but on all days of the week and put on your hair shirts and wear a girdle of spikes. You had need do many such things, for no little matters will quiet conscience and give the soul peace. To fill a bottomless tub with water is nothing to the labor of self-salvation! To build a house with bubbles, twist a rope of sand or weld an anchor of spray were easier, by far. Fools! Can sinners keep a perfect Law? Can finite effort satisfy Infinite Justice? Can a bankrupt, without a penny, put his creditor under obligations? Can a vile worm deserve anything at the hands of the thrice Holy God?

But, ah, ‘tis folly altogether! “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified.” “By the Law is the knowledge of sin,” and nothing more. All the efforts that a man can make to earn Heaven must end in disappointment and despair. “You must be born-again.” You must believe in Christ Jesus! You must be saved through His great salvation. There is no hope for you, O you who are dwelling deep in your own works! It is a sorry, sorry dwelling. I will not use the text to you sarcastically, as I might, but I will rather say, flee from your good works as you would flee from your sins! Have no more confidence in your goodness than in your badness, for if you rely on what you do that is good, you will be as surely lost as if you had depended upon your sins. Whether the sand is white or red is small consequence—in either case it is a bad foundation. You need a better basis, even that which was laid of old by God in the Covenant of Grace, even Christ Jesus, the Rock of our salvation!

The same text, in the same way, might be applied to those who are hypocrites and are practicing secret sins while they yet wear the name of Christ and are numbered among His people. They maintain a creditable position in the Church and yet indulge privately in evil habits. This class is the great trial of the ministry and in every Church there are some of them. They profess to love the Lord Jesus but they are traitors in the camp. They are fair apples, but rotten at the core! Gilded cheats, painted shams, counterfeits, impostors! O, it is a horrible thing to find a man coming to the communion table who worships the bottle and goes to bed intoxicated. He talks about the love of Christ and yet he is a drunk! He partakes of the cup of the Lord and dotes upon the cup of devils!

And there is another who is, perhaps, temperate in diet and liberal to the Church but, at the same time he is dishonest in his transactions abroad. He can never be trusted—he pays no one except by compulsion. He has no sense of honor and yet he has an uppermost seat in the synagogue. Nor is this all, for, alas, we have known some who could talk very loudly about what they knew of personal religion and Divine Grace, who at the same time were raking in the very lowest kennels of vice. How can I bear to think of such beings! O, Paul! I do not wonder at you, when I hear you say, “I now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.”

Such base deceivers are the enemies of the Cross of Christ above all others! The Trojans were safe inside and the legions of the Greeks could do them but little harm so long as they were outside the walls. But when the wooden horse was brought in with the Greeks concealed inside, the city was taken. The enemies inside the Church do her the most serious damage—she suffers most from those fearfully presumptuous sinners who are not satisfied with sinning in the King’s kingdom but must sin in the King’s palace—who dare to bring their filthinesses even to His own table and pollute it. If any of you who are hypocrites hope to escape, you need dwell deep, indeed!

Where are the deep places which can afford refuge for religious pretenders? Where shall liars conceal themselves? O, Hypocrite! It may be you have planned your sin so cleverly that the wife of your bosom does not know it—your scheme is so admirably cunning that you carry two faces and yet no Christian sees other than that Christian mask of yours. Ah, Sir, you are a greater fool than I take you for if you think you can deceive your God! Your own conscience must be very uneasy. Hypocrites are the devil’s martyrs—they endure a life-long martyrdom of constraint and fear.

I have seen, when I was a boy, a juggler in the street throw up half-adozen balls, or knives and plates and continue catching and throwing them, and to me it seemed marvelous. But the religious juggler beats all others hands down! He has to keep up Christianity and worldliness at the same time and catch two sets of balls at once! To be a freeman of Christ and a slave of the world at the same time must need fine acting. One of these days you, Sir Juggler, will make a slip with one of the balls and your game will be over. A man cannot always keep it up and play the game so cleverly at all hours—sooner or later he fails and then he is made a hissing and a by-word and becomes ashamed, if any shame is left in him.

O, “dwell deep, you inhabitants of Dedan” if you think to escape from God’s eyes and from the revealing power of His Providence. Better were it for you to come right out and throw away your cloaks and be deceivers no longer. Cast off your double-mindedness. “Cease to do evil, learn to do well,” for it is time to seek the Lord and may God grant you His effectual Grace that you may do so at once—before He condemns you to the lowest Hell.

II. But now we will use the text INSTRUCTIVELY, in which view the first and natural sense would be that the Prophet warns the tribe of Dedan, who had come to live among the Edomites, to go away from them and dwell in the depths of the wilderness so that when the destroyer came they might not participate in Edom’s doom. It was the warning voice of mercy, separating its chosen from among the multitude of the condemned.

Now this suggests to me one observation—The people of God, like the tribes of Dedan, to some extent dwell in Edom. Your business, your duty, is to come out from among them. “Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing.” I often marvel how some who really love the Lord and believe His Truth, can put up with the errors of the Churches with which they are connected. There are Churches which preach doctrine that is far other than the Gospel of Christ—such, for instance, as the doctrine that unconscious infants are made members of Christ and children of God by the sprinkling of a little water!

God will plague such a Church as surely as He is God! Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her plagues! I love the saints in the Church of England but I marvel at their abiding in such company! It is our duty to flee as far from error as possible and enter into no confederacy with falsehood. There are Nonconformist Churches where the Gospel is not preached and intellect is put in the place of faith. I charge you, separate yourselves from such! What fellowship has light with darkness? How can you love the Lord and be in league with those who despise His Word? While some cry out for unity, I would say a word for the Truth of God. Unity, indeed! What have we to do with that while Ritualism and Rationalism with their abominations defile the land? I dare no more be a member of a Church which does not hold the pure Truth of God in the love of it, than I dare join a band of pirates!

Our Lord entered into no covenant with Scribe and Pharisee, Sadducee or Herodian, but remained “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” Better go to Heaven alone than to Hell in company! Better be true to God, with Abdiel, “faithful among the faithless found,” than win the applause of the crowd by great liberality and equal inconsistency. More important still, however, is the separation of every Christian from worldly habits, customs and ways. Wherever you are, dear Friend, though you must be in the world, take care that you are not of it. “Come you out from among them: be you separate, says the Lord, touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

It is only in the lonely path of the true disciple of Christ who follows the Lamb where ever He goes, that you can realize your adoption and cry, “Abba, Father.” Come out from the world—confess yourself to be on the Lord’s side and then your fellowship with God shall be sweet beyond degree! Range yourself under the Divine banner and by God’s Grace remain a separatist from the world until life’s latest hour. So shall you, like Abraham, be a sojourner with God. “Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan.” Get away from the world’s customs and sins and above all from its selfish spirit and groveling aims! Dwell deep in the solitudes where Jesus dwelt— in the lonely holiness which was fostered on the cold mountain’s side and then shone resplendent amid temptation and persecution!

Commit yourself unto no man! Call no man master! Lean on no arm of flesh! Walk before the Lord in the land of the living and so dwell deep, as did your Lord. But I do not wish to enlarge upon that point. The practical matter I am aiming at lies in another direction. My earnest desire is that every saved soul among you may dwell deep, that is to say, that none of you may be superficial Christians but that you may be deep Believers, well rooted plants of Grace, thorough, downright, out-and-out Christians—that you may not only dwell in the Rock of Ages, but dwell deep in it. To this let me call your attention.

It is highly important, Beloved, that every one of us should have a deep sense of sin and a profound horror of it. Those who have but slight convictions, if those convictions bring them to the Savior, are safe, but such persons should pray the Lord to deepen in them their sense of the evil of sin. Slight thoughts of sin lead to slight thoughts of Grace! And what can be worse? Nothing is more to be dreaded than a flimsy religion, frail as the spider’s web, unsubstantial as the air. Lord, give me deep repentance! Teach me to know my sin and all the evils which lurk in it. Make me to shudder at it and dread it as a burnt child dreads the fire.

Do not, dear Friends, be like those people who jauntily confess, “yes, we are sinners,” but who merely intend thereby to chime in with a general form of speech. Such false speeches are a mockery of God. Thank God if you have been laid low under the Law. Bless God for deep subsoil plowing and trenching. I desire to feel, every day, that sin is an exceedingly bitter thing, a deadly evil, a moral poison—the essence of Hell! O, to loathe iniquity and see with self-abhorrence its heinous character—for so shall we prize the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love which thought it, the blood which bought it—and the Grace which worked it out!

Should your convictions of sin be already deep, then seek to dwell deep as to your faith in Jesus Christ. Much of the faith which passes current in the world is not faith—it is mere talk. We say we believe, but do we believe? We say “Yes, I trust,” but do we trust? Is it a real trust? Is it such a trust as will stand the test of the dying hour? Are we really divorced from our self-confidences and in very deed married to our Lord Jesus Christ as our only confidence? O, to have solid faith—the faith which will survive the removal of all things and outlive the general fire! O, Brothers and Sisters, ask the Lord to deepen your faith, to confirm, establish and perfect it!

And you who are now coming forward to confess your faith in Jesus—if you have only a grain of mustard seed of faith, it will save you, blessed be God! But I exhort you to seek for larger degrees of it. O you who in these regions profess to abide in the Lord, may you dwell deep in Christ! When you get upon the Rock of Christ Jesus you are safe, but when you get into the Rock then you are happy! A man on the Rock will be subject to the wind and to the rain, to the damp of dews and to the heat of the sun. But, O, a man in the Rock—it does not matter to him what weather it is— whether it blows or shines, he is sheltered! O, to get fully into Christ—to have a deep experience of our union with Him and a solemn conviction deepening into a full assurance of our exaltation in Him!

Beloved, this is, indeed, to dwell in the Goshen of Christianity! This is to drink the choice wines of the kingdom. The nearer to Jesus the more perfect our peace. The innermost place of the sanctuary is the most Divine. So would I have you, beloved Friends, dwell deep in the matter of Christian study. He who knows himself a sinner and Christ a Savior, is certainly justified, but we desire to be something more than saved. The babe in Grace is the Lord’s child, but we do not wish to be always infants—there is a time when we should be children no more. Christ’s babes should grow up to be men in Christ Jesus and my earnest entreaty to all professors, both young and old, is, “Let us seek deeply to study the Word of God that by feeding upon it we may grow.”

An instructed Christian is a more useful vessel of honor for the Master than an ignorant Believer. I do not say that instruction is all—far from it. There is much in zeal and, with but slender knowledge, a man full of zeal may do a great deal. But if the zealous man has knowledge in proportion, how much more will he achieve? Dig deep in your research into the Scriptures, beloved Friends! I am always afraid lest any of you should take your doctrinal views from me and believe doctrines merely because I have taught you to do so. I charge you, if I preach anything that is not according to the Lord’s Word, away with it!—and though we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, away with it!—do not regard our persons for a moment in comparison with Divine authority!

Study the Character of Christ. Do not merely know that He is Christ, but who He is—whose Son He is and what He is and what He did and what was meant by what He did. Know what He is doing and what He will do and all the glorious hopes which cluster around His first and His second advent—all the precious Truths of the Covenant of Grace and the glorious attribute of eternal love. Do not be afraid of what are called the “deep things of God.” I do not mean that you young beginners are to give your thoughts to them to the exclusion of the simplicities of the Gospel— but at the same time, when you know the Lord savingly, go on to know yet more and more!

Comprehend with all saints what are the depths and heights. Entrench yourselves in the precious Truths of God’s Word—no bulwarks are so strong. Above all things and beyond all things would I earnestly impress upon my beloved friends the need of deep living unto God. There is such a thing as flimsy living in which you pray and pray—yes, but it is a superficial, routine exercise. O, how I bless God when I can pray deep dwelling prayers—when my heart groans unto God and pours out her very self into His bosom! And how delightful it is to sing one of the deep songs when the innermost heart praises and magnifies God! And how delightful to get into deep fellowship with Jesus Christ till the Lord, Himself, is revealed in you and you eat His flesh, drink His blood and have His life in you!

Dwell deep, Beloved! Those who dwell upon the preacher do not dwell deep—but those who feed upon the Master, Himself, are strong and joyous. Those who live only upon outward ordinances and do not practice private devotion and are not abundantly with God in secret communion— those do not dwell deep. Get to the roots of things. The gold mines of Scripture are not in the top soil—you must open a shaft—the precious diamonds of experience are not picked up in the roadway, their secret places are far down. Get down into the vitality, the solidity, the veracity, the Divinity of the Word of God and seek to possess with it all the inward work of the blessed Spirit. It is of small use to learn a doctrine unless, in the most emphatic sense, you learn it by heart.

John Bunyan intended this when he said that the Truths of God which he learned were burnt into him. No man in very deed knows a Truth of God till it has forced its way into him and permanently impressed its image upon him. You may have a doctrine hammered into your head by argument till you are quite convinced and yet no practical result will follow. But, O, if it is stamped into your heart with Divine energy the consequences will be very different. I am not a Calvinist by choice but because I cannot help it! The Truths of God I preach are in me, part and parcel of myself! I do not carry my creed, but my creed carries me! It should be so with us as to all we know of Divine Truth. This deep knowing, deep feeling, deep living—this it is that makes sound work and lasting work for eternity!

In one word, as the Lord is bringing in many recruits into this Church—and we are glad to receive the rawest among you—my anxious desire is that they may be trained to be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness in years to come. We need you new plants to have a good foothold so that you may grow up into Christ in later years and bring forth fruit to His name. We are anxious that you should make a sound beginning, for, if a man is about to build a house, if he is unused to building he may think he is doing well if he sets to work upon the ground as it is and runs up several courses of bricks. But every man who is an experienced builder knows that instead of doing well he is wasting his time, since every brick must come down again.

If there is no foundation, all he builds will be worthless and the higher he goes the greater his loss. O, for a good foundation!—to be emptied right out by repentance and dug deep by conviction and the rubbish of self thrown out of you—this is a great blessing, for the deeper the foundation the higher the tower can be carried and the deeper our sense of sinfulness and nothingness the greater is the possibility of our being built up into the fullness, strength and perfection of Jesus Christ our Lord!

If any enquire what are our reasons for bringing forward at this time such an exhortation as this, I will briefly answer them. Brethren, it is well for us to dwell deep, because trials will surely come. Do you presume, O young Beginner, that your warfare is finished now that you have enlisted? Ah, simple Child, “let not him that puts on his armor boast as though he put it off.” You have come up to the starting point and you already think the prize is your own! O Beloved, you have but commenced running and your life is the length of the race! You will have to run and run till you shall lay down your race with your body—you will never have finished till then.

“What? But when I am saved, surely I shall have no more fights.” Hearken! The moment you are saved the battles will begin. “But shall I feel an evil heart after I am born-again?” Yes, and more than ever, for the new life that is in you will hate the old nature and the old Adam will hate the new Adam. There will be a conflict in your soul such as you never knew before and it will be perpetual! Do not think that Christ has come to send peace into your soul of the sort you look for—He makes no peace with evil, but draws the sword! There will be fights and wars within your spirit until you die!

Now, you must have deep work or else these inward trials will offend you. You remember John Bunyan’s wise picture, in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” of Christian and Pliable? Christian read his Bible and told Pliable of a beautiful city to which he was going where there were streets of gold and harps of the richest music. “And,” said Pliable, “I will go with you: I would gladly be there.” When he told him all about how Evangelist had instructed him and when he read to him the roll, “Oh,” said Pliable, “this is very pleasant. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one’s heart. Come on, let us mend our pace.”

But, as they went on, the road became very muddy and by-and-by their feet began to slip and after awhile they were both up to their necks in a slough. “Oh,” says Pliable, “is this that happiness you have told me of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect between this and our journey’s end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me!” And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house and Christian saw him no more. O, if it is not a work of Grace when you get a little soul trouble you will say, “Ah, I will have none of this. I thought it was going to be all ‘hallelujahs’ and ‘bless the Lord!’ I did not look for depressions and bewilderments.”

Now, when I hold up my Master’s colors and invite recruits, I am by no means eager to enlist cowards! I need those who for God’s sake and by His Spirit will go through the Slough of Despond resolved to escape from the City of Destruction. You must “dwell deep,” then, or inward trials will send you back to the world again. There will be outward trials, too—for when a man puts on the name of Christ the world soon raises a hue and cry against him and they say, “Here is another of your Methodists,” or, “another of your Presbyterians,” and they straightway bring forth some of their old stock epithets, hoping that to give a dog an ill name may go a long way towards hanging him.

They have a fine name for some of you who belong to this Church and they daub you over with it as plentifully as Noah pitched his ark. If the work of Grace is not deep in the heart of a ridiculed professor, he will say, “I don’t see why I should be laughed at. I wish to be respectable and cannot afford to be lowered for religion’s sake.” Ah, yours is a poor religion if a set of grinning sinners can laugh you out of it! Only a plant in stony soil will be dried up by the heat of persecution—if you are grounded and settled, no trials of cruel mocking or any other assaults of the enemy will overturn you!

Again, there is a necessity that you should dwell deep, Beloved, for in these days many errors have gone abroad in the world—and many teachers of heresy and infidelity—and if you do not dwell deep they will shake you terribly. When a soul is once established in Christ and has eaten bread with Him and seen the things of the kingdom as they are revealed in Him, why, if all the infidels in the world were to come to such a person and object and object, and object—their efforts would not be worth a farthing—for they would not turn him the breadth of a hair!

Even though such a man may be in other respects ignorant and weak, yet, if he has been with Jesus, he will be wise and strong! Communion with Christ braces up the spirit! He who has been plunged into the sea of Divine fellowship is invulnerable. A certain skeptic had often troubled an aged Christian woman about many things and upon many points he had ridiculed her. At last she ended the fight by a declaration of faith which cleared all the ground at once. He said to her, “Why, you are not such a fool as to believe that a great fish swallowed Jonah! You cannot believe such a monstrous fable.”

“Man,” she said, “God’s Word says it and if the Lord had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would have believed Him.” Her faith in the veracity of God explained all difficulties and as she was forever settled upon that matter—there was no use in arguing against her. Men call this blind faith but I call it faith with her eyes open looking alone to God! When faith dwells thus deep, the heaviest shells that our foes can hurl from the Krupp guns of their logic are no more injurious to the fortifications of our comfort than so many paper pellets thrown by a schoolboy! No—

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

But you must dwell deep to be able to do that, otherwise arguments with skeptics and papists will be your terror and your danger—and difficulties will arise which will greatly mar your peace. May you have Grace to dwell so near to God that it shall be impossible for evil insinuations to enter into your spirit! Dwell deep, dear Friends, for there are seasons coming when all your Grace will be needed. I have never heard of a man coming to mischief through having too much Grace. I never heard, yet, of any person falling into danger through living too near to God. Nor do I think most men suffer through being too careful in self-examination or too anxious to be right.

Presumption brings a thousand evils, but holy carefulness brings very few, if any. You will have to die, Beloved, soon. And though you may rejoice in the prospect of being with Christ, death, after all, is no child’s play. He who would die triumphantly will need God’s arm to bear him up. The river is in itself a deep and chilling river and if the Lord, who is Immortality and Life, is not with us it will be a drowning river. But if we have solid faith we shall pass over safely. But, mark you, no sham faith will help you, then.

What do those poor souls do who have dreamed of Heaven and discover when they are dying that their hope is a mere dream? O, what will false Church members do? What will the hypocritical deacon do? Above all, what will the unfaithful minister do, who, when he comes to die, finds that he has preached to others and has no part nor lot in this matter himself? What will he do when it is too late to take to another ship—to have all shipwrecked forever? What horror this must be! God grant it may not be so with any of you, and, therefore, Beloved, in fair weather look to your vessel.

It was a shameful thing, say what anyone will, to send the ship to sea we have been reading of lately, that was all worm-eaten and her iron, even her iron, quite rusted through. It would have been infinitely better to have had her well examined and not to have sent an unworthy ship out at all. But you see they ran on a beach and happily saved all the crew. But if you go to sea spiritually in a leaky ship like that there is no saving you—you are lost and lost forever!

O, if you have got into this professional boat which is rotten, get out of her though you lose all your comfort and see all your experience go down! Let it go down if it is a lie! It is better that a man be a beggar and be free than be a prince and be a liar. What care I for the gewgaw tinsel crown that men put on who strut upon the boards of a theater? Shall I esteem the mimic sovereigns and bow down to them as if they were true kings and princes? No! The poorest man who is himself is better than the grandest man who is a sham! God grant that we may stand the test of dying.

But there is a still more terrible test than dying, for some sleep quietly through death, but, oh, the judgment! I see two ponderous scales huge as hemispheres of this great globe and there I see the weights—the standard weights of Eternal Justice. Into yonder scales every one of us must go and what if there should be heard the dreadful sound, “Mene, mene, Tekel”? “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting!” There will be no hope, then, of making up the short weight or of coming up to the standard. Lost then, we shall be cast away forever! O, if you only get an inch towards Heaven, let it be a safe inch—for a safe inch is better than a counterfeit yard, and one drachma of Grace is better than a million tons of profession! One genuine tear is better than a sea full of washing your hands in outward ceremonies! Let your religion be real, dear Friends. “Dwell deep.”

And I will give this other reason—dwell deep because those who live near to God and are substantial in godliness, are the happiest of people. The top of the cup of religion may be bitter, but it grows sweeter the deeper down you drink. The cup at Satan’s banquet is sweet upon the brim where the bubbles glow like rainbows, but, ah, the horrid dregs of it! The cup that Christ gives has no dregs—it has at its bottom the sweetness of the wines on the lees, well refined. And, O, the inexpressible sweetness when you get to the bottom of all—where there is no bottom indeed—when you get a drink of eternal joys and never-ending blessings!

While deep living gives a man more happiness, it also endows him with more strength. Some single Christians of my acquaintance are worth 20 ordinary ones because they enter into the very marrow of religion and then impress others with the reality of it. I know at this moment Christian women who are worth 50 ordinary professing women. I would not say the others are not very good, too, in their way, but they are superficial compared with these deep-taught daughters of Zion. O God, if the Church is to be strong it must be through those that dwell deep! And so, Beloved, let me close by saying, dwell deep, for you will glorify God the most. The nearer you get to the sun, the brighter you will be. The nearer you live to Christ, the more like He you will be.

Dwell deep, Beloved! Beware of levity in godliness! Beware of superficiality! Beware of skimming! Seek to enjoy the deep, the blessed, the true reality! The Lord grant it to you for His name’s sake. But still, let me say to any who have not begun the Divine life, this is not for you just now. I talked to you last night and the night before and you know I bade you come to Christ just as you were. And so I do now, for saving work is coming and touching even the hem of the Redeemer’s garment. If you have touched the hem of His garment, do not be satisfied with that! Go on to know Him more and long, like Simeon, to take Him up in your arms, and say, “This Christ is mine—the blessed Christ—mine forever and forever!” God bless you, beloved Friends!

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MOURNERS, INQUIRERS, COVENANTERS  
NO. 1752

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“In those days and in that time, says the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go**

**and seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying,  
Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD  
in a perpetual covenant that  
shall not be forgotten.”  
Jeremiah 50:4.**

THE previous part of this chapter declares the overthrow of Israel’s cruel oppressor—“Babylon is taken, Bel is ashamed, Merodach is broken in pieces.” The Assyrian and Babylonian power had been the great tyrant of the ages and the Lord had employed it for the chastening of His people, until, at last, Israel and Judah had been carried away captive to the banks of the Euphrates and the land of their fathers knew them no more. This was the mournful song of the exiles, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” What a turn would come! In the day when God would reckon with Babylon and punish the haughty people for their cruelties and oppressions, then should Israel and Judah come to their own again.

“In those days, and in that time,” there would be hope for the downtrodden—the Lord would keep His appointments of Grace to the hour and, at the determined time, Israel would be free. “Surely the least of the flock would draw out the enemy” and escape from his power. God devises means for bringing back His banished ones and among those ways we usually see the overthrow of their conquerors. When, therefore, the Lord deals with Babylon in a way of vengeance it is that He may deliver His own people. See how the two things are joined together in the 18th and 19th verses— “Therefore thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.”

When Pharaoh is drowned, Israel is saved! When Sihon and Og are slain, the Lord’s mercy to His people is seen to endure forever! The destruction of Amalek is the salvation of Jacob and the overthrow of Babylon is the restoration of Jerusalem! It was a very amazing thing that a nation so crushed and scattered as the Jews were, should come back from captivity—it was a very marvelous instance of Divine power and faithfulness, as it is written—“For Israel has not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.”

I will not talk much with you concerning the Chaldeans and the Jews, but I would speak concerning ourselves. We, too, by nature are in banishment, far off from our God and the abode of His Glory. We are not what we ought to have been, for the Lord did not make us to be sinners, but to be His happy and obedient creatures. Our present lost estate is not our true state. We are banished through coming under the power of our great adversary. Sin has carried us into captivity and we are in the far country, away from the great Father’s house. It is a great blessing when the times come—and they have come—when there is an opportunity and an invitation to return. Today the power of the adversary is broken and we may flee out of the Babylon of sin. A greater than Cyrus has opened the two-leaved gates, broken the bars of iron in sunder and proclaimed liberty to the captives! We may now return to our God and freely enjoy the holy and happy associations which belong to the City of our God.

At such times, when the Lord is leading men to seek His face, questions arise, anxieties abound and difficulties multiply. The lost tribes could not come back from Babylon by merely thinking of it—the way was long and dangerous, the paths were unknown and difficult—and they who came back to Zion found the journey to be no promenade of pleasure or parade of pomp. It is so with the Lord’s banished when He gives them a heart and a will to return to Him—they are not, therefore, restored to the Father’s house at once—they may have to persevere through months of weary pilgrimage before they come to their desired abode. As I have said, returning times are anxious times. Men wander thoughtlessly, but they do not return without grave thought and serious consideration. I earnestly desire to be the means in the hand of God of answering questions, removing fears and clearing the way for those who have begun to seek the Lord. They mourn and I wish to comfort them. They ask the way and I would gladly direct them. They long to join themselves unto the Lord and I would, by His Grace, help them.

Last Lord’s-Day morning was given to the fathers of the Church. Let this be given to the beginners in the Divine Life. May the Holy Spirit give us thoughts and words which may lead the seeker into the way of peace. Everyone who is really seeking the Lord desires to be sure that he is seeking aright. He is not willing to take anything for granted, since his soul is of too much value to be left in danger. He does not even believe in his own judgment of himself, but when he thinks his face is towards Zion, he still asks the way. He inquires, “Are my feelings like those of the truly penitent? Am I believing as those do who are justified by faith? Am I seeking the Lord in a manner which will be pleasing to Him?” They have so long been as lost sheep, going from mountain to hill, that they have forgotten their resting places and, therefore, in their confusion they are afraid of going wrong again—and so they inquire with eager anxiety.

Perhaps we may show them from this Scripture how others sought and how others found—and this may be a guide and a comfort to them—for although there are differences of operation and all do not come to Christ with equal terrors, or with equal joys—yet there is a likeness in all the pilgrims to the Holy City. “As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.” The experience of God’s people in its root principles is always the same. All coming sinners endure similar griefs and pass through similar struggles—the same desires, the same fears, the same hopes and, by-and-by, the same realizations are to be found in all those who seek the Lord their God.

Looking carefully at the text, we perceive that those who came back to Zion by God’s gracious leadership were first, mourners; secondly, inquirers and thirdly, covenanters, for they ended by joining themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

I. To begin at the beginning, the Lord’s restored ones, during the processes of Grace, were first of all MOURNERS—“In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God.” Oh, my Hearer, after all your sins, I will not believe that you are truly coming to God if there is not about you a great sorrow for sin and a lamenting after the Lord! Some seekers are made to drink of this bitter cup very deeply; the wine of astonishment is long kept to their lips; their sense of sin is terrible—even to anguish and agony!

I know that there are others who do not taste this bitterness to the same degree. It is in their cup, but for all that, the sweet love of Christ is revealed to them so soon and so fully that the healthful wormwood of penitence is veiled beneath the exceeding sweetness of gracious pardon. The clear shining in their case so soon follows the rain that they scarcely know that there has been a shower of grief! Surely, in their case the bitterness is passed, but is it truly there even though the other ingredient of intense delight in God’s mercy swallows up all its sharpness.

Oh, Friends, you cannot imagine the Jews returning from captivity without bewailing the sins which drove them into the place of their exile! How could they be restored to God if they did not lament their former wicked estrangement? Shall the Lord press to His bosom an impenitent transgressor? How can there be peace to an offender as long as his offenses are not repented of? While the heart feels no compunction concerning its wanderings, no mourning over its guilt, no grief at having grieved the Lord, there can be no acceptance with God! There must be a shower in the day of mercy—not always a long driving rain causing a flood—but the soft drops must fall in every case.

There must be tenderness toward God if we expect reconciliation with God. The heart must cry, “How could I have sinned against so good a Lord! How could I have stood out against His love! How could I have refused my Savior and His abounding Grace! My God, forgive me!” These confessions, if truly made, cannot be spoken without sighs and sorrows. The multitudes of our sins cannot be thought of without a moving of the soul and a measure of heartbreak. Is it not written, “They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”? A look at Christ gives life, but it also produces the tokens of that life, among which we find godly sorrow which works true and sincere repentance. Even a sense of pardon does not exclude this holy mourning—on the contrary, it increases it. The more certain we are that we are forgiven, the more do we loathe the sin which caused the Savior to bleed and die. The more sure we are of the Divine favor, the more intensely do we regret the fact of our having been enemies to the infinitely gracious God. Of all the ransomed it is written, “They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.”

Observe that this mourning in the case of Israel and Judah was so strong that it mastered other feelings. Between Judah and Israel there was an old feud. They were brethren and it ought not to have been so, but they had become bitter adversaries of each other. Yet now that they return to the Lord, we read, “The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together.” O happy union in a common search for God! One of the first results of holy sorrow for sin is to cast out of our heart all forms of enmity and strife with our fellow men. When we are reconciled to God we are reconciled to men! I have seen those who had been fired with mutual hatred, loving each other when they have been alike under the power of the Spirit of God and bowed down with contrition! I am sure if you were to go forward as a sincere inquirer to ask the way to Heaven, if you met your worst enemy at the door and he said to you, “I am seeking mercy of God for my transgressions,” you would grasp each other’s hands and weep together.

If a man, professing to be a penitent, drew back at the sight of another who also came penitently to Christ, and said, “I can have nothing to do with him,” I should unhesitatingly declare him to be a hypocrite! And even if he were sincere, I should have to tell him that to a certainty the Lord could not and would not accept his repentance or grant him peace. If you will not forgive your brother, how shall God forgive you? Do you pray, “Forgive us our trespasses,” if you cannot forgive your brother his trespasses? A penitent sense of our own provocations of God will prevent our being provoked with men. As Aaron’s rod swallowed up all other rods, so a sincere sorrow for sin will remove all readiness to take offense against our fellow sinners. In the secret chambers of their souls the truly penitent say, “Everything that I have against any man is gone, now, for I remember nothing but that I have offended against my God. If the Lord will forgive my wrong, everything I have had to bear from others shall be as the small dust of the balance, not worthy to be considered or thought of in the day of Infinite Grace.”

I am trying to preach that I may help you who are seeking the Lord to discover whether you are coming in the right way. This shall be one simple test to you—you cannot be coming home to your Father unless there is some degree of mourning for sin, some smiting upon the breast, some bemoaning of yourself because of your iniquities. And again, for certain, you cannot be coming to the Lord aright unless there is a blotting out altogether from your heart of every offense that every man may have committed against you in past times. Judah and Israel, when the Lord has mercy on them, forget their enmity and recognize the brotherhood which they ought never to have forgotten! If I am speaking to any who are seeking the Lord, but seem to make small progress to His Light, I entreat them to inquire whether sins of enmity and wrath may not be lying at the door and blocking the way of Grace. Hasten to forgive freely, fully, heartily— and then pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” A family disagreement may seem to be a little thing, but it may be holding many in the deadly bonds of the Evil One. Be reconciled to your brother, or you cannot be reconciled to your God!

Keeping close to the text, we notice, again, that the exiles on their return were mourning while marching. Observe the words—“going and weeping.” We might have thought, perhaps, that when they began to go to their God, so much Light of God would break in upon them that they would cease to weep—but no, it is, “going and weeping.” A true heart that is coming to God takes the road by Weeping-Cross—it feels its sin, its guilt, its unworthiness and it, therefore, mourns. The closet is sought out and prayer is offered, but in the supplication there is a dove’s note, a moaning as of one sorrowing for love. When the prayer is over, there is dissatisfaction with the prayer, a smiting on the breast, as much as to say, “I pray but coldly compared with the way in which I ought to pray. I look not to Christ as I ought, but look half askance, I fear, at something else besides the Cross.”

An honestly believing soul is fearful lest it should be mistaken in its faith. A truly praying heart is jealous of its own prayer, lest it should ask amiss. Probably no prayer is more sincere than that which is followed by deep regret that it is not more fervent—in the fact that the pleader is dissatisfied with his cry lies a proof that the Lord is satisfied with it! Our humility is the watermark which proves our prayer to be genuine. If we think well of our prayers and imagine that we have almost a right to be heard, we shall make a fruitless visit to the Mercy Seat. We may not claim of God as a matter of justice those gifts which are pure gifts of mercy. The Lord had no respect unto Cain and his sacrifice because there was no reference to sin, no type of atonement, no confession of guilt in that which he presented. Publicans confessing sin are justified rather than selfsatisfied Pharisees. When a sense of sin leads to prayer, the prayer itself appears to be another cause for repentance because of the sin which mingles with it.

He who feels a humbling sorrow while he seeks his God is coming aright. Now the seeker opens his Bible and sits down to read the promise. And as he reads, he thinks what great mercy there is in it, but he adds, “Alas, how evil has been my life, since I have grieved the Lord of Love.” Then the tears flow like the water which gushed from the smitten Rock, for as the Believer sees that pardon is real and that it is meant for him, he is all the more melted down with penitential sorrow. This is his song—

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

Having grasped the promise and having looked to Christ and seen himself forgiven, the sincere soul continues to draw nearer and nearer to his God—and yet all the while he is filled with self-accusations and humility on account of sin. While he cries, “Blessed be the God of my salvation who has delivered me from my iniquities,” he also mourns within himself, exclaiming, “Alas, that I should have so transgressed and grieved His Holy Spirit! I am ashamed at having rejected such wondrous love!” Thus, “Going and mourning” depict a gracious blending of activity and repentance.

Turning the text around, we read not only of “going and weeping,” but also of weeping and going. The holy grief here intended does not lead to sitting still, for it is added, “they shall go.” That word, “weeping,” is sandwiched in between two goings—“going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord.” To sit down and say, “I will sorrow for my sin, but never seek a Savior,” is an impenitent pretense of repentance—a barren sorrow which brings forth no cleansing of the life and no diligent search after the Lord. Such a sorrow is the first dropping of that dread shower of remorse which will fall upon the soul forever. Remorse is the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire. No doubt, all that are now lost lament that they have brought themselves into such a ruin, but that lamentation is no evidence of reconciliation with God—many have a kind of repentance for having brought themselves into a condemned condition—but this is not genuine repentance if it stands alone.

When the prodigal cries, “I will arise and go to my Father,” then a work of Grace is certainly begun, but not till then. It is not enough to say, “I perish with hunger”—but when there follows upon it, “I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned,” then we have reached the true turning point—salvation has come to our house! True mourning for sin leads the sinner to the Cross. When you talk about repentance, if your repentance is with your back to the Cross, away with your repentance! If you are trusting to your tears, sorrows and grief—and not trusting to the blood of Jesus Christ—you are trusting in vain! Vanity of vanities! Your tears shall scald you if you trust in them and your groans shall be the echoes of your death sentence if you rely on them! That repentance in which a guilty man dares to fix his confidence shall be swept away as a thing that lacks the salt which would make it acceptable with God.

The way to repent is with your eyes upon the Sacrifice, viewing the flowing of the sin-atoning blood, marking every precious drop, gazing into the Redeemer’s wounds and believing in the love which, in death, opened up its unsearchable depths. All the while we must be saying, “My God, my God, I groan within myself that such a Sacrifice should have been required by my atrocious transgressions against You.” This is the holy mixture which is needed—going and weeping—but still going and seeking the Lord! We must not pass over that last word, “They shall go and seek the Lord their God.” This, dear Hearer, shall be a guide to you as to whether your present state of feeling is leading you aright. What is it you are seeking? “I am seeking,” says one, “I am seeking peace.” May you soon obtain it and may it be real peace, but I am not sure of you.

“I am seeking,” says another, “the pardon of sin.” Again, I pray that you may find it, but I am not sure of you, either. If another shall reply, “I am seeking the Lord; for I desire above all things to have Him for a Friend, though to Him I have been an enemy”—then I have good hope of him! I rejoice over the heart which is crying, “I want to see my Father’s face, and hear Him say, ‘I have blotted out your sins.’ I want to dwell with God, to serve Him, to obey Him, to grow like He. There has been a quarrel between Him and me—and other lords have had dominion over me—but now I desire that He shall be my Lord and King, and myself His loyal humble servant and beloved child. I hunger and thirst after God!” You see, Brothers and Sisters, we require a great many things in order to be saved, and yet only one thing is necessary.

I would represent it in this form—Here is a little child, picked up from the gutter, diseased and filthy, unclad, unfed. And if you ask me to make out a catalog of what the child needs you must give me a large sheet of paper to write it all down! And then I fear I shall leave out many things. I will tell you in one word what that poor infant requires—it needs its mother. If it gets its mother, it has all it needs. So to tell what a poor sinner needs might be a long task, but when you say that he needs his heavenly Father, you have said it all! This was what the prodigal needed, was it not? He needed his Father—and when he went to his Father, all his necessities were supplied.

Oh Souls, you are seeking aright if you are seeking your God! Nothing short of this will suffice. This may greatly aid you to judge whether you are in the right way or not. And so you see, first of all, the returning exiles were mourners.

II. Secondly, these mourners became INQUIRERS. We read in the second verse of our text, “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” They knew something, that is clear, for they turned their faces in the right direction, but having been born and nurtured in Babylon, the road to Jerusalem had never been trod by them—the route was strange and new. They knew within a little the quarter in which Zion lay and they looked that way, but they did not know all about the road—how could they? The saving point about them was that they were not ashamed to confess their ignorance. Minds that the Lord has touched are never boastful of their wisdom. There are many persons in the world who would be converted if they could but consent to be taught by God’s Word and Spirit—but they are such wise people—they know too much to enter the school of Grace. Jesus tells such, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

A sense of ignorance is the doorstep of wisdom! He shall never know, who is not willing to confess that he does not know. These exiles confessed their ignorance. They knew a little, but they felt that they had much more to learn before they could stand in the temple of God in happy fellowship with Him. It is clear from their asking the way that these inquirers were teachable. They not only yielded to be instructed, but they were eager to be taught and, therefore, they asked for information. It is a hopeful sign when children ask questions. If we can get them to desire knowledge, the desire will be more valuable than the knowledge, itself. The way, nowadays, is to cram the memory, but if our youths could be brought to hunger for knowledge and to ask questions, their minds would be much more effectually benefited.

It is a great mercy for a poor seeking sinner to have a teachable spirit, so as to pray, “Lord Jesus, write Your Gospel on my heart. Here it is, ready to be written on. Only tell me what You would have me do. I make no reservation—I am willing, by Your help, to do it. Or if there is nothing to be done but to sit at Your feet, tell me that, and I will do it as Your Grace enables me.” This teachable spirit is a great benefit to any man—it is, in fact, a precious fruit of the Spirit. “They shall ask the way to Zion.” They shall, therefore, be conscious of ignorance and they shall be willing to be taught! These are good characteristics, such as God accepts.

More than this, they will be anxious although they are right—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it”—they are traveling in the right direction and yet they ask the way! They have looked westward from Babylon, towards Jerusalem. They have taken up the westward position which, in their case, had a hopeful meaning in it. They are setting out for the land of Canaan as their first father did when he left Chaldea. And as they have no map of the road, they ask for the way which leads from banishment to the city of their God! They are right, for their faces are Zionward and one proof of it is that they are anxious to keep right, or to be set right. You who are certain that you are right are very liable to be wrong! But those who make every inquiry of the Word of God, of the servants of God and of their fellow travelers are, in all probability, pursuing the right road. He that has never raised a question about his condition before God had better raise it at once.

The fullest assurance of faith we can ever attain will never excuse us from the duty of self-examination. When a man is most surely prospering in business, it will be wise for him to keep his accounts with care. If he does not attend to the state of his affairs, we shall suspect that his prosperity is a pleasing delusion which he dares not disturb. He who is most sure that he is right before God is most willing to look within—and he that will not search his own heart, but takes it for granted he is safe, may take my word for it that he is in a perilous condition! It is a strange thing that when men set their faces in the right way, they become careful and serious and deeply concerned, for they feel that their eternal destiny is not a thing to trifle with.

At the same time, note concerning those who are coming to the Lord and His people, that they are questioning, but they are still resolved. They ask their way to Zion, but they have set their faces like flints in that direction! They ask how they can be right with God, not as a matter of curiosity, but because they mean to be at peace with Him—by God’s Grace, nothing shall turn them aside from their God and His temple—and, therefore, their anxiety to be right. They do not raise questions by way of quibbling that they may have an excuse for sitting still, but they question because they are in downright earnest. True penitents will have Christ or die! Therefore with solemn resolve, lest, perhaps, they should be misled, they ask their way, determined to walk therein.

Though they ask the way, we may remark, further, that they know where they are going. They ask their way to Zion. They wish to know how they can become fellow citizens with the people of God; how they can behold the great Sacrifice; how they can eat the true Passover; how they can be accepted worshippers of Jehovah and how they can enjoy fellowship with Him. They ask their way with understanding, for they know what their heart is seeking. They ask their way, not to somewhere or other, but to Zion—not to some imaginary blissful shore that may be or may not be— they seek God’s own dwelling place, God’s own palace, God’s own Sacrifice! They ask boldly too, for they are not ashamed to be found inquiring! And when they are informed, their faces are already that way and, therefore, they have nothing to do but to go straight on. May God grant us myriads of such inquirers!

Observe the right order—first they sought the Lord and then they asked their way to Zion. First God and then God’s people! First the Master of the house and then the house of the Master! First that you may become His child, secondly that you may be put among the children. We pray the Holy Spirit to teach you this order well—first give yourself to the Lord and afterwards to us by the Word of God.

III. Now we come to the last matter—these inquirers become COVENANTERS, for they said to one another, “Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Oh, that word, “covenant.” I can never pronounce it without joy in my heart! It is to me a mine of comfort, a mint of delight, a mass if joy. Time was when theology was full of Covenant Truth. Nowadays these grand old doctrines are laid aside by our wise men as too commonplace for their enlightened minds! I do not believe that some modern preachers can say, “covenant.” They could not frame their mouths to pronounce it right. The doctrine of the “Covenant” is a kind of Shibboleth by which we may know the man of God from the false prophet.

Let the people of God take no delight in the man who does not delight in the Covenant of Grace. I rejoice in those old Scot books about the Covenant—Covenant Truth was so inwrought into the Scot heart that Scot peasants, as well as divines, perpetually talked about it. You remember the good old cottager’s blessing over her porridge? I cannot repeat it in pure Doric, but it ran like this— “Lord, I thank you for the porridge, I thank you for an appetite for the porridge, but I thank you most of all that I have a Covenant right to the porridge.” Only think of that! A Covenant right to the porridge! Does not the promise say, “Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure?” God has given to His children a Covenant right to be fed in this life with daily bread—otherwise we might not pray for it!

In the day in which the Lord put us into the Covenant by personal experience, He said, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly” and, consequently, He promised the porridge and any other provision which He judged to be “food convenient for us.” If we are in poverty, it sweetens everything if we can feel that our food and raiment must come to us, for the Lord has covenanted to supply all our needs! We pray the Lord, “Give us this day our daily bread.” How came it to be ours? Why, because it was guaranteed us in the Covenant—Covenant provision has made it ours and, therefore, we may ask for it as ours.

Have I any right to ask God for what is not mine in Christ Jesus? As sinners we ask for mercy and grace for the sake of Grace, but when we come to be children, we can also appeal to other attributes—and especially to faithfulness which is a great Covenant security. We can now say, “My Father, since I am Your child I am an heir of God, joint-heir with Jesus Christ—therefore give me of the fullness which You have treasured up in Him on my behalf.” The upper springs are ours and the nether springs shall not be withheld—

*“He who has made my Heaven secure  
Will here all good provide.  
Since Christ is rich, can I be poor?  
What can I need beside?”*

Returning to the text, from which I have swerved a little, these inquirers become covenanters, for we read that they seek to be joined unto the Lord—“Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord.” The mischief of our fallen state arose from our trying to be distinct and independent of our God. The younger son said, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” See, he has received his share in ready money and off he goes to the far country. What does he do when he penitently returns? Why he joins himself to his father! Nothing in the house is his—he has had his portion of goods long ago—but he lives at home because he is one with his father and cannot be shut out from the house. He is in communion with his father and so he is a partaker of all his father’s goods. O that word, “jointheirs”! What security and sweetness dwell in it! It is a grand thing to be an heir of God, but it makes it so much surer to be “joint-heirs with Christ.” We have such fellowship with Jesus that we share all that Jesus has—our title to all good things lies in Jesus and in our being one with Him. “Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord.”

Now dear Hearts, are you willing to be one with Christ and so to be one with the Father? Is not this the one thing you long for, that you may be so at peace with God through Jesus Christ that you may be joined with Him? You are a right-hearted seeker! In fact, you have already found the Lord, or else you would not find it in your heart to use such an expression as seeking to be joined unto the Lord! Next, notice for how long a time this Covenant is to be made—“Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.” In our English army of late they have enlisted “short time” men. A good brother came to join the Church last week who is in the Reserves and I said to him, “You are not coming to unite with us for two sixes, the first six with the colors and the other six as a reserve man—you have come, I hope, to fight under the colors as long as life lasts.”

“Yes, Sir,” he said, “I give myself up to the Lord forever.” No salvation is possible except that which saves the soul forever! It must be an everlasting salvation or no salvation! And yet some professors try to be off and on with God—they are wonderfully good on the Sabbath—but they slip their regimentals off on Sunday night and there is no accounting for them during the week. I do not know where these double-faced people are to be found on Monday night, but I fear they are up to no good! These chameleons change their color according to the light they are in. Their religion is a sort of acting—a kind of masquerade. Beware of a religion which you can put on and off! In the Capitol at Rome I saw one of the Roman Emperors and I remembered well His Majesty’s brutal countenance! Soon after I saw the gentleman looking very different—I would not have recognized His Imperial Highness at all if it had not been for the name—the fact is, they had put another wig on him! Oddly enough, certain of their statues are so carved that a series of stone headdresses can be put upon them—and this makes a mighty difference in their appearance.

I am afraid that to some professors their religion is a wig, which so wonderfully changes them when they put it on or take it off, that you would not think they were the same people! A real man of God has his religion interwoven into the warp and woof of his being—he could not be other than he is, whatever his circumstances might be. Said one, “I hate such a man; he shall not come to my house; for I hear he is never ten minutes in a room but he begins to talk about religion.” Such a man the world may hate—but such a man the Lord loves! Oh, that our godliness may be as our eyes, our mouth, our countenance, our heart, our life— never to be parted with, but forever essential to ourselves! May we now join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant! The Covenant of Life requires a lifelong covenant! We do not take Grace upon a terminable lease—it is an entailed inheritance, an immortal, eternal possession!

Note, further, that this joining to God these covenanters intended to carry t out in a most solemn way—“Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual”—agreement? Promise? No! “Covenant” is the word! It is a profitable thing for the soul to covenant with God. Dr. Doddridge gives a form of personal covenant in his, “Rise and Progress,” and I have been told that some persons have written it out and even signed it with their blood. I believe that such a formal transaction may lead a soul into bondage—this covenanting is not to be performed quite so literally—but I believe that it should really be done.

That a man should give himself to the Lord in set and solemn form at some time in his life I believe to be a great help to his later perseverance. And if he will renew his covenant every now and then it may greatly help to his keeping it. In the ordinance of Baptism we have the best visible setting forth of that Covenant. Circumcision set forth the taking away of the filth of the flesh, but Baptism sets forth the death and burial of the flesh, itself—we see in it the emblem of our death and burial with our Lord. The Believer, thereby, says, “Now I am come to an end of my old life, for I am dead and buried.” And he becomes from that time on as one who has risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life. By that solemn act the Believer has covenanted that Christ shall be his life and that his old self, being dead and buried, shall no more rule and reign.

I have known some Believers, and I think they did wisely, take a part of a day for the special objective of giving themselves anew to the Lord. They have said, “Lord, I do this day, as a poor sinner, solemnly put my trust in Your Word, in Your Son and in His atoning Sacrifice. And, doing this, I feel that I am not my own, for I am bought with a price. And I now ask for Grace that from this day forward I may be wholly Yours. Not only I, but my wife, my children and my substance—all that I have I give to You, my Lord, admitting that nothing which I have was ever mine, but always Yours. I pray that You will be my God forever and ever, and be my Guide even unto death—and that after death You will receive me to Glory.” Such a covenant as this will bear to be looked back upon and repeated. You can gladly say—

*“High Heaven that heard my solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear,  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

You are coming to the Lord rightly, my dear Friend, if you are yielding body, soul and spirit unto Him to be His forever. There is no fear about your safety when you join yourself unto the Lord by a perpetual covenant.

One word more remains to be spoken. Those who came mourning and inquiring, when they became covenanters, felt that they had a nature very apt to forgetfulness of good things and, so, a part of what they desired in their covenanting with God was “a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” God will never forget, yet may you pray, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” The fear is lest you should forget. What is your view of that possibility? Would it not be terrible? Think it over and say, “If I should ever forget the Lord Jesus. If I should ever forget my obligations for His great salvation and for the good hope of eternal life which He has given me, it would be infamous! God grant I may die sooner than deny my Lord!”

Where could we go for comfort if we had forgotten our God? What would remain for us but everlasting despair? Let us, therefore, pray the Lord that it may be a perpetual covenant that shall never, never, not even for an hour, be forgotten! Ask the Lord to write this covenant upon the fleshy tablets of your heart, that it may be there forever! O Zion, if I forget You, let my right hand forget her cunning! Sooner than I should forget You, O my God, suffer me speedily to die! Let me not live to become so false, so wicked as under stress of infirmity or temptation, even for a moment, to turn aside from You!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, take hold on Christ this morning with a renewed grip and say, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You! Suffer me not to forsake You. Hold me up and I shall be safe. I would be Yours living. Yours dying and Yours forever and ever.” Thus desiring and pleading, all will be well with you. May the God of the Everlasting Covenant bless you. Amen.

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“GOING AND WEEPING”  
NO. 3049

A SERMON  
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**“Going and weeping.”  
Jeremiah 50:4.**

POSSIBLY someone says, on hearing my text, “I like better to be going and singing.” Yes, my Friend, and I do not blame you for making such a choice. As long as you can go and sing in the name of the Lord, let nothing stop you from doing so. It is meet that we who have been redeemed by Christ from destruction and are heirs of Heaven, should make merry and be glad. We should “rejoice in the Lord always,” yet we must not despise others if they should seem to give more prominence to another phase of spiritual experience, namely, “going and weeping,” for there are sons of sorrow on earth who will undoubtedly be sons of joy in Heaven. Among the sweetest flowers that bloom in the Savior’s garden are those that, like the snowdrops and the lilies of the valley, hang down their heads.

It is also possible to be going and singing and yet, at the same time, to be going and weeping, for the mind may be in such a complex condition that while it has abundant cause for joy, it has a sweet well of happy grief within itself. There is such a thing as a bitter sweet—the worldling has that. But there is also such a thing as a sweet bitter—and the Christian often has that—so that while he is weeping, he can also be singing. While his soul is cast down within him, yet does he lift up his horn on high and rejoice in the God of his salvation! It is quite possible to blend these two experiences and the life of God’s people thus becomes like a rainbow, consisting partly of the sunshine of Heaven and partly of the raindrops of earth. They sing because of their present and future joy—and they weep because of the sad past and the relics of the Fall that are still about them—and the sins of the age that still surround them. I will not say that “Going and Weeping” is a better motto than “Going and Singing,” but sometimes it is the only one we can use. And often it may be joined with the other. I hope I shall be able to show you that “going and weeping” is a very choice way of living.

We see in our text, first, a blessed combination. When we have spoken of that, we will mention when and where this combination should be conspicuous. And lastly we will give reasons why this combination should be manifest in our lives.

I. First, here is A BLESSED COMBINATION—“going and weeping.” The two things certify each other, supplement each other and stimulate each other.

First, they certify each other. I mean that when a man is going away from his past sins, away from his old habits, away from selfrighteousness, if that reformation is a work of Divine Grace, it will have a watermark upon it—there will be “weeping” with the “going.” If the prodigal had only said, “I will arise and go to my father,” we might have doubted the reality of his repentance. But when he added, “and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son,” then the tears of penitence, which must have accompanied such a confession, verified the reformation. Beware, Beloved, of all dry-eyed reformations! Certain preachers disparage and run down repentance—they say that it is simply “a change of mind.” That is true in a sense, but what a change of mind it is—not such a change of mind as a man makes when, instead of buying one hat, he buys another or, instead of spending a shilling, he saves nine pence out of it! I have heard preachers refer to repentance as if it were a trifling, insignificant alteration of opinion—but if that is all the repentance we have had, it is a repentance of which we need to repent! The oldfashioned repentance is the only one that will bring you to Heaven! If you do not leave—

*“The sins you loved before,  
And show that you in earnest grieve,  
By doing so no more”—*

you will come short of the repentance which the Holy Spirit works in the souls of the Lord’s own chosen people! There must be, as John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, “fruits meet for repentance.” Or, as the marginal reading puts it, “answerable to amendment of life.” There must be true godly sorrow over your past evil conduct. There must be a loathing of yourself in the sight of God. And all the “going” that is not attended by “weeping” will be a bad going after all.

Now I will turn this Truth of God around the other way by reminding you that there are some persons who profess to be very repentant concerning the past—if they could live their lives over again they would not live at all as they have done—so they say and their tears flow copiously. I am not always pleased to see copious tears. When seeing inquirers, I have noticed that when men weep very much, they are either men of a tender spirit who are easily moved to tears, or else they have been so accustomed to drink that they have got into a maudlin state and cannot help crying. I would rather have tears falling inside a penitent than outside. Never condemn a man because he does not weep as others do—it may be that his heart is too full for tears. Nor condemn those who cry outwardly, for tears are often genuine evidences of repentance. I merely remark that a briny tear, in itself, is not a sufficient proof of that godly sorrow for sin of which the tear is only the index. And when I warned you against dry-eyed reformations, I meant those so-called reformations which do not include real sorrow for sin. External weeping is quite a secondary matter, but inward weeping there must be in all true converts. Some people cry a great deal and talk a great deal—they say that their heart is adamant and that they are dead as a stone. Of course they are dead! They never were spiritually alive and the natural, stony heart has never been taken out of their flesh! There is a great deal of truth in what they say, but they have not learned it from the Spirit of God. They have caught certain phrases from the lips of gracious people and merely say what they hear others say—just as parrots do when they are taught to repeat what their owners say.

How am I to know whether this profession of repentance is genuine or not? Why, as I know the value of the “going” by the “weeping,” so I know the value of the “weeping” by the “going!” Is the weeping man’s life changed? Has God the Holy Spirit enabled him to lay the axe to the roots of those old habits of which he says he repents? Does he go on drinking and yet say that he mourns that he was a drunkard? Does he go on swearing and yet say that he laments his profanity? Is his temper constantly boiling over, yet he says that he repents of it? My dear Friends, there must be something more than that, for God cannot look upon our expressions of regret for the past as having any sincerity in them unless they are attended by a Grace-assisted effort to put an end to such sins for the future! There must be the “going” to prove the “weeping” to be true, as well as the “weeping” to prove that the “going” is in the right road.

In the next place, these two things supplement each other. That is to say, what is deficient in the “going” is supplied in the “weeping.” And what is not in the “weeping” will be found in the “going.” For instance, the “going” concerns the present. When a man is, by the Grace of God, renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is a different man from what he used to be—there is faith instead of unbelief, love to God instead of enmity against Him and holiness instead of sin. In fact, he is “a new creature” in Christ Jesus! And this “going” applies to the future as well as to the present, for the man will “go from strength to strength.” Led on by the Divine Spirit, he will “grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He will tread the path of holiness till he enters the Celestial City, to go no more out forever. But when the black and dreary past of his sinful life again comes before his mind, he cannot help weeping. Yet even then he pleads the merit of the precious blood of Jesus and prays with penitent king David, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” When that black past is blotted out like a cloud blown away by the wind, the “weeping” and the “going” are not separated—tears have still to be shed because of the turning aside, the faltering, the halting even in going along the road which God has marked out for us. When we see men reclaimed from outward sin. When we mark the manifest change in their character we may call that “going” in the right road! But unless there is some “weeping” through intense heart-emotion, some manifestation of sincere sorrow over that in which they once delighted and of regret that they have not attained to the high and holy things which ought to be the portion of all true Christians, there is something lacking.

Now turn the thought the other way and notice how the “going” supplements the “weeping.” The “weeping” is an evidence that we have learned our need. The “going” to Christ in faith supplies that need. The “weeping” is the acknowledgment of the disease. The “going” is the application to the Great Physician. The “weeping” mourns over our nakedness. The “going” takes us to the King’s wardrobe to put on Christ’s spotless robe of righteousness. The “weeping” is because of our emptiness. The “going” links us on to His fullness. It would be wretched “weeping” if we did not know the blessed way of “going” to Him of whom Paul wrote, “My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

I also said that these two things stimulate each other—and the truth of this statement is readily perceptible. Our “going” leads to our “weeping,” and our “weeping” excites us to “going.” The poor prodigal felt the pangs of hunger within his body and he felt in his spirit that he had sinned against his father. Therefore he said, “I will arise and go.” And I expect that as he went, his hunger quickened his pace—and that every pang of his emptiness, and every sight of his filthiness—and every consequent tear would make him speed with greater energy towards his father’s house. A deep sense of sin is often a blessedly impelling power to drive us to the Savior. I desire never, in this world, to be free from a deep sense of the bitterness and guiltiness of sin. Even though freed from the guilt of sin by the precious blood of Jesus, I still desire to feel what an abominable thing sin is, that I may go, eagerly and passionately, to my dear Lord’s wounds and get the one only effectual remedy for all my soul diseases. Light thoughts of sin breed light thoughts of the Savior. When our “weeping” over our transgressions ceases, our “going” to Him who “was wounded for our transgressions” is apt to also cease. Repentance and faith are like the Siamese twins. If one is sick, the other cannot be well, for they live but one life. If ever you are asked which comes first, repentance or faith, you may answer, by another question, “Which spoke of a wheel moves first when the wheel begins to revolve?” You know that they are all set in motion at the same time. So, when the hand of God sets our soul “going” in the right road, it also sets our soul and often our eyes “weeping.” And I believe that when our soul is really “going” towards God, it is with a deepened repentance over the past and a sincere “weeping” over the imperfections which it still has to lament.

So that the “weeping” stimulates the “going” and I am sure that the “going” stimulates the “weeping.” If the Lord helps you to grow in Grace and you get much joy and peace in believing, you will be sure to say, “What a fool I was to have been all those years a slave to sin and an enemy to such a blessed Savior!” And when you get very near to God and “walk in the light, as He is in the light,” you will see your imperfections more than you ever did before. When I meet with a Brother who tells me that he is nearly perfect, I know that he is living in the dark, for, if he lived in the light, he would see how far short he came of the Glory of God. You think your white linen looks very white, do you not? But when the snow falls and you place your linen upon it, it no longer looks white. So, until you come near to God, you do not know what “perfection” is—but when you get even a dim perception of what His holiness is, you say, with the Patriarch Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Oh, that the Lord would enable us to have more true “going” in the way of holiness—growing in communion with the Holy Spirit, advancing in our likeness to Christ and becoming more humble, more prayerful and more fervent in spirit and more diligent in service, for then I am certain that the blessed art of holy “weeping” would be more practiced by us every day of our life! So, the “weeping” helps our “going” in the right road and our poor “going” leads to more “weeping” because we do not go better.

II. Now I leave the explanation of this strange combination of “going and weeping” to point out WHEN AND WHERE IT SHOULD BE MOST CONSPICUOUS.

And here, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I begin with myself and with my Brothers engaged in the same holy office. Scripture teaches us that with the sower of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, there should always be a “going” and a “weeping.” Here is a passage to prove my assertion to be true, “He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” We have a Christ-like task if our “going” is what it should be—to “preach the Word,” to “make full proof of our ministry,” to “keep back nothing that is profitable unto you,” to bring forth, as scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, “things new and old” out of the Divine Treasury—to go after the outlying masses and “compel them to come in,” that our Master’s great House may be filled for the great Gospel feast to care for the sick, the sad and the dying—all this is included in the “going” of “a good minister of Jesus Christ.” But it will be a poor “going” if there is no “weeping” with it! Think of the Prince of Preachers—what a wonderful “going” was His! Ah, and what wonderful “weeping” was His—at the grave of Lazarus and over the Jerusalem sinners! How deeply He loved even those who rejected Him! Oh, that we who profess to be His servants had more tender hearts! Then we would say with the weeping Prophet Jeremiah, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” Paul was indeed a “going” preacher—“in journeying often” and, “in labors more abundant.” But what a “weeping” preacher he was also! You know how he said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, in his farewell address at Miletus, “Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.” And to the Church at Philippi he wrote, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.” So these two things, “going and weeping,” ought to be characteristic of every true preacher of the Word—and of all teachers and other servants of the Lord Jesus Christ whose office is of the like kind. I often feel that I can adopt Doddridge’s language and say—

*“Arise, my most tender thoughts, arise!  
To torrents melt my streaming eyes  
And you, my heart, with anguish feel  
Those evils which you cannot heal!  
See human nature sunk in shame.  
See scandals poured on Jesus’ name!  
The Father wounded through the Son—  
The world abused and souls undone.  
See the short course of vain delight  
Closing in everlasting night—  
In flames that no abatement know  
Though briny tears forever flow.  
My God, I feel the mournful scene.  
My heart yearns over dying men  
And gladly my pity would reclaim  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame! But feeble my compassion proves,  
And can but weep where most it loves!  
Your own all-saving arms employ,  
And turn these drops of grief to joy.”*

This combination, “going and weeping,” should be conspicuous, not only in those who plead with men for God, but also in those who plead with God for men. The best praying consists in “going” “boldly unto the Throne of Grace” and pleading there—yet they who win most from God are those whose hearts are most deeply affected—those in whom there is the “weeping” as well as the “going.” Such was the prayer of Jacob in that great night of wrestling concerning which the Prophet Hosea says, “He had power over the Angel and prevailed. He wept and made supplication unto Him.” Weeping is a wondrous help to those who would find their way to the heart of God! So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, pour out your hearts before Him—pour them out like water before the Lord and when your heart is breaking for the longing that it has, even if you shed no outward tears, you have learned the sacred art of praying and you shall receive what you have asked in so far as it is according to the will of God!

Beloved, it is a sad thing to have to say, yet it is true, that this “going and weeping” ought to be very conspicuous in backsliders. I am always glad to see backsliders returning to their first love and restored to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are one or two things that I always like to see about such people—the absence of all arrogance and self-justification and the presence of deep humility both towards God and towards His Church—for their offense has been against God’s people as well as against God, Himself. When a Church member falls into sin, all the members have to suffer in their repute among men and they also have to suffer in their power with God and, therefore, the returning of a backslider should always be accompanied by manifest signs of the deepest contrition. Many speak of David’s sin, but say nothing of David’s penitence. Nathan rebuked him in a fashion that very few kings would have endured, yet there was no anger in David’s heart against him for the stern way in which he told him of his faults. The 51st and other penitential Psalms show how melted by contrition David’s soul was— groans, sobs and sighs escaped from his heart instead of his former joyous music. There was a “going” and a “weeping” on the part of the repenting backslider! If he had known George Herbert’s quaint lines, he might have said—

*“O who will give me tears? Come all you springs, Dwell in my head and eyes—come, clouds and rain! My grief has need of all the watery things That Nature has produced. Let every vein Suck up a river to supply my eyes!  
My weary weeping eyes are too dry for me Unless they get new conduits, new supplies, To bear them out and with my state agree. What are two shallow fords, two little spouts Of a lesser world? The greater is but small— A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts, Which need provision in the midst of all. Verses, you are too fine a thing, too wise For my rough sorrows—cease, be dumb and mute! Give up your feet and running to my eyes, And keep your measures for some lover’s lute, Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme— For mine excludes both measure, tune and time. Alas, my God!”*

But, Beloved, this “going and weeping” should also be seen in Christians who are making progress in the Divine Life. I believe it always will be seen in those who are diligently and carefully watching and striving against even the appearance of evil. That “going” which consists in a sort of feverish excitement, or in a sudden leap into a high condition of soul is to be very seriously suspected. I have found that I have had to fight for every inch of the road that I have ever traveled Heavenward. I do not think I ever gained any spiritual victory easily. If any here find the road to Heaven to be strewn with flowers and one in which they can run without being weary, I can only say that I have not found it so—and that if I did not wait upon the Lord, I should utterly fall. Brothers and Sisters, I pray you to suspect that it is presumption and not the full assurance of faith if you are always “going,” but never “weeping.” I have already explained that this “weeping” does not put aside the rejoicing, for a Christian may “rejoice in the Lord” all the more while he mourns before God on account of his own shortcomings, waywardness and faultiness. I think the most joyful soul among us may willingly sing—

*“Lord, let me weep for naught but sin,  
And after none but Thee  
And then I would, oh, that I might  
A constant weeper be!”*

And this “going and weeping” should also be conspicuous in every student—I mean not only students for the ministry, but students for Heaven, and that is what every Christian is. The Apostle John was a student, and he once saw, in the hand of God, “a book...sealed with seven seals.” And when it was asked, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” and there was no man found worthy, what did John do? He says, “I wept much.” And often that is almost as good as knowing the original languages—indeed, it may be better! If the heart can weep over a Doctrine, it will get that Doctrine opened up before long. There is no chemical so strong as our tears for piercing through the hard shell of the Truth of God. Sincerely cry over the Truth and soon the Truth will enter your soul and you will know its inmost meaning! There is a way of “going” by bending the mind to the Truth of God, but there is also a “weeping” in the passionate longing that we ought always to have towards God’s statutes. “Going and Weeping” is a noble motto for the student.

So it is for the Christian worker and for the Christian sufferer. I will put the two together. The Christian worker goes and weeps—the Christian sufferer weeps, yet goes. I desire, while working for God in vigorous health, to maintain a lowly, humble, penitent frame of mind. But if sickly and laid low—and made to weep through bodily pain or relative affliction, I ask that I may have cheerful courage, so that if I cannot do much, I may do something for the Lord and still keep on “going.” I have seen and often is my spirit melted at the sight of one whose sufferings seldom abate, yet whose desire to serve God never abates, but rather increases and who would give anything if activity might take the place of patience. Blessed be those weak ones whom the Lord elects to suffer, yet who still seek to serve Him! And blessed are those who actively serve Him, yet sit humbly at His feet and feel that they are less than nothing and who weep tears of joy to think that God should so honor such poor worms as they are as to permit them to do anything for His dear name’s sake!

This “going and weeping” ought to be most conspicuous in those of you who are not yet saved. If you really want to be saved you will seek the Lord your God by hearing His Word and by much earnest prayer. If His Grace is really working in you, you will seek Him by casting yourselves at His feet and by looking to the great Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross and by trusting in His redeeming blood. But with all that “going” there will be “weeping.” You will loathe yourselves in your own sight—you will bemoan the corruptions of your heart and cry, “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” Never cease your “weeping” till Christ has said, “I absolve you.” Sigh and cry until, at His dear Cross you have seen all your transgressions blotted out forever. O Sinner, I pray God to work in you this “going” and this “weeping!” I have already told you that the “weeping” is of no use without the “going” by faith to Christ, but I have also said to you that the supposed going to Christ is not a real “going” to Him unless there is also sincere “weeping” on account of sin. May your “going” be away from your sin and may your “weeping” lead you to look to Christ as

you pray— *“Lord God of my salvation,*

***To You, to You, I cry!  
Oh let my supplication  
Arrest Your ear on high!  
Distresses round me thicken,  
My life draws near the grave—  
Descend, O Lord, to quicken,  
Descend my soul to save!”***

III. Our time is nearly exhausted, but I ask you to have patience with me for two or three minutes more while I mention a very few out of the multitude of REASONS WHY THE “GOING” AND THE “WEEPING” SHOULD BE CONJOINED IN OUR LIVES.

And, first, speaking to the members of this Church, I mention that which is always uppermost with me. We want to see a great enlargement of our Church, a deep and permanent revival of religion. We have had a foretaste of it, but we are sighing and crying for a great deal more. If we are to have it, there must be in the Church a “going” and a “weeping.” Every Brother and every Sister must be doing something for the Lord! You who can preach in the street, go and do it! You who can distribute tracts, go and do it! You who can teach in the Sunday schools, go and do it! You who can serve the Lord in the lodging houses or anywhere else— you who can speak to the ones and the twos—go, go, GO, in the Lord’s name, “go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!” But you will go best where you go “weeping.” Ah, me, what cause we have for weeping! Planted in the midst of the greatest city upon the face of the earth—the greatest for population and, considering its Light of God, the greatest for transgression—what cause we have for weeping! If you knew what some of us have to know, you would know enough to give you heart-ache or heart-break. If you went into some of our streets on the Sabbath, you might ask, “Is there any Sabbath at all with all this marketing and bargaining?” Look at the gin-palaces—those doors of Hell are wide open in almost every street—as though they sold the Bread of Life, men multiply these places where they destroy both body and soul! I dare hardly remind you of the haunts of vice—I will rather speak of the agents of superstition. How busily they ply their deadly trade! Some damn men by open sin but these damn them by a lie which they offer to them as the truth of God! This city is a reeking dunghill and, “except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” May God, in His mercy, preserve us as salt in the midst of the general putridity!

Some of you have even greater cause than this for weeping for, in your own houses there are those who love not the Lord. Your children are not the Lord’s children. Perhaps your wife or your husband loves not your God. You may well weep as you go! Sympathy and activity, compassion and diligence—with this sweet mixture every saint ought to be anointed. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is better still, for that anointing has among its choicest ingredients the power to give us the sympathy and the diligence that we need.

Now, Beloved Friends, I speak to you who are not converted. If you are seeking the Lord, there ought to be in you the “going” and the “weeping.” The “weeping” as you think of Jesus and His great love to sinners like yourself. They despised Him, rejected Him, laughed Him to scorn but He still pursued them with love, as I trust He has pursued you. And I know some for whom He has, by His Grace, continued the pursuit until, at last, with a Divine art known only to Himself, He has made the unwilling, willing in the day of His power! For the love that Christ has to sinners, we ought all to feel our heart “weeping” that we should ever have offended such a Divine Lover. To transgress against His crown is high treason, but to transgress against His Cross is the sin of sins! I know not by what name to call such hardness of heart, such barbarity of spirit, such brutishness of soul. Think, for a moment, (for perhaps this may help you to go and weep), of the Lord, Himself, the King of Glory coming down among men and finding a poor shelter in His birth, little comfort in His life and no solace in His death. Very poor was He who could have worn the sun upon His head and the stars as rings upon His fingers! Very lowly was He before whom the tallest angel shrank into less than nothing in joyful adoration! Think of Him amidst the cold night of Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood! Think of Him scourged, spit upon, mocked and, at last, fastened to the cruel Cross to die the death of a slave—all for love of guilty men! Where are our hearts? Surely adamant is softer than our hearts if we do not weep to think that all this was for undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners! And for no motive but that He was so full of love to them that He must give Himself thus to suffer and to die for them. Let us go to His Cross and look upon Him whom we have pierced and mourn because of Him. And while we rejoice over pardoned guilt, let us mourn that we have pierced the Lord.

If nothing else will make us weep, there is one other reflection that should bring out the sorrow and also the activity of all Believers—and that is the fact that though we were once lost and far from God, we are now saved! There are sitting in this house hundreds, if not thousands of persons who were “heirs of wrath, even as others,” “but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”! And now, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” “Oh, what amazing mercy,” each saved soul may well say, “and all this for me!” Everlasting Love ordained it. Immutable Love has accomplished it. And unchanging Love will perfect it! The chief of sinners, yet chosen before time began! A sinner since conversion, yet loved with a love that will never change—it cannot increase and it never will diminish—loved with a love that will outlast the sun when its bright lamp has burned up all its oil! A love that shall outlast time so that when the angel shall “stand upon the sea and upon the earth,” and swear “by Him that lives forever and ever,” that there shall be time no longer, it shall not affect the heritage my soul possesses in the Infinite, Eternal Love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Oh, how could I ever offend such a God as this? Shame on my heart! Gladly would I smite you that you could ever be an enemy to One who loved you before the day-star knew its place. And O base spirit that does not now serve God better, more ardently, more passionately, more perfectly, seeing that all this love has been spent on you! Beloved, God grant that we may realize, in all its sweetness, the meaning of our text, “going and weeping,” and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **EPHESIANS 1:1-14.**

In this chapter we see what Paul, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to say about the possessions and privileges of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 1, 2. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is a benediction for you as well as for the saints at Ephesus! It is for all “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” May you all have Grace without measure and may you all have “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” to “keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”! Grace and peace are both to be had by believing in Jesus.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. It is right that we should bless God as He has so richly blessed us. Blessed be the Heavenly Father who has so abundantly blessed His children. How has He blessed us? “With all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or, things) in Christ.”

4. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, That is the commencement of all the blessing, God’s electing love. This is the Fountain from which the Living Waters flow. There would have been no stream of blessing to us at all if it had not been for this first primeval choice of us by God, even as Jesus said to His disciples, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.”

4. That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Here is the blessing of sanctification—we are chosen that we may be made holy. To what nobler end could we have been elected? Is not this the very highest of our heart’s desires—“that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”?

5. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Oh, what a blessing this is, altogether inconceivable in its results!—

*“Behold what wondrous Grace,  
The Father has bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race,  
To call them sons of God!”*

6. To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Here is music for you—“accepted in the Beloved.” Are there grander words in any language than those four? Oh, the joy of being Beloved, adopted, accepted by God the Father because of His beloved Son! Now comes something more.

7. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace. Redemption from destruction, the forgiveness of our sins—we have all this through “the riches of His Grace.”

8-14. Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. There is no end to the blessing which God gives to His chosen. He is always blessing us with blessings upon blessings, Grace upon Grace, and then there will be Glory to crown it all. Blessed be His holy name forever and ever!

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1883.

**“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” Jeremiah 50:5.**

This prophecy of Jeremiah was concerning the destruction of Babylon. Israel and Judah had been carried away into captivity by the domineering power. The captives lived far away in Babylon and wept when they remembered Zion. The Prophet foretells that in the day when God should break the power of Babylon and cast down all their false gods, then should come the time when the captives should return to their own land. That seems a very simple observation, but it is full of comfort when we remember its symbolic meaning. By nature, all are captives under the power of Satan, sin and death. That is the great Babylon that has carried captive even the elect of God! And there are multitudes, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who are still in bondage under the powers of darkness. Now, just as Israel found comfort and hope, and had an expectation of getting back to the promised land when the might of Babylon was broken, so there is comfort for every sinner who desires to escape from the power of sin and Satan in this great fact—that Christ has broken the power of the old dragon. They met in deadly combat. All the hosts of Hell were mustered in that dark and dreadful hour when our lone Champion, whom God had anointed that He might fight our battles, met the whole of them and overthrew them! They bruised His heel, for He left His body bleeding on the Cross, but He broke the head of the archenemy. As He cried, “It is finished,” He dashed to pieces the powers that were arrayed against Him—and Babylon was then and there overthrown! Here is our hope.

Listen, you who are in the fetters of Satan, you may yet overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, for the Lamb Himself has overcome him and all who trust in His great Sacrifice shall come off more than conquerors! He has led captivity captive! He is the master of the situation and His adversaries He has utterly overthrown. His adversaries, I said, but they are also your adversaries—therefore let every sinner who desires to escape from the bondage of Satan, take heart of hope from the good news that in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah has triumphed over our great enemy! He has snapped in two the iron yoke, that His redeemed might go free! Thus, Babylon’s destruction is Israel’s salvation.

Notice, next, these words in the fourth verse—“In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together”—from which I gather that when men’s hearts are set upon seeking the Lord, it is wonderful how neighborly they become! You know that the children of Israel and the children of Judah had separated from one another. They each had a king and they were frequently at war. They envied one another, though they ought to have been brethren. But now, when God begins to deal with them and they start back to seek their God, they become friends with one another! Well may we forget our enmities against men when we begin to repent of our enmities against God! It is time for a man to forgive his brother his trespasses when he, himself, prays to the Lord, “Forgive me my trespasses.” And this must be done! It will be a very great hindrance to any seeker if he tries to find the Lord and yet, in his heart, harbors enmity against anyone who has offended him. I believe that there are many persons who long to find peace with God, who never will unless they first make peace with their fellow men. Remember our Lord’s words—“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Will you go and ask the great King to forgive you the enormous debt that you owe Him when you are about to seize your brother by the throat because of the few pence he owes you? Then, surely you cannot think that God will listen to such a suppliant as you are! No, but when God brings people together to Himself, it is astonishing how close they come to one another! Israel and Judah will then be praying and weeping together—and seeking the same Lord. How often this has happened in times of revival! A man has stood up to be prayed for and he has been astonished to find that there was a Brother with whom he had quarreled, months before, who was pleading for mercy at the same time! Neighbors who have fallen out with one another, have come to the Tabernacle and found the Savior, together—and have been good friends ever since—for the God who reconciles us to Himself is sure to make us friendly with one another! Attend to this hint, then, you who are seeking the Savior! You who are encouraged by the fact that the power of Satan is broken, take care that you make up all quarrels and put an end to all envying and disputes, for thus you will be helped in seeking the Lord.

Notice, next, that the right way for a sinner to return is first to seek the Lord and then to seek Zion—that is, the Church, or Heaven, whichever you understand Zion to be. Verse four says, “They shall go and seek the Lord their God.” And then follows our text, “They shall ask the way to Zion.” John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress shows the way to Heaven, but we ought always to remember that he was not writing to show sinners the way to Christ, but to show the way to Heaven. Those are two different things though, in some respects, they are similar, yet there is a difference between them. The way to Christ is this—“Believe and live.” The way to Heaven is, first, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and then, after that, by His Grace, follow on to know the Lord and go from strength to strength, from Grace to Grace, till, at last, you are prepared for the eternal happiness. There is a difference between seeking Christ and seeking Christ’s people that should always be noticed—you are not to seek Christ’s people so as to join with them until you have, first of all, found Christ! No man, no woman, no child, has any right to Gospel ordinances till first of all he has trusted Christ. When you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then Christ is yours and you are saved! Then come and join with the Church militant, below, and you shall, in due time, join with the Church triumphant above! But remember that the first business of a sinner is not to seek Heaven, nor to join a church, but to seek the Lord. You have to be reconciled to the God who made you—you have to experience the power of the God who alone can re-create you and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus—you have to seek the Lord.

“But,” says one, “God is a consuming fire.” I know He is. Therefore, come to Him that everything in you that can be consumed, may be consumed, and that God may give you an inconsumable life which shall dwell even in the midst of the fire and not be consumed! There is no Heaven apart from God, there is no peace of conscience apart from God, there is no purification from sin apart from God. The Lord still says, “Seek you My face.” But many make a mistake and go trooping off to join some Christian people. No, no! Come back—you cannot go to God that way! First, give yourselves to the Lord and then afterwards, “unto us by the will of God.” You must first be joined to the Head, then to the members! First to Christ, then to His Church. Take all things in the right order—begin and go on as God would have you do. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Let that also be treasured up in your memory, if you are seeking the Lord.

Another remark arising from the context is this, that many who seek the Lord seek him weeping. “The children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping.” Notice that combination, “going and weeping.” Some are weeping, but never going—and some are going, but never weeping. It is a blessed thing when we have the two together—practically drawing near to God and passively feeling deep sorrow for sin. There are two kinds of tears and I think that they who truly seek the Lord shed both of them—the one is a tear of sorrow because of sin, the other is a tear of joy because of pardon. I would like to have my eyes full of both, that with my joy for pardoned sin I might mourn that I pierced the Lord, grieving that I transgressed God’s Law, yet rejoicing that I am forgiven! May you, dear Friends, have these tears standing in your eyes! They never blind the eyes—they are like a bright magnifying glass through which we can more clearly see the mercy of God.

Are any of you beginning to turn to the Lord and do you feel more sad than you ever did before? Well, if so, I am not sorry for you—that is the way that many go to Christ —“going and weeping.” The old Puritans used to say that “the way to Heaven is by Weeping-Cross”—by which they meant that repentance is necessary to salvation—and so it is! He who has never sorrowed for sin has never rejoiced in a Savior! And the more you rejoice in Christ, the more you will sorrow for sin. Perhaps the last repentance of a good man is the deepest that he ever feels. I mean that he will hate sin more when he stands at the gates of Heaven than he did when he first of all saw the way to pardon through the Atoning Sacrifice. Repentance is not a thing to be once manifested and then to be done with forever—repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to Heaven! Good old Rowland Hill said there was only one thing about Heaven that he regretted and that was that he would not be able to shed the tears of repentance there, for God will wipe all tears from all faces there. But till we get to Heaven, at any rate, let us always be repenting of sin, always lamenting that we ever plunged into it and, at the same time, be always rejoicing that our sins are forgiven!—

**“My**sins, **my sins, my Savior!  
How sad on You they fall,  
Seen through Your gentle patience,  
I tenfold feel them all.  
I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”**

Now, with all this by way of preliminary, though indeed it is part of the sermon, I come to that portion of Scripture which really forms my text— “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” This passage may be used as a test by which to try true seekers. I will introduce to you four or five sorts of seekers and also some who are not seekers at all.

I. First, there are some PERSONS WHO NEITHER ASK THE WAY TO ZION NOR SET THEIR FACES TOWARD IT.  
There may be some such persons to whom I am now speaking. Their relationship to Christ is that of utter indifference. There are millions around us in this sad condition. They are not active opponents—they do not think enough on the things of Christ even to take that position. They regard eternal things as though they were mere trifles and they look upon temporal things as though these were all-important. They call this, “minding the main chance,” and, “looking after the principal thing.” But as to their souls, God, Heaven and eternity, they are utterly indifferent.  
Let us think, just for a minute or two, of what it is to which they are indifferent. They are utterly indifferent to God. He made them and yet they never think of what they owe to their Creator. Every minute that they live, the breath in their nostrils is His gift, yet they make Him no return—He is not at all in their thoughts. You know how many there are who live as if there were no God at all. This is a terrible thing because God will require all this at their hands. As surely as they live, if they break His laws, they will be punished. If they neglect His great salvation, He will visit it upon them. He knows all their indifference and He is grieved about it all. Hear how He, Himself, puts it—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” It is no slight thing to be utterly indifferent to Christ, to Him who loved mankind so much that He could not abide in Heaven and let them perish, but, must come here and be a lowly, suffering, despised, crucified Man, that He might redeem men. Yet, after all that He has done, which must have astonished the angels in Heaven and which ravishes the heart of every gracious man on earth, these people do not care—  
*“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”*  
And they are also utterly indifferent with regard to themselves. They expect to have troubles in this life; but as to that which comforts many of us under these troubles, they do not wish to know about it. They see many of God’s people calm and quiet under pain and bereavement and sorrow—and they are sometimes curious to know what the secret is—yet their curiosity is not strong enough to stir them from indifference. Many never cross the threshold of the house where Christ is preached. Some of your neighbors know, by the sound of the bells, that it is the Sabbath, but that is all the Sabbath there is for them. Oh, this is indeed sad! It ought to weigh heavily on every tender heart that there should be multitudes who neither ask their way to Zion nor turn their faces toward it. Alas, that they are indifferent to their own eternal state! They know that they will die—it is very rarely that you meet with a man who will question that—and some of them believe that when they die, there is another state and there will be a final judgment and a giving in of an account before the last tribunal! Yet, for all that, they go on from day to day “like dumb driven cattle.” As the ox goes to the slaughter and as the lamb goes to the shambles, so do these people descend into their graves without anxiety and without thought.  
Alas, they will not think of that awakening which is as certain as death itself, of that rising again which is an undoubted fact and of that dread appearing before the burning Throne of God where eyes of fire shall read their hearts and where the tongue of thunder shall proclaim their deeds recorded in God’s Book of Remembrance. Oh, no, they have no care for all this, it is all a trifle to them! And there are many such. Pity them, dear Friends, and pray for them—and do it all the more because “such were some of you.” I saw, yesterday, many working men who, I believe, have really trusted in Christ, and I was charmed by the way in which they were brought to the Savior by their fellow workmen. But some of them, who were at least 40 years of age, told me that they never remembered praying or having a religious thought at all till the Lord met with them. And He that can meet with some can meet with others, too, so let it be our prayer that He will do so to the praise of the glory of His Grace!  
Often, when a man is indifferent about Divine things, it is because he vainly imagines that he is wise. I do not think that you and I ought to meddle with everything. There are some things we may as well let drift, but this will never do about God and eternity! I may be indifferent to God, but He is not indifferent to me. I may forget Him, but He has not forgotten what I do, think and say. As surely as I live, I shall have to stand before His judgment bar. I may despise Christ, but I shall have to see Him sitting on the Great White Throne. And if I will not have Him as my Savior, then I must appear before Him as my Judge—so that my indifference is vain!  
Another thought that ought to come home to many is that this indifference is so foolish. When a man is indifferent to his own happiness, then he is a fool! If a man were sick and there were some medicine that would heal him, but he was indifferent to it, you would be very grieved for him, but you would say that he was most foolish. If a man were miserably poor, although he might be rich, but he was indifferent about it, you would think him insane. Now, there is no joy like the joy of salvation in Christ! There is no bliss under Heaven that can parallel the bliss of the man who has committed himself into Christ’s hands and is resting calmly in Him! Yet these indifferent people do not care about it. Poor souls, they do not know the value of Christ. Well said the poet— *“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him, too.”*And if they knew the pleasure of religion, they would want to enjoy it. They say that we are a set of long-faced, miserable, melancholy folk. I do not think we look so! Do we? At any rate, we do not feel so—

*“The men of Grace have found*

*Glory begun below.”*  
Ours is a singing religion, ours is a joyful faith that helps us to surmount the trials of each passing hour. Oh, that men would not be indifferent to this, but would begin to ask their way to Zion with their faces toward it!

II. Now, secondly, there is another set of people who ASK THE WAY TO ZION WITH THEIR FACES TURNED AWAY FROM IT.  
We meet them, every now and then—some of them come here—their faces are turned away from God, but they have a pew here and they like to hear about the Gospel. I cannot make some people out—they take the trouble to go out on the Sabbath to hear about the way to Heaven, yet they deliberately walk in the opposite direction! I never dare say again what I did once, that I almost wished that some who had heard the Gospel for a number of years and never accepted it, would stay away if they did not mean to have it—that they might make room for somebody else who would receive it. I have always been sorry that I said that, for there is one who has stayed away ever since—and for whose conversion I have often prayed—but he said there was commonsense in my remark and as he did not intend to have salvation, he would come no more to hear of it. And he never has, so far as I know. I sometimes hope that the very honesty of the man may yet compel him to think—he has a love to this place and to me, though he does not come—and I pray God that even that which seemed so sad a result of what I said may turn out for good in the end. But I will not say it again.  
Still, it is a very strange thing that any should say, “Tell us the way to Heaven,” and yet, when we have told them, that they should set off walking the other way! “Go due east,” you say. But they go due west, directly. Now what can be the reason for that? A man is secretly a drunk, or he is unchaste, or a woman is living in secret sin, yet always found listening to the Gospel. Why is this? Do you wish to increase your own condemnation?

Do you deliberately intend that the Gospel, which you will not permit to be a savor of life unto life to you, shall be a savor of death unto death to you? Do you really choose that? I cannot think that it is so!

I hope that you do not come in order that you may hear of things to quarrel with and quibble over. You do not ask your way to Zion that you may find fault with the way, or pick holes in the reply of him who tries to answer your enquiry—may that be far from you! Yet there have been some, no doubt, who have been guilty of that sin. Still, let me say, even if you come to hear a sermon to ridicule it, come and hear it! I remember one who was, afterwards, an eminent saint, who first went to hear Mr. Whitefield because he was a great mimic. He wanted to hear him so he could later mimic him in a club which they called the “Hell Fire Club.” “Now, my mates,” he said, “I am going to give you a sermon that I heard Mr. Whitefield preach yesterday.” And the man repeated the sermon, but he, himself, was converted while he preached it—and so were several of his mates who had met for blasphemy! So, come even if you come for such an evil purpose as that! Still, it is a sorrowful business that there should be men who ask the way to Zion and turn their faces in the opposite direction. Turn them, O God, and they shall be turned!

III. There is a third class of people WHO ASK THE WAY TO ZION, BUT TURN NOT THEIR FACES.  
They are not opposed to religion, yet their faces are not turned towards it. I do not understand them—they are always wanting to know how they can be saved and to know all about salvation, but they do not seem to wish to have it—their faces are not set that way.  
What is the meaning of their conduct? Is it an idle curiosity? Do they want to understand theology as others wish to understand astronomy or botany? That is almost like drinking wine from the sacred vessels, as Belshazzar did—and you know how that night he was slain. When men who have no part nor lot in this matter are discussing this doctrine and that, it is as if those who are not God’s children were playing with the children’s bread, or pulling it in pieces.  
Why do such people ask about salvation? Do they dream that mere knowledge will save them? Do I address one here who imagines that an orthodox creed will save him? Alas, I suppose that no one is more orthodox than the devil, yet no one is more surely lost than he! You may get a clear head, but if you have not a clean heart, it will not avail you at the last. You may know the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism by heart and you may heartily denounce all who err from that statement of sound doctrine. But unless you are born again, it will not benefit you. Did you say that you believed the 39 Articles? There is one article that is essential— “You must be born again”—and woe to that man who has not passed through that all-important change!  
Perhaps, however, some of those who are asking their way to Zion, but have not set their faces that way, are asking with a view to quiet their consciences. It makes them feel better to hear a sermon. Oh, you are strange people! There is a man who is very hungry—does it make him feel that his appetite is appeased when he smells the dinner, when he sees the plates arranged upon the table and hears the clatter of the knives? Do you think that if you are very poor, you will get rich by being allowed to walk through the Bank of England and see the great quantities of bullion there? It is strange that you should imagine this, for it might rather increase, than diminish, your sense of poverty to know that there is so much wealth while you are not a partaker of it.  
Is it that you are trying to store up some little knowledge to use, by-andby? Are you asking the way to Zion that you may run in it when it becomes convenient to you? Ah, Sir, are you making a convenience of God? Do you intend to make Him stand by while you attend to more important things? What is it that is to come before God? I knew a man who was religiously inclined in many respects, but there was a harlot who stood before God. I knew another who had many serious thoughts about God, but in his case it was the wine cup and the companionship of certain friends that stood before God. Ah, how many things there are that are earthly, sensual, devilish—yet men say that God must wait till they have served their turn with these things! Sirs, He will not turn lackey to you! And it may come to this as it did with Felix—that you will never have a convenient time for God—and God will never find a convenient time for you! Oh, let it not be so! If you ask the way to Heaven, let it be with your faces toward it.  
IV. There is a fourth set of people WHO HAVE THEIR FACES TOWARD IT, BUT THEY DO NOT ASK THE WAY.  
There are not so many, perhaps, in this class as in those I have been describing, but there are some of them. They are resolved to be saved. They are anxious to find Christ. They are willing to join the Church. They are, above all, longing to get to Heaven—but they do not ask the way. Do they fancy that there are many ways? How many roads are there to Heaven? This Book declares that there is only one! It says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” And Jesus Himself says, “I am the way.” Not, “I am one of the ways,” but, “I am THE way.” I quoted to you, just now, one of His last sayings—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Well, suppose that he does not believe, what then? “He that believes not shall be damned.” Thus, you see, the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is intolerant of all compromise! It will not admit that there may be other ways to Heaven and other methods of salvation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” There are some people who, if they happen to be born of parents who believe the Gospel, will follow their father and mother in the good way. But if they happen to be born of ungodly parents, they imitate them. If my father were blind, I do not see any reason why I should put my eyes out. And if any of you happen to have an extremely poor fathers, do you, therefore, say, “Well, I shall never try to rise above his condition. I shall be just as poor as he was and feel a pleasure in being so”? Surely you do not talk like that! Then why should you follow your parents in sinning against God? If the father is wrong, there is the more reason why the child should be earnest to be right! There have been enough in your family who have been lost—why should not you be the first to be saved, if there have been no others? Think about this important matter. Enquire the way to Zion.  
Do you ask, “Where are we to enquire?” Well, first of all, enquire of the Book—  
*“This is the judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail,  
Our guide to everlasting life  
Through all this gloomy vale.”*  
When you have enquired of the Book, then go on your knees and enquire of the blessed Spirit who inspired the Book! If you cannot understand the Bible, ask the Author of it to explain it to you. He gives wisdom, therefore ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world, and to lead you in His way. I may also say, but quite secondarily, enquire of His servants. Go and hear the Gospel! Do not go where there is fine preaching and clever preaching—unless it is true Gospel preaching. The people of this land have had to get Acts of Parliament passed to prevent the sale of adulterated goods—and in London people try to buy milk that has at least some milk in it—yet they will go into a place of worship and say, “There is a clever preacher here.” Yes, but is it the Gospel that he preaches? “Oh, they have a very fine organ!” But is the Gospel fully proclaimed there? “You can see all the colors of the rainbow on the backs of the fellows who perform at the altar.” Yes, but is the Gospel preached there? That is the one point on which everything depends—all the rest is of little account. They may try to sell us what they like, but if it is not the genuine article, we will not buy it—if it is not the Gospel, what do we want with it? We want that which will really save us in time and through eternity, so we ask for it of those who preach the Gospel, and who preach nothing but the Gospel.  
And I may also add that you will do well to ask about the way from many of God’s people. Although they do not preach, they will be glad to tell you what they know, and many godly men and women can explain to you just what you need to know. I like to see men, when they are in earnest, seeking out some Christian friend and saying, “Tell me, now, how did you find Christ?” It is good for a young woman to go to the teacher of her class, or to some matronly Christian, and say to her, “Let me tell you of my doubts, dear Sister. You have gone a good way on the heavenly road—tell me how I can get into it.” It is a good thing, thus, to enquire of those who are in the road. You may often get your mistakes rectified in this way and, before you have wandered very far, you may be guided into the right road.  
V. Now to close. Those are the best enquirers WHO TURN THEIR FACES TOWARD ZION AND YET ARE WILLING TO ASK THE WAY.  
Is that your condition, dear Friend? Have you set your face towards Christ, towards holiness and towards Heaven, and are you asking the way? Well, then, let me say two or three things for your encouragement. the first is, Thank God that your face is toward it and that you are asking the way—  
**“My seeking His face  
Is all of His**Grace,”  
said one. And so it is. Thank God for the Grace that has made you feel uneasy in sinning, for the Grace that has made you wish for Grace, for the Grace that has made you long to be a Christian! Set a high value on this little Grace, for it is no small thing, after all, and, as you think of it, bless God for it!  
Remember, next, that you must act as far as you know how to act. If the Lord has shown you the right pathway, go in that pathway. Perhaps you say, “There are many difficulties there.” Never mind the difficulties— cross each bridge as you come to it. “Oh, but there are some things that I do not understand!” No doubt there are! And there are many things that I do not understand. And there are some things that I do not particularly want to understand! If I understand what really concerns my eternal welfare and the good of my fellow men, and the glory of God, it is enough for me. As far as I have gone at present, I can say, with Jack the huckster— *“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”*  
That map of the road has lasted me so far and I would advise you to keep to it, at least for the present. “But I want to know all about the Doctrine of Election and so on.” Do you? Well, you shall know, one of these days, but just now, you need not think so much of that glorious Truth of God as the Doctrine that God has sent His Son into the world that men might live through Him! You keep to that line of Truth at present. You have your face turned toward Zion, then go straight on! You have asked the way and you have learned enough to know that Christ is the way—then let Him be the way for you. And if there is anything else to be learned— and there is—God shall reveal even this to you.  
Of some of the grand Doctrines of the Gospel our Lord might say to you as He said to His disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” You shall bear them, by-and-by. When your little boy gets his first spelling book, does he begin to whimper and say, “I can’t learn A B C, Mother, because my brother Harry learns Greek, and I must learn Greek first”? You say, “My dear John, learn your A B C now, and you shall get to Greek by-and- by if it is necessary.” So, dear Friend, you just keep to such texts as these—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you are now asking the way to Zion with your face toward it, remember that the Lord has made the way very plain. He knew that limping feet would travel over it, so He gathered out the stones. He knew what dim eyes some of the travelers in it would have, so He lit it up with many a bright lamp and He, Himself, is still the Light of it!  
He knew what a heavy burden you would bear until you began to tread that narrow way, so He had an open sepulcher set close by the Cross, that everyone who looks to Him on that Cross might feel his burden roll off his back, to be buried in that sepulcher never to be found again! O dear Friend, run in that road that Christ has made so plain! Trust, trust, TRUST, TRUST! That is the way—TRUST! Trust God as your Father! Trust Christ as your Redeemer! Trust the Holy Sprit as your Renewer. Have done with yourself! Have done with everything but your God, your Savior, your Comforter. Trust in Jesus and you have found the way! You are saved, your sins are forgiven you, you are, “accepted in the Beloved.” You are not yet in Heaven, but you shall be, in God’s good time. You have not yet joined Christ’s visible Church, but you are welcome to do so—do not postpone it. You have not yet joined the Church triumphant, but you shall do so one of these days. Therefore, be of good cheer, and the Lord bless you! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 31:18-26.**

Verse 18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus. It is God who is speaking here. There is never a moan, or a sob, or a cry, or a sigh, but God hears it. The Lord is very quick of hearing for the sorrows of penitent sinners. There is no mistake about this matter, for He says, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.”

18 *.*You have chastised me, and I was chastised. “No good came of it. I smarted, but I was not benefited—‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised.’”

18. As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the LORD, my God. There was never a heart that spoke thus, unless Grace had been secretly at work with it. And depend upon it, if God has brought us to this point, we are ready to declare Him to be our God and are anxious to be the subjects of His converting Grace. It is because God has looked upon us in His wondrous love. If you desire to be turned towards God, you are already, in a measure, turned towards Him. The desire to feel is a kind of feeling! The longing to believe has some measure of faith in it! Be comforted by this thought, yet be not content to rest where you are, but go on till you have all the blessing that the Lord is waiting and willing to bestow upon you! Happy is the man who is saying to God at this moment, “Turn me, and I shall be turned, for You are the Lord, my God.”

19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded because I did bear the reproach of my youth. When a man has “sown his wild oats” and God, in mercy, helps him to come back from such a dreadful field as that, he recollects what he has been and he is ashamed of himself. Sometimes he is more than half ashamed to mingle with God’s people, for he is afraid that they will have nothing to do with such a wretch as he has been. But he is, most of all, ashamed to come near to his God because of the sins of his youth. Yet listen to the Lord’s gracious words concerning him.

20. Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord. Here we seem to look into the very heart of God and He is represented to us as though He had contending passions within Him. He speaks angrily one day, but He earnestly remembers mercy the next. God changes not, yet His dealings with men must change because their state varies so much. He sometimes speaks in great wrath while they hold to their sin, but love lies even at the bottom of that wrath—and soon He changes His tone and speaks comfortably—and puts away the sinner’s sin when He sees that His anger has worked the due result and the sinner quits his sin to come to his God. Some of you understand this treatment, for you have experienced it. But you cannot comprehend the fullness of mercy and love that is in the heart of God towards the repenting sinner.

21, 22. Set up signposts, make high heaps: set your heart toward the highway, even the way which you went: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these, your cities. How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? How long will you be seeking comfort where you cannot find it and pleasure where nothing but misery can come?

22, 23. For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. Jerusalem was cursed because of sin, but God declared that in His great mercy He would make it to be a place of blessing, and men should speak of it as the, “habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”

24-26. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, farmers and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me. He that can sleep and dream as Jeremiah did, may well say that his sleep was sweet to him. May God grant to us, whether we sleep or wake, to be always with Him! Then our time shall be indeed sweet unto us!

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ENQUIRING THE WAY TO ZION  
NO. 3035

A SERMON  
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**“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.” Jeremiah 50:5.**

I am going to take these words out of their context and use them as I believe they may very properly be used—as a description of those whom God is about to save. This is one of the signs and tokens of a coming salvation, “They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”

You remember that Zion of old was the place, above all others, where God manifested Himself. To ask the way to Zion means, therefore, to seek after God, to desire to be reconciled to God, to long to be pardoned and accepted by God.

Zion was also the only place where the offering of sacrifices was permitted. Though the disobedient and idolatrous Jews offered sacrifices on the high places which they had profaned by their abominations, they did so contrary to God’s commands. The only place where the sacrificial victims could be acceptably offered was in the Temple on Mount Zion. To come to Zion, today, means to come to the one Sacrifice which God has provided for the sin of man, namely, to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is the one Propitiation for human sin and who has, by His death upon the Cross, made a full Atonement for the guilt of all who believe in Him.

Zion was also, in the olden time, the appointed place of public worship where the tribes went up on their solemn feast days, to join in the joyous Psalms that arose with thundering acclaim from ten thousand voices. There the multitude bowed in solemn prayer and there they heard the Word of the Lord. In a somewhat different form from that which we now observe, yet in a similar spirit to that in which we now meet, they worshipped God. So to ask the way to Zion means to desire to worship the Most High, to seek to become true and acceptable servants of the ever living God.

Zion of old was also the place of delightful fellowship. There friends met friends from the farthest ends of the land. He that dwelt at Dan gave the right hand of fellowship to him that dwelt at Beersheba when they came to their great general gatherings at Jerusalem. To ask the way to Zion, then, means to seek to come to Christian fellowship, to desire to be united in Christian bonds with Brothers and Sisters who love each other because they love one common Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, their blessed Savior!

Zion was, besides, a place of rest. It was looked upon as the abode of peace. Those who dwelt there were under the special protection of Heaven. To desire, therefore, to find the way to Zion is to desire to find peace, lasting peace, conscious peace with God, even “the peace of God which passes all understanding.”

Zion, too, has been regarded as a picture of Heaven. To desire to know the way to Zion is, therefore, to desire to know the way to Heaven. To say, “Tell us the way to Zion,” is the same thing as to say, “Tell us how we may reach that blessed state of salvation which shall secure for us a joyful entrance into everlasting bliss.” There are two things stated in our text concerning the enquirers as to the way to Zion. First, we have their enquiry and, secondly, we are told the direction in which their faces were turned—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”

I. First, then, we HAVE THEIR ENQUIRY—“They shall ask the way to Zion.”  
Who will do this? We will try to find out who they are who ask the way to Zion and, first, they are evidently those who are weary of other ways. They have been treading the way that leads to Hell. They have known and walked in the ways of pleasure and folly. They are familiar with the way of worldliness. Many of them have tramped along the miry way of self-righteousness and they have all run in the road of willful wickedness. Yet they are willing to leave all these ways, for a man cannot go in two opposite directions at the same time! He must go only in one or the other of them and, in asking the way to Zion, it is taken for granted that the truthful enquirer is weary of all other ways. Is it so with you, my Hearer? You are not yet saved, but are you discontent with all that you have ever known as yet? It is a blessed thing when God makes a man discontented with all but HIMSELF—when the way of sin is no longer so smooth and pleasant as it once was and the enjoyments of the world are no longer so delicious and alluring as they used to be. Surely, if this is your case, my Hearer, you are being weaned from the breasts of your vain delights that you may come to your Father who can make you truly blest!  
I can only praise God from the depths of my heart if any of you who are not yet in the way to Zion, have had your way hedged up of late, for it may be that the thorns which have scratched and torn you, have only kept you from going yet further astray from the right road. I hope that even the wretchedness which arises through treading the paths of sin may drive many to find relief from it in the Savior who is, Himself, the way to God! Am I addressing any who are in such a condition at this moment? Surely there must be someone here who is saying, “I need to find something real, for I have tried the sham and found it useless. I want to get peace of conscience if I can, for I am distracted by the thought of my guilt. Wealth cannot satisfy me. I have abundance of this world’s goods, yet I am not happy. Worldly ambition cannot satisfy my soul. I have gained the position for which I strove, but I am not content. My mind is driven to and fro as by a whirlwind. I am like a cockle-shell boat at the mercy of the stormy waves, or like the chaff from the threshing floor that is driven before the wind. I have no rest, no peace, no satisfaction.” Well, my dear Hearer, if you are in that state of mind and heart, I earnestly recommend you to ask the way to Zion—for that is the place of rest and contentment—and if you are sincerely asking the way, I am quite sure that it is because you are weary of all other ways.  
Those who ask the way to Zion also thereby confess that they are not yet saved. It is a great work, a Divine work, to bring His people to confess that they are not yet saved, for the most of mankind have the notion that, somehow or other, all is well with them in the sight of God. This is especially the case with those who have been brought up religiously. If you have, from your childhood, been regular attendants at a place of worship. If you have been kept strictly moral and outwardly religious, it is exceedingly probable that you will slide into the idea which perhaps you would not express in so many words, but, still the idea is there—that you have, after all, very fair prospects with regard to the world to come. In Jeremiah’s day there were some to whom the Lord said, “Trust you not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these.” And today the children of godly parents, the people who attend places of worship regularly and live an outwardly moral life, are very apt to say, “The people of the Lord, the people of the lord, the people of the Lord are we.”  
Perhaps some of you fancy that because you have been baptized, although you never were converted, or because you have dared to profane the Lord’s Table by your presence, although you are quite unfit to be there, you are therefore saved. If that is the case with you, it will be a happy thing for you if you are led to enquire the way to Christ because you feel that you have not yet accepted Christ as your Savior. It will be a mercy for you if you are led to see that your natural condition, instead of making you a citizen of Zion, makes you a citizen of Sodom or of Babylon! Certainly you cannot become a child of God by birth, by blood, by Baptism, or by any ceremonial process—but only by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! If you are not yet saved, I pray that you may be made to know that you are not. It is only God’s gracious Spirit who can convict a man who thought all was well with him, that he is lost. Only the Holy Spirit can prove to him that he is not a Christian, though he thinks he is one! And when he is made to realize this, he will probably soon be transformed into that which he now fancies he is—a true child of the living God!  
So those who ask the way to Zion are those who are weary of other ways and who feel that they are not yet in the way of salvation, the way of holiness.  
Further, to ask the way to Zion proves that the enquirer is not presumptuous—that he does not think that he shall get to Zion, blunder on as he may. I believe that many men cherish the erroneous notion that if they are really sincere, and distinctly and decidedly moral, they will, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, get through the gate of pearl into Heaven. They say, “If we do not, who will? If it will not be well with us, then it must be far worse with a great many others who are worse than we are.” That is the kind of talk in which many indulge, but it is sheer presumption! O Sirs, believe me that being saved is not child’s play! It is not a matter to be dreamed over. No man ever hit this mark by chance! No man’s soul was ever saved by mere chance. Many a soul has gone to Hell through neglect, but never has even one soul gone to Heaven in that way! Remember that solemn unanswered question of the Apostle Peter, “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If it is only after stern fighting and struggling—and often a long and wearisome pilgrimage—that the Christian gets into Heaven and if even he is sometimes “saved, yet so as by fire,” how shall they escape who neglect this great salvation? If they who serve God most diligently have nothing to glory in, what will be the portion of those who rebel against the Lord, or who simply “neglect” His great salvation? O Sirs, if the best of saints sometimes fear that they will be castaways at last, though that fear is needless if they are the Lord’s—what will become of godless Sabbath-breakers, or of you who never read the Bible and never bow your knees in prayer, but who live as if there were no God, or as if it mattered not whether you served your Maker or abhorred Him? This fatal presumption will never do—and I hope there are some of you who have now done with it forever, who are no longer hoping to stumble into eternal life, but who are asking the way to Zion, knowing that there is but one way—and sincerely desiring to find it!  
This enquiry, if it is honestly made, also proves that those who make it are not conceited. They ask the way to Zion for they do not think they know everything and they are willing to learn what they do not know. If a child should offer to tell them the way to Heaven, they would be glad to hear it. Or though the person who might deliver to them the message of salvation should be clothed in the garb of poverty, and although his language might be incorrect and ungrammatical, yet if he should tell them plainly what they must do to be saved, they would be willing to take the treasure even out of an earthen vessel and to find the priceless jewel in the mire! But when men boastfully say, “We know all that we need to know, so we have no need of any teacher. As for the Bible, we look upon it as an antiquated, worn-out old book and we, men of thought and intelligence, can do without it. Can we not study the rocks or the starry heavens, or the wide fields of Nature? What need have we of a voice from God to guide us?”—we can only reply, “Ah, Sirs, your boasting is that of fools! You must excuse the harshness of the word, but it is true, for wise men know their ignorance—and only fools boast as you have been doing. May you be emptied of all your pride—turned upside down as a man turns a dish bottom upwards and pours out all its contents. And when you find that there is nothing in you, go and ask the way to Zion with true humility! You will never be truly wise till you find out that you are not wise. And you will never really know till you are willing to admit that you know nothing except what God teaches you by His Word, His Spirit, or His servants.  
There is another thing about this asking the way to Zion—it shows anxiety on the part of the enquirers. Sometimes when one wants to find a certain spot in the intricate streets of London, one stops and asks a policeman, or someone else, which is the way to such-and-such a place. And an answer is given, with more or less clearness. But having gone in the direction indicated and not having found the place, one naturally asks again and, perhaps again! If you are afraid of missing the spot you want to find, there is seldom anything lost by asking—and it is always better to spend one minute in asking the way than to waste ten minutes in going wrong! He who is the most anxious to find the right way is the man who will ask the most often—and I trust there are some here who are willing to ask of the Word of God and to ask of God’s servants—“Tell me, is this the road to Heaven, or am I mistaken? Is this the plan of salvation by which alone sinners can be delivered from the wrath to come? O Sirs, I cannot afford to be mistaken here, for my soul’s eternal welfare depends upon it! A mistake here would involve everlasting misery! So, as before the living God, tell me the truth, even though it should hurt my feelings and make me angry, yet be faithful with me, O men of God! I ask you again and yet again, the way to Zion.”  
I think, too, dear Friends, we may say with regard to this enquiry, that the man who makes it is not a skeptic. He would not ask the way to Zion if he did not believe that there is such a place. There are some people who are continually trying to amuse themselves by pretending to be doubters. I speak what I really feel about this matter, for I do not believe in the honesty of nine out of ten of the doubts of which I hear, or of the new ideas that are constantly being brought forth concerning one Truth of God or another. I am sometimes asked why I do not preach more often against these heresies. What? Am I to tell everybody what any fool likes to say against God? Not I! If anybody else wants to propagate infidelity in that way, let him do it. I shall not blow a trumpet to call attention to the lies that men keep on inventing. If I answered everything that they have said up till now, they would say something else that was false next week. I have better employment than that of shining the devil’s boots in this way! And besides that, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the most of you are not troubled by these heresies. You know, in your inmost souls, that His Book is true, that there is a God and that, before long, you will have to stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. If any of you do not believe the Bible, that does not affect the fact that it is true. And what I have to say to you is to charge you, as you love your never-dying souls, to escape from Hell and flee to Heaven—to point out to you which is the right road and to beseech you not to miss the overwhelming Glory of eternal life for the sake of indulging your foolish and fatal pride. There is a heavenly Zion—ask the way to it, press forward and find it!  
I will make only one other remark upon this part of my subject. Those who sincerely ask the way to Zion are evidently not asking out of mere curiosity, for if they were, they would ask where Zion is and what sort of a place it is. And they would probably ask some very foolish questions concerning it. Instead of doing so, they simply say, “Show us the way.” That is practical—they ask the way to Zion. I often fear that the questions which are asked by many people concerning various mysterious or difficult Doctrines in the Bible are only asked in order to try to lull their consciences to sleep while they are living in rebellion against God. A man says to me, “Can you explain the seven trumpets of the Revelation?” No, but I can blow one in your ear and warn you to escape from the wrath to come! Another says, “Can you tell me when the end of the world will come?” No, but I can tell you how to be so prepared for it that you need not be afraid if it were to come tonight! I can urge you to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, so that, let the end of the world come when it may, you can await it with holy joy and enter into eternal bliss! We want more, especially among sinners, of practical questions and not mere captious and curious enquiries. There will be time enough for you to ask all proper and right questions and to have them answered—when you have sought and found the Savior. But meanwhile, my dear Hearer, your immortal soul is in jeopardy, so attend to that first of all. A man who is sinking in the sea is mad if he says, “I won’t lay hold of that rope until I understand all about astronomy.” A man in a burning house need not trouble his head about geology—his first business is to get to the fire escape—he can leave his study of geology till tomorrow. So you

unconverted ones should “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and all other things you need shall be added unto you.  
This must suffice concerning the sincere enquirers who ask the way to Zion.  
II. Now we will consider the direction in which these enquirer’s faces are turned—“They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it.”  
If a man should ask you the way to a certain part of the town which lies toward the North, and his face should be turned toward the South, you would say, “Sir, that place is in the very direction from which you have come. You must turn your face the other way if you mean to get there.” But suppose that he kept on walking in the same way in which he was going before he spoke to you? And suppose that he still asked the way, yet persisted in doing the very opposite to what he should do? You would at once know that he was merely mocking you and you would very likely pass on and say to yourself, “I will answer the civil enquiry of anyone who really needs directions, but I will not continue to answer the enquiry of a man who asks the way and when he is told, deliberately turns his face in the opposite direction!”  
I hope I am addressing many who are saying, “We do want to be saved. We are in real earnest about it. We would do anything in our power to be true Christians and to have our sins forgiven.” Shall I tell you how we can know whether your faces are turned in the right direction? A man who has his face towards Zion is earnest about Divine things. He used to trifle concerning eternal realities, or to assume the appearance of earnestness on certain occasions. When he heard an earnest preacher deliver an impressive discourse, he felt his spirit somewhat stirred, but he soon cooled down and was as careless as before. A man who has his face Zionward is constantly in earnest. He feels that the chief business of his life is to get salvation and I believe that a man in real earnest about eternal life, sooner or later obtains it. I do not think there will be one lost sinner in Hell who will be able to say, “I honestly and earnestly sought the Savior, but I sought Him in vain.” A man may be in earnest and yet, through lack of knowledge, he may miss the mark for a while. But I believe that sooner or later, the Light of God, by God’s Grace, will come to him. If God continues to cherish the earnest desire within his heart, it will be a sign that He means to ultimately open the prison door and set the bound spirit at liberty! So earnestness is a good sign of the face being set Zionward.  
Another sign that a man’s face is towards Zion is seen when he hears the Word attentively. There is great hope for the man who constantly attends the preaching of the Gospel—that is to say if it is really the Gospel that he hears, and if it is honestly and earnestly preached—and if, while attending the House of Prayer, the man does not merely come in and go out, as a mere formal worshipper, but anxiously listens and watches to hear whether there is a message that is especially suitable for him. I know that I have some hearers who seem to go fishing in my sermons to see if there is something in it suited to their case that they can catch and appropriate to themselves. Like the little boy who used to listen so attentively that his mother asked him why he did so. He replied, “I heard a minister say once that if there was a word in the sermon that might be blessed to us, Satan would be pretty sure to try to distract your attention so that we might not hear it. So I want to hear it all and see if there is something that may be useful to me.” I am satisfied that your face is set Zionward when you can honestly say, “I come to the House of Prayer and sit there not merely because it is the Lord’s-Day and we must go somewhere to worship Him—not because I like to see the crowded congregation and to join in the joyous songs of praise, but because I hope that one of these days the minister will be guided by the Holy Spirit to let fall a handful on purpose for me—and that even I may know what it means to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”  
Perhaps a better sign is when a man not only continually hears the Gospel preached, but frequently and as often as he can, reads the Word of God with a view of finding something that may meet his case. In some respects the preached Word has a very powerful influence over those who hear it because it comes with a living power from living lips—and God has ordained that by the preaching of His Word men shall believe and be saved. But in other respects, this Divinely-Inspired Word is far superior to anything that we can ever say, for it is the Infallible Word of God which lives and endures forever! Here is God’s own Truth in God’s own words—and when I find that any of you get up a quarter of an hour earlier in the morning so that you may be able to read a chapter before you go to work, or when I hear that you carry your little pocket Testament with you, so that in your dinner hour you may read a few verses with the prayer—“O God, save my soul while I read this, Your Holy Word!”—I feel that if you have not already found Christ, you soon will do so! At any rate, I am satisfied that you are enquiring the way to Zion and that your face is turned towards Heaven! And I do not believe, my dear Friend, that you will long be in the habit off attentively reading the Word without finding some precious promise that shall come home to your spirit and bring you into the light!  
There is still one better sign and that is this—I am so glad to know that some of you have begun to really pray. I expect that most of you used to pray, after a fashion, even when you were children. Your mother taught you to say a little prayer at her knee before she put you to bed. And many of you did not give up that habit until you went away from home. Perhaps you were apprenticed and possibly there was another apprentice in the room where you slept—and you had not the moral courage to kneel down while he was there. Well, I am sorry if it was so, yet I fear that where you did observe that form, you did not really pray! But now you do truly pray and from your heart you do really speak to God. It may be that there are others of you who have always used a printed or written form of prayer, yet till lately you never prayed in the true sense of that word. You used to read or recite the words just as the followers of Mohammed repeat their stereotyped form, but your heart was not in them and you were often half asleep even while you were uttering those meaningless words. But now you cannot help praying— you groan out poor broken sentences to God that you would not like to see in print. I recollect the time when I used to pray after this fashion, “O God, save me! I hear the Gospel preached whenever I can, but it does not bring peace to my heart. I am still without God, without Christ and without hope in the world! O Lord, do save me! Save, me, I beseech You. And save me now!” If that is the spirit in which you have prayed, never mind what your words may have been—if this has been your desire, your face is set Heavenward and I do not believe that the Lord will long let you cry thus unto Him without sending you a distinct answer of peace! You remember that the Lord said to Ananias, concerning Saul of Tarsus, as one of the evidences of the great change that had been worked in him, “Behold, he prays.” And if that can also be said of you, there is good reason to hope concerning you! Surely the Holy Spirit has already been at work within you if you have begun to pray continually and to pour out your heart’s supplication in secret before the living God!  
Another good sign of sincerity is when a man begins to forsake his old companions and shows that he likes the people of God far better. In my early ministry in London, there was a certain friend—if he is not here tonight, he is usefully engaged elsewhere—who came to the service one Lord’s-Day evening with no objective beyond a vain curiosity. But that night the Word of the Lord stung him to the quick and made him very angry. He wrote me a letter, the next morning, to tell me that I had insulted him—and I do not know what he was not going to do! He came again to see if I would do the same as before and the Word of the Lord cut him up far worse! But it was a very different letter that he wrote to me the next morning. He said that he had been in the habit of meeting, on Sunday nights, with half a dozen friends—most of whom are now members of this Church—and they used to, on Saturday, draw at the top of a sheet of notepaper a little sketch signifying, “Drop in on Sunday night—pipes and tobacco at seven.” Then the man went on to tell me that if these former friends of his would not come with him to the House of Prayer, they would be friends of his no longer, for that old mode of spending the Lord’s-Day evening would never suit him again! That is one of the sure signs of the working of God’s Grace, when a man says to his old companions, “Now, Sirs, I cannot be your friend if you are not God’s friends. As far as worldly matters are concerned, I will help you when I can. I will not break my friendship with you in that respect. But as to spending my leisure hours in the places of sin where you find your delights, I cannot do it. I fear I am not yet converted. I am afraid I am not a Christian, but this much I know—I cannot find my pleasure any longer where I used to find it.”  
Ah, my Friend! When you talk like that, you have your face set Heavenward! Even if you are not actually on the road there, you are certainly in a hopeful condition and I trust that, before long, there will be something better even than that to be said concerning you! You will go to the houses where the name of Christ is like ointment poured forth and though you may sit still and hold your tongue, you will be thinking, “I wish I had a share in these precious things, and I do delight to hear these people talk about them.” I know some learned men who have been delighted to listen to a very poor woman as she was talking of the joy of the Lord only a little while before she passed into the spirit-land. It is usually a sure sign that we are in love with the Master when we are in love with His servants and when we find delight in the company of His people. It is surely because there is a secret drawing of our hearts towards Him. It indicates to me, my Friend, that your face is set Zionward when you begin to hate the company of the loose, the frivolous, the wicked—and to choose the company of the earnest, the truthful, the godly, the prayerful, the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ!  
I shall only detain you while I mention the best sign of all—a sign, dear Friends, which I believe is present in many of you—namely, that you are beginning to repent of sin and beginning, though you hardly dare to think that you are, to believe in Jesus! Only a few days ago you did really think that you had believed in Jesus, though you are afraid to think so tonight, and you would not like to be deceived about so important a matter. Yet at times there is a most blessed brokenness of heart about you. You cannot look back on your past history without feeling that your tears must flow as you mourn that you should ever have lived as you have lived—that you should have had so many privileges and should have slighted them—that you should have had so many warnings and should have despised them. You do not imagine that this feeling is true repentance, but I believe that a truly repentant soul scarcely ever thinks that it does repent as it ought to do. When a man is most tender in heart he generally says, “I grieve that I feel so hardened and that I am not as tender as I ought to be.” Remember this—there never was a saint who repented as much as he should have, for repentance should be perfect and no Christian has ever attained to that height.  
As for believing in Jesus, I know that there are some of you who— when you have just been reading the very sweet promise in the Scriptures and your heart has been enabled to rest upon it—have had thoughts like these, “I cannot say that I really do believe in Jesus, but I do desire to believe in Him. And one thing I know, if He is not yet mine, I will never be fully at rest with anyone but Himself—  
*“‘Other refuge have I none.’”*  
“If I cannot nestle under His blessed wings, I will never try to hide under any others.” You sometimes hope that you really have trusted in Jesus— and I think that you have done so, although your faith is very feeble. Remember, however, that even a feeble faith is a saving faith! Though your faith is no bigger than a mustard seed, so that you can hardly see it, it will bring salvation to you! Even if you cannot see it, God can. If you do but touch the hem of Christ’s garment, virtue will flow out of Him to the saving of your soul!  
There are some who go to Heaven rejoicing all the way. I hope you may be of that happy number. But there are others, like those who are mentioned in the fourth verse of this very chapter, who go “weeping.” There are tears at every step—“going and weeping.” Yet, when they get to Heaven, they will not be asked whether they came weeping or laughing. It is better to go weeping to Heaven than to go laughing to Hell! There are some who go weeping to Heaven—they seem every day as if they must surely perish on the road, yet they get there at last—and, dear Friend, if your face is set Zionward—if you can truly say, “There is none but Jesus for me. He is all my hope and all my trust,” you may rest content that you also will get to Heaven at last! If you are really trusting in Christ, you are sure of Heaven, even if you have but one single grain of living faith in

the Crucified Savior—**“The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and Hell obstruct the way!”**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 32.**

In this Psalm we have the Gospel of the peace of God as David knew it for himself and wrote it for the benefit of others.  
Verse 1. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Hear this Inspired declaration, you who have transgressed the Law of your God! You who cannot plead a righteousness of your own, you who are conscious that you are sinners in the sight of God—here is a door of hope for you! Here is a possibility of blessing even for those whose lives have been full of sin and transgression! This is not a blessing of the Law, but a blessing of the Gospel—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”  
2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity. Even God does not keep it recorded against him. The man has committed iniquity, but it is no longer laid to his charge, even by Him whose allseeing eyes have witnessed it! “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.”  
2*.*And in whose spirit there is no guile. No shuffling, no deceit. He deals honestly with God and with himself—and with his fellows—and God deals righteously with him, and yet covers his sin, forgives his transgression and imputes not to him his iniquity!  
3, 4*.*When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. While under a sense of sin, David could not pray. Or his prayer, if he did offer one at all, turned into a kind of roaring, like the cry of a wounded beast. He was so heavy in heart, his whole being was so scorched and parched by the fire of God’s righteous anger because of his sin, that the very ducts of his tears refused to supply him with any further streams and he had to cry, “My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” Oh, what a burden sin always brings with it! And what a dreadful thing it is to be crushed under the almighty hand of God when He convinces us of our guilt by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit! When David was in that condition, what did he do in order to get peace with God and to find rest for his soul? Listen—  
5*.*I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. He made to the Lord a full, childlike confession of his sin, iniquity and transgressions—evidently putting his heart’s trust in the mercy of God. And soon all the burden that oppressed him was removed and the fierce burnings of Divine Vengeance within his spirit were quenched—and his storm-tossed heart was at rest in his God! “You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”  
6, 7*.*For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place. See where a sinner can find a safe shelter—only in his God. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the appointed Judge of all mankind, yet it is to Him that we fly for refuge, crying—  
*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee!”*  
It is strange that He from whose lips the storm of wrath against sin comes, is the hiding place of His people! He draws the sword of Infinite and Infallible Justice against all iniquity and then He furnishes, in His own great heart of love, the sheath into which that sword of justice is plunged! So today the Believer says to Him in a fuller sense even than David understood the term, “You are my hiding place.”  
7. You shall preserve me from trouble: You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. The once heavy heart shall dance for joy! The spirit that was so grievously burdened shall take up the note of glad thanksgiving when the Lord’s free Sovereign mercy brings forgiveness to His repenting children.

8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes. A good servant frequently does not need even a word from her mistress to guide her as to some duty to be performed, or some fault to be avoided—a look is all that is necessary, just a glance of the eyes gives the necessary guidance. So the Lord says to His watchful servant, “I will guide you with My eyes.” But, like the attentive servant, we must be keenly on the watch for this indication of our Lord’s guiding eyes.

9 *.*Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you. If you will be like a horse or a mule, do not be surprised when you are made to feel the bit and bridle which are appropriate for such creatures! And if a whip and spur are added, remember that you brought such treatment upon yourself! No, do not be so foolish, but give heed to the Divine Injunction—“Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. The backsliding child of God will smart under the strokes of his Father’s chastising rod, but still sterner treatment will fall to the lot of “the wicked.” On another occasion, David wrote, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

10. But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. What a number of blessed fences there are around a Believer! Just now David wrote, “You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” And now he says of himself or his fellow Believer, “He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” What more can he need?

11 *.*Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart. The Psalm began with blessedness and it ends with holy gladness! It was necessary to go down into the Valley of Humiliation for a while, but the Lord brought the Psalmist up to the mountaintop again, so that he felt that he must have others join him in his gladsome song—“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” May all of us be fitted, by God’s Grace, to join that singing and shouting company, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3426 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SORE GRIEVANCE  
NO. 3426

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1914. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “They have forgotten their resting place.”  
Jeremiah 50:6.

THE people of Israel had been so hunted about that they forgot the place where once they rested. The same remark may be made of some congregations. There are Christian people who have the great misfortune of an unchristly pastor. The preaching is eloquent—they are constantly exhorted to do one thing and another. It may be the preaching is intellectual—they are encouraged to speculate upon this and that Doctrine, or it may happen that the preaching is rhetorical, the people are covered with flowers—the preacher seems to be constantly scattering from himself a display of fireworks, an explosion of dazzling words! But there is no manifestation of Christ—no opening up of the completeness of the atoning Sacrifice—no uplifting of Jesus in His love to His people, in His union with them, in the Covenant which He has made on their behalf. Oftentimes have we met with good people who fretted because the ministry failed to supply for their souls. They could have done without the eloquence. They would have been happy without the new theories, however intellectual. They could have survived if there had been less exhortation—what they wanted was a little food to strengthen them, a little repose to invigorate them, a little faith to encourage them in resting upon the finished work of Jesus Christ! Oh, what an account will they have to give who, instead of being shepherds of God’s sending to feed His flock with discretion and make them lie down in green pastures, come to them as legal taskmasters wielding the rod, but never using the pastoral staff to guide the flocks by still waters! However, I fear there are some who, though no less worried, nevertheless forget their resting place. Let us talk familiarly with one another on this theme.

What is our resting place, Beloved? We have only one answer, I am sure—“We who have believed have entered into rest,” but our rest is in Jesus Christ, Himself. We believed on Him, He took away our burden and we found rest. We bowed our neck to His yoke, became His disciples and we found yet fuller rest unto our souls. Not a particle of rest do we get from ourselves, neither does the world contribute to it, for, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” All our rest is found in Him, for He is our peace, who has said, “It is finished,” and in that finished work we confidently repose. It is possible for us to forget, however, to enjoy the rest which faith has made it our privilege to possess. And if we do, it is not only a loss to our comfort, but it is a very serious loss to us in all respects. If sheep, under the charge of any, should lose their rest, besides the cruelty to the creatures and the suffering it would involve them, it would be a serious loss to their owner. A sheep does, after it has been fed, lie down—it must naturally chew the cud. The food it has gathered, it must digest in peace, or else it cannot grow fat. It cannot, in fact, be in health at all. Fancy a field of sheep in which some worrying dog constantly amused himself by hunting them from end to end! They would become lean and valueless. They would ultimately die. We must have rest! It is important, therefore, not partly and in measure, but to the uttermost degree, that when Christ has become our rest, we should continue to enjoy Him and to rest in Him! The sense of such need urges me, at this time, to endeavor to lead you, as God shall help me, to Christ Jesus our rest, by reminding you of some who forget their resting place. If it should happen to come home to your own souls, may you have Grace to escape from the calamity which the text describes!

Three things—here is the first— a sin of which to be convinced. Secondly, the cause of it to be sought out. And thirdly, the cure of it to be brought about. “They have forgotten their resting place.”

I. THIS IS TO BE ACCOUNTED A SIN FOR MANY REASONS. Let us recollect how dearly our resting place was purchased for us. To give your soul rest, my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ gave up His rest and more—His Heaven, His Throne, His honor, His life. No rest could there ever have been for you, a wandering sheep, if the Shepherd had not given up Himself as a ransom for the flock. Did it cost Him Gethsemane’s bloody sweat? Did it cost Him Calvary’s wounds and death? And did you receive it and yet forget it? Have not you often thought that whatever else might have passed away from your mind, never could the thought of that dying love depart? Yet it has faded on the tablet of your heat, for you have forgotten the priceless gift which that dying love has procured for you! Oh, chide yourself, that Immanuel’s purchase should be lightly esteemed, that He, your rest, should ever slip away from your thoughts!  
Remember, too, how graciously that rest was given to you. My own remembrances may help yours. I remember well—and did I live to twice the age of Methuselah—I could never forget the time of my wearisome bondage under the Law and under the slavery of sin! Oh, what I would have given, then, to have had rest, to have had my sins pardoned. I dare to say, I think a thousand deaths would have been cheaply endured by me if I might have escaped the wrath to come! My burdened soul chose strangling rather than life because my life had become weariness and even like unto wormwood and gall had the cup of life been embittered. But as in a moment, rest came to my soul by a glance at that Crucified Savior! An act of simple faith exercised upon Christ’s Atonement brought me perfect rest! And shall I forget my resting place? I am sure if some prophetic spirit of the future could have whispered in my ear at the time of my conversion, “You will forget your resting place,” I would quickly have answered, with Hazael, to the Prophet, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” And I might have said, “Is your servant a devil, that he should ever think of doing such a thing?” “Love so amazing, so Divine”—shall this be cast behind my back? A gift so precious, brought to me when I deserved it not and just when I most required it—shall it ever be lightly esteemed or carelessly neglected? Oh, memory, let fall what you may, but retain as with an iron grasp, the recollection of that blessed day in which my soul found her resting place!  
Beloved, there are other reasons to make this forgetfulness of ours greatly sinful. Remember how sweetly we have enjoyed that rest since then! It was not one day a honeymoon and then ever afterwards Christ and our souls, strangers—oh, no, I speak to some of you who have had many high days and holidays since the time of your conversion! You have feasted upon dying love! That banqueting house of Solomon’s Song is a place well known to you—the banner of love that waved over the spouse of old—its silken folds have also waved over you! ‘Twas but the other night when some of us were together in prayer and communion with Christ, and we could not help singing—  
*“My willing soul would stay,  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away,  
To everlasting bliss.”*  
Could we have such enjoyments and yet forget them? Such rest in the resting place and yet make light of it? Such peace of God that passes all understanding, and yet be listless about it? Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights, to leave the flowing fountain for the broken cisterns, which, if they had been whole, had been but stagnant reservoirs, unworthy to be compared to the clear living stream that bursts from the fountain of fellowship with Christ! Let every sweet season of past spiritual enjoyment gently rebuke you, Beloved, if you do at all forget your resting place!  
Further, does it not seem strange and marvelous that any of us should forget our resting place when we so greatly need it? Oh, I think I speak for the most of you when I say it is a weary world after all the mercy that God has made to pass before us—it is a weary, weary world! Solomon, with all his wealth, with all the accessories of pleasure, with all the tastes to enjoy them, deliberately said, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” And I am sure it is easy amidst pains and toils, blunders and disappointments, for many of us to utter the same lament. When afflicted in body, distressed with severe labor, or reduced to poverty, we might as well try to find rest on the sea, or on a bed of thorns, or on a bed of flames, as find rest in the things of this world! What weariness of the flesh, what vexation of spirit we endure! Oh, then, why is it we forget our resting place? Men, jaded and faint with the drudgery of labor, are glad to throw themselves upon the bed and fall asleep, and you that have much toil and travail under the sun, will you forget that couch that Christ has brought you, upon which your spirits may take delicious repose? With such need for rest, and such a rest so sweetly proven to be restful in the past, ‘tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing that we should ever forget our resting place!  
Since our resting place is so suitable to us, it becomes the more strange that we should forget it. Suitable for a sinner is a finished salvation. Suitable for a warrior is the great shield that covers his head in the day of battle. Suitable for a fugitive is that castle and high tower of our defense which is found in Christ, the Lord’s Anointed! “The coney goes to her place in the rocks and the stork has her nest among the fir trees.” Oh, you children of God, you have a resting place suitable to your nature—how is it you can forget it? Touch upon the things of nature, how they chide you! Bring to your remembrance the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, the dumb driven cattle accustomed to the yoke, and let them chide you, for they forget not their resting place! Carried away to the city the other day, the dove was taken from its cage, and they let it loose, fastening to it a message. It mounted aloft, it whirled round a while that it might see where it was. It was far, far away from the dovecot—it was found hundreds of miles away, but where did it fly? Swift as an arrow from the bow, it sought its resting place with infallibility of affection! It found its nearest way to the cot where it had been reared and brought its message safely there. Will you let the pigeon outstrip you in affection for your resting place? Look at the swift-winged dove and be ashamed! And even the dog, which you despise, taken away from its master, carried many miles away, in darkness, too, so that it might not know its way, has been known to swim rivers, cross by-ways it could not have known, and there it is found barking for admission at its master’s door—oh, so happy when it heard its master’s voice again! It could not rest elsewhere. Oh, my Heart, are you more doggish than a dog? Do you forget your Lord when dogs remember well their masters? Let us learn even from these creatures, I say, and henceforth let us not forget our resting place. As all ingratitude is base, this sin cannot be light or venial. Now, let us ask—  
II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE FORGETFULNESS which we sometimes have of Jesus Christ—our heart’s dear rest?  
How frequently it arises from neglect of thought, a culpable remissness! So busy, up in the morning and at it—the whirl, the noise and clatter of business in the ears—always in the ears, every nerve on the strain, right on till one falls asleep through sheer exhaustion! Oh, our times are hard for deep piety! They are hard and trying times for souls that would walk near to Christ. I know more Grace can match the evil of the times, but still, our Puritan forefathers with their quiet lives, calm and undistracted, with the time they could have for studying the Word of God, and for private prayer—no wonder they outstripped us! I am afraid some Christians neglect the reading of the Word of God—almost as a rule forget it! You don’t get your daily text. You don’t get your meditation. Ah, Souls, if a thing never comes across the mind, it is not remarkable that you should forget it! If any of you are going on a journey, you don’t forget your wives! No, they come often across your thoughts. You may forget some stranger whom you saw but once—you may never think of him again. Were the mind more occupied with Christ, there would be less likelihood of our forgetting Him! You know, when the photographer takes a picture, if he does it rapidly, it may be that, by-and-by, it will fade. If they want to take a picture that shall be definite, fixed and permanent, they let the sensitive plate continue long exposed to the view, that there may be a good, thoroughly well-fixed impression. I would that my soul had many opportunities of being like a sensitive plate fixed right in front of Jesus to take His portrait thoroughly—to have it so upon my soul that it could never fade away! Oh, to have much more communion with Christ, to contemplate Him with a steady gaze and undistracted attention is the way to overcome our present forgetfulness! This is a flimsy age—a superficial age. It has its waves of religious excitement, but they are all on the surface. We have not many of those great ground-swell waves where the ocean of manhood seems to heave up from the very bottom. These are the waves that work wonders for men and glorify God. May we have many such in our own souls!  
Another reason why we forget our Savior is our tendency to selfsufficiency. A poor man who has nothing of his own and who lives dayby-day a pensioner upon some rich man’s bounty, cannot forget the man who helps him! But if he should forget him this morning, he will be sure to remember him tomorrow morning when he needs bread! And he who receives his money weekly, might forget his friend on the Tuesday, but he will remember him again on the Saturday, when he must go to him again! If we were always sensible as we should be of our absolute dependence on Christ for everything, and going to Him for all, there would be no fear of our memories failing us! But we very soon set up a little independency of our own—poor worms as we are—as a Brother said in prayer the other night, “Dust heaps!” That is all we are, the very best of us— poor “dust heaps.” We imagine we are kingdoms and we talk such great things, and think such big things about our experience and our wisdom! Oh, away with it all! We might well not see the sun when we eclipse him with our self-sufficiency! You poor beggarly worm, naked, poor, and miserable, I counsel you to buy of Christ, gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich! And white raiment that you may be clothed! And go to Him again, leaving your self-sufficiency behind you!  
With others it is worldliness that keeps them from remembering their dear Savior. They forget their resting place because they are so worldly, grasping after so much. Enough is not enough to them—they must have more. The early rising and the sitting up late are right enough for industry, but wrong enough for avarice—these are the things that keep the soul from Christ—the getting money rightly if you can, but, anyway, the getting of money. A man cannot live for money and yet abide in Christ! When the heart gets the world into it, it eats as does a canker. If you will have the world, you shall have it—but you shall not have Christ! Oh, can you make an exchange of Christ for such poor stuff, for such heavy clay? Keep all the world outside your heart! If you keep all the sea outside the ship, it cannot sink. Is the world inside your heart—a little water there will prove a leak that will sink your vessel—beware of worldliness! Those of you can be worldly that are poor, as well as those that are rich. You may have cares that worry and devour—and keep you from your Savior. Strive against these! Be not cankered with this canker! Love not the world, or you cannot walk with Jesus! Lay your cares on Him who cares for you—and you will come back to your resting place!  
I fear that some Christians forget their resting place through idolatry. “Idolatry?” you ask, “We are not idolaters! We are not, even as the Romanists are, who will worship their crucifixes or their relics.” No idolatry? Was not that idolatry this afternoon with that boy of yours? Ah, what a boy! Your heart all but adores him and if he were taken from you, you would feel you could not forgive God! No idolatry? The other day, when you looked upon your fair estate and all the comforts of life with which God had surrounded you, did not you feel your heart go after these things? No idolatry? “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” was once an exhortation of John, and it is also my exhortation to you this evening. We so soon make idols. I am afraid if an idol breaking were to take place tonight, many of you would go home broken-hearted! Or if your idols are at home, you would go home to see them broken, and yourself be ready to despair. There is much idolatry—and if you love son or daughter more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him! If you love husband or wife more than Christ, you are not worthy of Him. Oh, be it so, that they take low seats and Christ sits on the Throne! Go down, Beloved, go down! I love you there as I may and should, but come up, my Savior, take the highest place, for there You must sit King of Kings and Lord of Lords!  
Once more, I think some genuine Christians forget their resting place for a while through despondency of spirit. It is sometimes hard to remember our sweet rest in Jesus when we get oppressed. I can speak very feelingly here. There are some of us that carry about with us a constitution which elevates us, at times, up to the very heavens of delight—and sinks us down at other periods very, very low. Those who have high tides must expect to have very dry ebbs. If you mount high, you sometimes will fall low and then, when the liver won’t act, when the spirits won’t move, when the whole heart hangs its harp upon the willows, it is difficult, then, to come and rest in Jesus. And some feel grinding trouble, or a perpetual affliction of body, till at last they get into a chronic state of sadness. Dear Brother, dear Sister, before you get there, make a rally, if you can, to get away from it! It is to be escaped from. After all, Christ died for sinners such as you are. Hang on Him! Cling to Him! Come and wash again in the fountain which is filled with His blood! He loves you! He gives Himself for you! He can never forget you, or cast you away! Come and rejoice in Him, yet again, and lift up your heart once more by simple, confident faith in Him, for, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Don’t let Satan triumph! Don’t let the world laugh because a Christian is in despair! “Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” Be gone, you fears! Let the winds take them away. “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. His mercy is not clean gone forever. He will be mindful of His Covenant. He will not cast away His people whom He did foreknow.”  
These are the things that will sometimes bring us into the dilemma of forgetting our resting place. And now to close—  
III. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR IT ALL?  
I do not know what Charles the First meant when he gave his watch to Bishop Judson and said, “Remember.” I do not care what he meant. But let the same be my word to you tonight, “Remember! Remember!” That is the cure for this distemper of the mind, this dereliction of the heart.“Remember what?” you ask. Remember first the past— *“His love in time past forbids me to think  
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”*  
Remember the days of old, the Everlasting Covenant. Remember the sealing of the Covenant with blood upon the accursed tree. Remember the day of your sin, and the day of salvation—your sore bondage and your great deliverance when He brought you out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm—remember this and you will no more forget your resting place!  
Remember again the future. You ask, “Can we remember that which has not happened yet?” Let your faith substantiate the promise and see it as though fulfilled, and remember it tonight. You will, before long, be where Jesus is. Your soul, white-robed, shall appear before Him, and your poor body—vile body as it is—shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and you shall shine with the mighty host who day without night magnify the name of Him that is, and was, and is to come! Remember this, and you shall not forget your resting place. “All this comes to you through Him. He has procured it for you and is preparing it for you at this hour.”  
Remember, also, something about the present. What is there that you have, tonight, of all your possessions that can afford you rest? Have the roots of your spirit begun to twist about the earth? Pray to have them unbound, for, otherwise a painful time will come to you. What have you that you could rest upon in the time of death? A Roman Catholic once said that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith was a blessed supper Doctrine—would do to end the day with! But he thought it was a bad breakfast Doctrine to begin the day with. At least there is truth in the first observation—it is a blessed supper Doctrine and Christ makes a blessed supper for us in life’s end. There is no supper in life’s end—no supper that the soul can eat—but Jesus Christ, who shall give her satisfaction and contentment as she goes forth on her long journey! Well, as you have nothing that can satisfy you in dying, why do you try to satisfy yourself with it now? Have you been making an idol? Have you? Let it go! Forget not your resting place, I pray you. Look at your friend’s house and read, “mortal” written there! Look in your child’s face and know that before long your last act of kindness for that child will be to find a narrow home in the silent grave. What? Are you immortal and seeking to live upon mortal food? You, eternal as God’s life, and yet seeking to satisfy yourself with the worm’s meat that springs out of earth, and goes back again to it! Shame on you! When Christ gives you rest, and is All-in-All to you, turn not away from the everything to try and fill yourself with the nothing!  
Lastly remember, and this last remembrance will be a blessed cure— remember Christ Himself. For this purpose come to His Table. Though you have, for a while, forgotten your resting place, He says, “This do you in remembrance of Me.” Come and remember Him again—  
*“Gethsemane can I forget?  
Or there Your conflict see?  
Your agony and bloody sweat,  
And not remember Thee?  
When to the Cross I turn my eyes,  
And rest on Calvary,  
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,  
I must, I must remember Thee.”*  
So may it be with you now!  
There may be, however, in this congregation—no, I know there are some who have never yet enjoyed rest. They are going about to find it. Dear Hearer, there is only one resting place—don’t look for another! Your works will never provide you rest. Sacraments can never rest you. Tears and groans, and prayers can never rest you. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.” “Believe in Him and live!” Trust in Him and you shall find rest unto your soul forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 3:6-25; 4:1-29.**

Let us read part of the 3rd Chapter of Jeremiah where God brings a solemn accusation against the two nations of Israel and Judah because they forsook the living God and went after idols—neglected His pure and holy worship—and followed after the abominable rites of the heathen.

Verse 6, 7. The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me. Depth of mercy that God should bid such a polluted one return to Him! “Yet I said, after she had done all these things, Turn you unto Me.”

7, 8. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. Some cannot be kept back from sin by the punishment of others, but they run into the fire in which others have been burnt, and so they aggravate their sin.

9. And it came to past through the lightness of her whoredom that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with wood. That is to say, she gave her heart to false gods and worshipped stones and wood. And how it must anger the living God to see men turn away from Him to worship blocks of wood and stone, instead of Him, and especially a people who have been instructed concerning the living God, and so commit the grossest act of disloyalty to Him, and are rebellious to the last degree.

10, 11. And for this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly says the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. The one sinned openly and persevered in it. The other pretended to repent and did not, and that pretended repentance was more hateful in the sight of God than even the daring and open sin of Israel. What next?

12. Go and proclaim these words towards the north and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the LORD. And I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever. The offense was foul. It is such a one as stabs at the heart of man’s honor. It is an offense which a man will scarcely ever forgive. But God bids His wandering Israel come back! And He proclaims mercy—free mercy—even to such gross transgressors!

13. Only acknowledge your iniquity. It is all He asks you to do. Confess that you have done wrong. “Only acknowledge your iniquity.”  
13. That you have transgressed against the Lord, your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the LORD. It was under the trees that they set up their altars to worship there false gods, so that they turned the graves, which should be full of beauty and sweet with song, into the places of idolatry, whereby God was provoked. But He says, “Only confess it. Come and lament it. Acknowledge that you have been guilty, and I will put away the sin.”  
14-16. Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD: for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you pastors according to My heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, neither shall it come to mind neither shall they remember it. Neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done anymore. Evangelical repentance, when it brings pardon with it, usually puts a slight upon mere legal ceremonies. We need not the symbol when we get the substance! We need no Ark of the Covenant nor holy place at Jerusalem when once the Lord appears in plenteous Grace to put away our sin!  
17, 18. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk anymore after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel. Nothing unites people like the Grace of God. Two men that have been pardoned by the same Savior ought to love one another, and they will!  
18, 19. And they shall come together out of the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said—After all this mercy, He seems to come to a pause, “But I said”—

19. How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant and a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? Is it possible? Can it be done? These harlot nations that have defiled and polluted themselves with unutterable filthiness—can they be put among the children—the children of God?

19-22. And I said, You shall call Me, my Father, and shall not turn away from Me. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Do you hear it? Do you hear God’s promise? Do you hear His command? “Return, you backsliding children. I will heal your backslidings.” Now for the answer. God grant that it may well up in your hearts.

22, 23. Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God. Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. We leave all false confidences. We forsake our earthly joys.

23, 24. Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. They have not profited by worshipping idols. They have suffered through it.

25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth, even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. There you see the repentance which the Lord commanded at His people’s hands, and wherever there is such a repentance as that, there are sure to be acceptance and salvation! God grant us that repentance and save us for His mercy’s sake!

**JEREMIAH 4:1-29.**  
Verses 1, 2. If you will return, O Israel, says the LORD, return unto Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then shall you not be moved. And you shall swear, The LORD lives, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness. And the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory. So he sets before them life and death. First, He begins with these words of encouragement. He begs them to come, for God is willing to receive them, notwithstanding all.

3, 4. For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. They had the outward religion, but the Lord’s servant bids them know that they must have heart religion. The heart must be purged—the inward must be cleansed. This they had no mind to. They would multiply their sacrifices and their outward performances, but as to cleanliness of heart, this they cared not for.

5-7. Declare you in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem and say, Blow you the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves and let us go into the fortified cities. Set up the standard towards Zion, retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make your land desolate; and your cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant. This was a terrible prophecy. The Chaldeans, who had broken to pieces so many other kingdoms and powers, were on their way! The enraged lion had leaped from his thicket and was about to tear, and rend, and do universal havoc! And if they did not turn to God, their whole land would be laid waste. One would think that such a heavy blow would have awakened them to a sense of their danger and their sin, but, alas, it was not so!

8, 9. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, says the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the Prophets shall wonder. Universal fear would take hold upon them. If they would not rightly fear the Lord and turn to Him, the time would come when, without exception, the greatest and the wisest of them should be taken with a sudden panic!

10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, You shall have peace; whereas the sword reaches unto the soul. God promised them peace, but it was upon a condition which they did not fulfill. There was peace while they gave up their sin, but, “There is no peace with God unto the wicked.” And so they missed it.

11, 12. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto Me: now also will I give sentence against them. What an awful line that is. “Now also will I give sentence against them.” They had been on their trial. They are found guilty. They will not repent. “Now will I proceed to pronounce their doom and give sentence against them.”

13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! For we are spoiled. They began to cry out when they began to smart. And the Prophet comes in, again.

14. O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. There is always that silver bell of mercy ringing out the note of invitation! “O Jerusalem, your sorrows, your destruction may yet be averted if you will turn from your darkness! Wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.”

14-18. How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes affliction from Mount Ephraim. Make you mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem that watchers come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about because she has been rebellious against Me, says the LORD. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart. When “great judgments are abroad,” it is always on account of great sin. It was so in the case of Israel. “Your doings have procured these things unto you.” Oh, when the ungodly man begins to reap the result of his life—when, in his own body and in his own home, he begins to see what sin will often bring the drunkard, let him hear these words—“This is your wickedness. Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you.”

Now follows the lament of Jeremiah—one of the most amazing pieces of sorrowful writing that will ever be read in your hearing!  
19-21. O my soul, my soul! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace because you have heard, O, my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war! Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet? The dreadful blast of war, the bloodred flag of murder flying through the land while the Chaldeans slew right and left, young and old—we need to put ourselves into Jeremiah’s position to be able to realize the horror of this case.  
22, 23. For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void: and the heavens, and they had no light. As if they had gone back to chaos—to the primeval darkness—to the first disorder before God began to create.  
24-29. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the Presence of the LORD, and by His fierce anger. For thus has the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken it, I have purposed it and I will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up upon the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. Now all this did happen. It all came to pass. Palestine, the glorious Garden of God, was made as dreary as a wilderness! It is not much better now. It has scarcely recovered. God will regather them to the land one day, but oh, what a sight it was when God at last had ended His patience—poured out the vials of His wrath upon His once favored land!

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PERFECT JUSTIFICATION AND PERFECT PARDON  
NO. 2789

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 27, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SUMMER OF 1860.

**“In those days, and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will**

**pardon them whom I preserve.”  
Jeremiah 50:20.**

I do not profess to have attained sufficient proficiency in interpreting the prophetical parts of Holy Scripture to be able to enter, as some can, into the minutes of the future and to tell when any particular promise will have its actual, literal fulfillment and, indeed, if I could do so, it would not serve my purpose at this time, for I wish to take my text— perhaps you may think by way of accommodation—as describing what shall be the case with all God’s people when, having crossed the Jordan of death, they shall stand before the Great White Throne—and, indeed, what is now the case with all those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

I shall use my text thus—first, I shall say something about the great iniquities and sins mentioned in the text. And then, secondly, I shall speak, at greater length, upon the great forgiveness by which these sins have been put away. May God grant that many of us may feel that we have a sweet and undoubted participation in the complete pardon and deliverance which are here spoken of!

I. So, first, let us meditate for a little while upon THE GREAT INIQUITIES AND SINS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.  
Those sins were of no common order. Israel was a nation, chosen out of the world, to be the peculiar people of the Lord. They were chosen, not because of anything especially good in them, for they were always a stiffnecked and rebellious race, but because of God’s Sovereign Grace. Because of this special privilege, even if they had been only ordinary sinners, their sin would have assumed a most serious aspect, for never does sin seem to be so black as when it is committed in spite of great love, special peace, high privileges and other Divine blessings.  
The Israelites were not an ignorant people. They did not sin, as the Philistines did, in the dark. They were not left in the dim twilight of nature, but they had the fullest Revelation of God’s mind and will that was afforded to any people in those days. They were not taught the Truth of God by a system that was too high for them to understand, for the types and symbols of the ancient sanctuary were exactly adapted to the infant state of the Jewish commonwealth and to the immature condition of the Israelites’ spiritual life. Well might the Lord say concerning them, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” He had brought the goodly vine up out of Egypt. He had planted it in the richest soil in the whole earth. He had built a wall around it by making His chosen people to be separate from all the other nations in the world and He had dug a winepress for the gathering in of the fruits of the vineyard. And so He might well ask, “Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”  
Therefore, I repeat what I said just now—If the children of Israel had only sinned as other nations did, yet their sins would have been of the most heinous character because of the greatness of their privileges and the peculiar and special love that had been lavished upon them. But they were sinners of an unusual kind—they were positively unmatched in guilt by any nation under Heaven! What other nation forsook the gods whom they worshipped, even though they were only idols? Did not the idolaters cleave to Baal and hold fast to Ashtaroth? Do we find that even when the heathen nations were smitten, they forsook the god they professed to worship? Did they not still blindly and foolishly cling to their worthless idols and bow before them?  
Yet the children of Israel cast away their God—they who had worshipped Jehovah turned aside from Him and bowed down before Baal and, oftentimes did they grieve the Lord and provoke Him to anger because they went after other gods and worshipped idols that were not gods. This was a new evil under Heaven—a thing unheard of and unknown. The heathen would sooner have lost their nationality than they would have forsaken the idols that they adored, but Israel had played the harlot with many lovers. She, who ought to have been the most chaste of spouses, was unfaithful to her Lord and went gadding abroad among those whom He abhorred!  
Besides, my Brethren, I would have you remember that the children of Israel provoked God, perhaps, more than any other nation that has ever been upon the face of the earth by reason of the fact that the provocations of other nations were speedily punished and not permitted to continue as long as those of Israel. God commanded that the Canaanites should be exterminated because of their abominable sins, yet they were not greater sinners than some, at least, of the Israelites were! Some of the incidents recorded in the Old Testament evince a state of morality in the commonwealth of Israel as low, as sensual, as degraded as even the criminality of Sodom itself! As a nation, they had sinned as foully as others and, in some respects, still more foully because, when they were often smitten and chastened for their sin, they returned to it, like the dog to his vomit, “and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Think of the provocation that Israel gave to the Lord in the wilderness! Remember that time when Jehovah said to Moses, “I have seen this people and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under Heaven: and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.” Though the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger, yet His anger was fierce and terrible against the rebellious people.  
Think, too, of their continual revolts under the Judges—to omit, for the while, the possibly better state they were in under Joshua’s leadership. They were first in bondage to one power and then to another, for the simple reason that there was hardly one false god that they had not worshipped, nor was there any form of lust or crime which Israel had not learned. Then remember the abominable iniquities of the house of Israel during the days of the kings who followed Solomon—how they offered incense to false gods in all their high places, and bowed down to idols in all their groves and under almost every green tree. They adopted the very worst forms of idolatry—they made their children pass through the fire— they offered up their little ones as a sacrifice to Moloch! The murder of infants was common among them. They were not content to imitate the better part of the heathen idolatries, but they must take the whole and drain the black cup to its dregs—and they even seem to have exceeded the wickedness of those whom they imitated! The provocations of Rome have been many. The iniquities of the great Grecian empire were intolerable. The pride of Babylon was more than God could endure. The crying sins of Nineveh reached unto Heaven. The guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great. But the children of Israel, in the race for the prize of evil, distanced all these who were, apparently, greater sinners than themselves!  
I feel that we must give the pre-eminence to them, especially when we consider their transgressions in the light of the love and favor which the Lord God had displayed towards them. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, our text is true. Let us read it again, remembering what I have been saying about Israel’s iniquity. “In those days, and at that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I preserve.” Their provocations, their idolatries, their lusts were all to be swept away and to be forgotten! Crimes which had accumulated upon crimes were all to be covered in the depths of the sea! Surely, this should give hope to the very chief of sinners! If any of you are sorely depressed because of your great guiltiness, this passage should afford you much encouragement for, if God took so completely away, not the sins of those who had lightly offended against Him, but the crimes of the very blackest of criminals, why may He not wash away yours, also? And why may not you hope and even be confidently assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses you from all sin?  
II. Now I turn, in the second place, to look, for a little while, at THE COMPLETE PARDON SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT. Let us first consider the words and then the sense of them—“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.”  
First, look at the words of the text. This is a metaphorical form of speech—“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” You remember that Rachel hid the image under the seat on which she sat, so that when her father searched for it, he could not find it—yet it was there all the while. But it is not to be so with our sins! They are to be searched for, but there shall be none. They are to be sought for, but so effectually shall they have been put away that they shall not be found. Not only shall they not be discovered, but there shall not be any to be discovered. They shall be so completely removed, so absolutely annihilated, that they shall have ceased to exist! Come, let me draw a picture for you. Are there any who will ever search for the sins of God’s people? There are many who would do so if they could—and there are some who must do so.  
There is, first of all, an awakened conscience. One of the first things which an awakened conscience does is to search for sin. It will never rest content in the house where there is sin—it will go through every chamber of the heart and track sin to its most secret recesses. A blind, dead, sensual conscience may lie in the same bed with sin and not be disturbed, but an awakened conscience can detect it afar off and will have nothing to do with it. The lie, or any other form of iniquity, cannot tarry within sight of a conscience, the eyes of which have been spiritually opened. But, Believer, you are so fully pardoned that, though your tender conscience may search for sin, it shall not be found! Even when your conscience shall be illuminated with the sunlight of Heaven and all its obliquity and dimness of vision shall be taken away—if it should in Heaven look for sin, “there shall be none.” It is not difficult to realize that a blind man cannot see sin and a man with a blind conscience cannot see sin in himself, but I say that the man with the keenest spiritual sight, the man with the enlightened, the intelligent, the instructed, the perfect conscience may search the forgiven soul through and through, but there shall not, upon that soul, be found even the shadow of a spot! So thorough shall the washing be that the eyes, which now run with tears day and night because of the consciousness of sin, shall then be free from tears, for it shall see no sin to weep over—it shall behold no iniquity over which it has to grieve and no crime for which it has to mourn. Oh, glorious cleansing is this, when even an awakened conscience shall search and find no sin!  
But more than this, there is within us another eye which is even quicker in seeing sin than is our conscience, and that is the eye of our unbelief. It is amazing, my Brothers and Sisters, how soon our unbelief finds a ground for fear lest we should be lost. It seems to find such a reason, often, when there is none. It will catch at any little circumstance in our daily life to make us imagine that God has forgotten us. Unbelief is blind to good and to God, but it is very quick of sight to everything that is fearful and terrifying. I have known some Christians so full of unbelief that it was very difficult to give them any comfort—they were most dexterous in finding out the worst parts of their character and history—and very crafty in, as it were, seeking to neutralize the force of God’s promises by mentioning some evil thing in their own experience which seemed as if it deprived them of their right to receive the promised gift. But God so fully pardons His people that even their doubts, their fears, or their searching unbelief shall not be able to find a flaw in it!  
If it were possible for me to be smitten with unbelief even in Heaven, so that I should begin to mistrust my standing in Christ, or to try to find a reason why I should mistrust, I should not be able to do so. However much I might seek to find any speck or spot of sin, I would be obliged to say at the last, “Great God, I am clean through Jesus’ blood, I am clean every whit.” And even now, Beloved, and even here, though your unbelief thinks it sees a dozen sins, yet remember that those sins, at least as far as the guilt of them is concerned, are not really there. They are forever put away! Christ has drowned them in the Red Sea of His precious blood! There may seem to you to still be guiltiness upon you, but there is none if God has pardoned you, for “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” You may think that there is, but there is not—God now sees no sin in Judah, nor iniquity in Israel. He may see it to reprove it, or to chastise it,

ut judicially to avenge it, He sees none. Our Lord has made us so perfectly white that there is no spot to be found in us. He has so completely covered us with the robe of His matchless righteousness that no imperfection shall be seen in us even when we come to the perfect world where we are to dwell with Him forever! What a precious thought is this! Lord, give us Grace to believe it and to dwell in Christ—and enjoy to the fullest all our privileges in Him!  
But, further, there are other eyes, besides our own, which are always searching for our sins and, among them, there is the quick eye of the envious world. There are some of us who have good reason to be dead to the world, for the world has never spoken a good word concerning us, but has always been ready to magnify our faults when it could find any, or to lie against us where there was no fault at all. I, of all men, have no reason to respect public rumor! I do not respect it and I cannot, for, of all lying things, public rumor seems almost to exceed Satan, himself, in the lies which it will invent! Thus men who are to stand pre-eminent as God’s ministers must make up their minds, when they commence their ministry, that they will probably be accused of every crime in the calendar! I should not be greatly surprised if you were to be told that I had committed the grossest iniquity that ever was perpetrated and, my Brothers and Sisters, should you hear such a thing, it will not so much distress my spirit as it might have done in years gone by, now that I know that the world’s tongue is always ready to speak the worst word it can against the man who does it the most harm. If I am to fight the Lord’s battles, I may leave Him to fight mine! If I defend His Character, He will defend mine! I shall not defend my own—that I know—it is always a bad thing for a man to be his own defender!  
You must, all of you, have noticed in your more private capacity, how quick the men of the world are to find fault with you. You just stumble and they say that you have had a serious fall. There is one spot upon your cheek and they declare that your face is covered with mire. You stooped to pick up a pin and they affirm that you stole a ton of gold. That is the style in which they usually magnify our faults—and if they cannot find any, then they tell lies and invent them! It is a grand testimony to a man’s uprightness when worldlings cannot say anything against him without lying, for it shows that there is nothing of which they can truthfully accuse him! It is a noble thing for a man to be in such a position and then he can say, “Now have I come where I desire to be—there is no love lost between the world and me. The world is dead to me and I am dead to the world.” If we say hard things of the world—as we are bound to do if we are faithful—of course it will say hard things of us. If we say that it is a flaunting harlot, that its beauty is only painted and its joys are a sham, we must not be surprised if it says the same concerning us. Have you never noticed how, if two men are driving in the street, and one of them is on the wrong side, he is generally the one to call out to the other, “What are you doing?” So is it usually with the Church and the world—the world, because it is on the wrong side, will be sure to cry out to the Church, “What are you doing there?”  
Well, Christian, there is a joyous thought for all who have been slandered and abused! The day is coming when “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found”—when, before the eyes of an assembled universe, God’s despised servants shall be fully vindicated and against them not a dog shall move his tongue, even as it was in the day when Israel came up out of Egypt. Oh, glorious shall be that resurrection of buried reputations when there shall come up from the grave, not only God’s people, but also their characters, and they who have served the Lord faithfully shall shine as the stars in the firmament of Heaven forever and ever! It is to me a joyous thought that sinners who hate the Word of God, and hate God’s people, shall search for their sins, but shall not be able to find them!  
Yet again, Brothers and Sisters, there is one whose eye is even quicker than that of the world! One who is always searching for our faults—and that is our infernal enemy, Satan—Apollyon, the destroyer! Oh, how he watches us to do us harm! Never did a lion, crouching ready to spring upon its prey, watch the harmless deer feeding upon the plain, or drinking at the spring, more keenly and more fiercely than Satan watches us. He is always seeking to find faults in God’s people, that he may accuse them, sometimes through their own conscience and, at other times, by himself bringing the accusation against them up to the very Throne of the King! Happy, happy shall be the day when even Satan shall not be able to find fault with us! For then, in the Pit, he may bite at his iron bonds and may in secret hate and long to slander us, but his malice will all be in vain! The old serpent shall be unable to spit his venom upon the people of God. It will be a glorious triumph for you, poor devil-tried child of God, when you shall put your foot upon the old dragon’s neck and he shall be powerless to harm you!  
But there is One, whose eyes are quicker than those of the world, and whose sight is keener than that of Satan—it is HE, the all-seeing One, our Father and our God. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” If there were the faintest trail of sin upon us, He would discover it, for does He not search the heart and try the reins of the children of men? Can we hide ourselves anywhere from His Presence? Would the top of Carmel be too high for Him, or the depths of the sea too deep? If we seek to mount above the clouds to escape Him, or fly beyond the western sea to get beyond His sight, He is still there— everywhere, above, beneath, around—all eyes, all ears, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing—even before they are our own—the unformed thoughts that are within our inmost soul. But what a joy it is for us to know that even He will not be able to find a sin in any one of His blood-washed children! Up from the blessed bath we come and even Omniscience, itself, can see no spot remaining upon us. In the full blaze of the awful glory of the Day of Judgment, when God’s eyes shall read the most secret thoughts of the ungodly, and when His voice shall wake the echoes of every conscience, His eyes shall see no sin in those for whom Christ died! And His voice shall awaken in them no accusing thought, but only cause them unsullied joy because He perceives in them not even the shadow of a fault, for they are “accepted in the Beloved.”  
This is a sweet Truth of God and it is easy to utter, but how difficult it sometimes seems to grasp and hold it firmly! Yet, if we are believers in Jesus, we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus, for He has put away all our iniquities and cast all our sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. His own declaration to each of His redeemed ones, is, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” Fly, Gabriel, to all the countless hosts of Christ’s elect! Look upon each one as they now gather before the eternal Throne of God and say, you bright discerning angel, have you found a fault in any one of them? There is Mary Magdalene and there the penitent thief and yonder are Saul of Tarsus and Manasseh, and many more who were great sinners while here below—but can you see any sin in them now? There, too, stand the glorious hosts of those who, in these later days, have crossed the stream and entered their eternal rest. I charge you, O you watchers, you holy ones, tell me, can you find a fault in any one of them? The answer of all of them is, “No, the fact that they are here proves that they are without sin, for of this city it is written, ‘There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.’” Yes, when the Last Great Day shall come, and the whole family of the redeemed shall be safely housed in their Father’s home above, if each one should, individually, be put into the scales of the sanctuary, there is not one of whom it would be said, “Tekel: you are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting.” If they were all to be cast into the crucible, not one grain of dross would be found in the whole of them! Though many of them were, once, among the very chief of sinners, yet if they were all to be examined—as they will be—by the eyes of Infinite Justice, yet, in them all, no trace or shadow of sin shall be discovered!  
Now, in closing, I want you to take the sense of the words, which I understand to be that when God pardons His people, He pardons all their sins at once—not half, but all! Their blasphemy, their lust, their theft, their pride, their lying, or whatever their sin may have been—this is God’s receipt in full for all their indebtedness to Him—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin.” If you believe in Jesus now, my Hearer, there is not one sin recorded against you in God’s Book of Remembrance, nor a tithe of a sin, nor a shadow of iniquity!  
Not only does God pardon all the sins of His people, but He pardons in all senses of the term. You know that, sometimes, a man pardons his son for his wrongdoing, yet he cannot fully reinstate him in his confidence. He will not trust him with his money as he does his son who never wandered away from home. But God pardons completely. He harbors no ill thought of you, but loves you no less than He would have done if you had never sinned. If you had been as Adam was once—perfect and pure, without spot—God could not love you more than He does now, nor could He give you greater privileges, or higher honors. He has given you the promise of a crown and a share in His Son’s Throne and Glory! He has made you joint-heir with Christ of all that He has—what more could He have done for you had you been an absolutely perfect being?  
But, further, when God pardons a sinner, He puts away all his sin forever. The cloud may return after the rain, but the cloud of my sin comes back no more. When the winter is gone and the springtime and the summer have made their presence felt, yet we know that winter will come again and the leaves will fall from the trees. But the winter of my spirit’s sin will never return. The great sea, when it rolls up in its might, must go out again at the ebbing of the tide. But that ocean of the love of God, which covers up my sins, will never roll back, but shall abide at the full forever and ever! The sun of God’s mercy never sets when it has once risen. The stream of Divine Love never dries up when it has once begun to flow. It is no brook like Cherith, at the side of which a Prophet might sit down for a little while and then its waters fail—but it is an ever-flowing river, as perpetual as the eternal Fountain in the heart of God Himself!  
I know not where my brethren who think that pardoned sin may come back again, ever get any comfort. O Beloved, this Bible would be to me like a casket emptied of its jewels if you could ever take from me the firm belief that once forgiven, sin is no more imputed! Once washed away, the filthiness never returns! That was a magnificent argument of the Apostle Paul—“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Do you see the pith of the argument? If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled—the harder work—how much more, being friends, we shall be saved! And if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by His death, how much more, being friends, shall we be saved by His life!  
If we are washed in Jesus’ blood, verily we are clean, so clean that— *“Not the shadow of a spot  
Shall on our soul be found.”*  
Come death when it may, we shall meet it with joy, and not with sorrow, for—  
*“With our Savior’s garments on”*we shall be—  
*“Holy as the Holy One!”*

Sinner, if you have never known what it is to be pardoned, let it not seem like a dream to you. If you ask, “May I be forgiven?” I answer—Yes, certainly you may! Listen to what God Himself has said—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Sinner, if you believe in Christ, be your sins ever so many, they shall be blotted out, for—

*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in His crucified God,  
His pardon at once He receives,  
Redemption in full through His blood.”*

So, without delay, just as you are, come and trust in Christ! and your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven you, and you shall go on your way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, even as you are rejoicing in the assurance of the love of God. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 18:1-35.**

Verse 1. I will love You, O LORD, my strength. What a blessed “I will”— “I will love You”! He does love the Lord, and he declares that he will continue to do so. He feels that he must do so, for the Lord has been his strength. There are many aspects under which the love of our heart is most justly and fitly given to God and this is one of them. If the Lord has been the strength of our heart, then let our heart love Him.

2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my selection, and my high tower. How David heaps up the epithets! When the Believer once begins to praise the Lord, there is no end to it. He can never even satisfy himself, much less can he hope to rise to the height of this great argument! Notice how many of those little pronouns there are. Luther used to say that the very marrow of divinity lies in the pronouns. Certainly the sweetness—the honey of it lies here. Let me read the verse again, putting the emphasis on the pronouns—“The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

3. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies. Calling upon Him in prayer, and rendering praise to Him, “so shall I be saved from my enemies.” You remember how the army of Jehoshaphat marched forth into the valley of Berachah, singing and praising the Lord? They had no need to strike a blow, for the Lord gave them a glorious victory when they began to sing and to praise! And we might have more victories if we had more praise and more prayer. Now David goes on to tell us what had happened to him and what happened to the children of Israel when they came up out of the land of Egypt and went into the wilderness.

4, 5. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. That is, “went before me,” “lay in my pathway.” Did you ever have a window opened in your heart so that you could see all the ruin of your nature—all the possibilities of evil that lay asleep within your soul? Did you ever feel, as you gazed upon that sight, as if you were looking over the edge of the bottomless Pit? Ah, then, you have been in the condition which the Psalmist here describes—“The sorrows of Hell compassed me about: the snares of death lay in my pathway.”

6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. That is a wonderful expression, “My cry came before Him, even into His ears.” That is, of course, speaking after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other manner. God appeared to hear David’s cry as you and I hear a thing when we say, “It seemed to ring in my ears, I could not get rid of the sound of it.” What happened then?

7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was angry. The Lord was angry with those who had made His child cry, as a father is angry with one who injures a beloved child of his, or as a mother is angry with one who puts her babe to pain. The Lord made the earth to tremble because He was angry at the oppressors of His servant.

8. There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. That is David’s graphic and striking representation of the indignation of God on his behalf.

9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet. This is a wonderful description of the interposition of God on behalf of His people. The scene referred to by David is probably the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel enemies.

10. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. So swift is prayer to reach the heart of God—and so swift is God to come to the help of His people!

11, 12. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. For all the dread artillery of Heaven shall be used for the defense of the faithful. God will hold nothing in reserve when His people are in danger.

13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. What made God speak in those terrible tones? It was the faint and feeble cry of His poor servant down below. Can you and I make thunder? Yes, we can. If we can thunder at the gates of Heaven by prayer, God will thunder in the heavens in His Omnipotence! He will quickly respond to His children’s cries. The first Christians who were employed in the Roman armies were called the thundering legion, because, it was said, once upon a time when they prayed, God sent a thunderstorm to destroy their enemies and, truly, a living Church of God that is full of prayer, may be called a thundering legion!

14. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning, and discomfited them. What a wonderful picture this is—as if the Eternal had taken down His bow and aimed His shafts of lightning against the foes of His people!

15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. At the Red Sea, Moses sang, “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” But here, David does not represent God as sending forth a great wind, but as if, in His eagerness to help His servant, His very nostrils gave forth such a mighty blast as made the sea to divide, so that “the channels of the waters were seen.” It is one of the most vivid pieces of poetry that ever fell from the pen of Inspired or uninspired man!

16, 17. He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me. When a child of God is in such a condition that he cannot help himself and he cries to his Heavenly Father, then the Lord always helps him. Our proverb says, “God helps those that help themselves.” That is true, but there is something better than that. God helps those who cannot help themselves. That proves the greatness of His mercy, which endures forever. David said of his foes, “They were too strong for me,” but they were not too strong for the Lord to overthrow!

18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. “I leaned on Him. I rested on Him. I relied on Him and so I was made peaceful, calm, quiet, confident in Him—‘The Lord was my stay.’”

19. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me. What do you say to that, Believer? That God delights in you—that He finds something in you, which He has put there by His Grace, which is the object of His benevolence? Is it not your likeness to His dear Son, whom He loves so much, that wherever He sees His image, there His love flows forth?

20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For when God gives a man holiness, He will give him happiness! Holiness and happiness usually go together and if, for a while, they seem to be divided, they shall soon be united again.

21-24. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight. The godly never see any merit in their own works, they never have any trust in them for salvation, yet they cannot help observing, with pleasure, that when God enables them to walk uprightly, He sooner or later delivers them. If you come into any trouble because you fear God and serve Him, you will come out of it again. Yes, and come out of it like the three holy children came out of the furnace—with not so much as the smell of fire remaining upon you.

25, 26. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show Yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate. If a man walks in a obstinate way, and opposes God, he will soon find that God treats him in a similar fashion. Sinners shall surely smart for their sin. Rebels shall yet sing another tune, however loudly they may boast today and scoff at God and His people.

27. For You will save the afflicted people. There is comfort there for any of you who are His people, and who are under His afflicting hand.  
27. But will bring down high looks. Pride enflames the indignation of Jehovah—it is to the humble that He has regard.  
28. For You will light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. Plead that promise if you are in the dark at this moment. If you are God’s child, He will bring you out into the light before long.  
29. For by You I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. God’s warriors have to fight in various ways and in all they must show themselves like men, and ascribe all their triumphs to their Lord.  
30. As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him. No armor of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the Covenant God of Israel protects His warring people. He is Himself the buckler of trustful ones.  
31. For who is God save the LORD? Or who is a rock save our God? Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely, in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge!  
32- 36. It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds’ feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation: and Your right hand has held me up, and Your gentleness has made me great. I think you will see that David has given us, in this Psalm, the reasons why he began by saying, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2648 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SACRED MEMORIES  
NO. 2648

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 9, 1882.

**“Let Jerusalem come into Your mind.”  
Jeremiah 51:50.**

This message from the Lord was written by the Prophet Jeremiah to the Jews who were carried away to Babylon or even to more distant places. They were entreated not to forget the holy city where they had worshipped Jehovah in His Temple. Among all their thoughts, they were bidden to take care that the thought of Jerusalem should often come into their minds. This would keep them from settling down in the places to which they had been carried as captives. They were always far too ready to mingle with other nations and to forget that God had separated them to be a people unto Himself forever. So Jeremiah begged them to keep the holy city in their minds, that they might not judge themselves as having become Persians or Babylonians, but might still remember that they were Israelites and that Jerusalem was their mother city and home.

Besides, this kind of meditation would raise in their hearts ardent longings to get back. “Let Jerusalem come into your mind,” that is, “Sigh for it. Earnestly desire to come back to it and as you cut the various ties which bind you to the distant land, let the links which unite you to Jerusalem become stronger every day.” We know, from the 137th Psalm, that this is just what the captives did—“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” This was a proof that they regarded the country where they dwelt—and where many of them prospered and became great—as a place of banishment. Their pathetic lament proved that they never could be truly happy till they were back at the place of Israel’s solemn assemblies, the spot which was specially dedicated to the worship of the Most High.

This feeling that they were aliens in a strange land and their longing desire to return to their native country would make them quick to observe everything that might work for the good of Jerusalem. If any of them came to be the king’s cupbearer, as Nehemiah was, or occupied any position at court, as Mordecai and Esther did, they would be on the lookout for opportunities of working for the good of their beloved city and they would avail themselves of every occasion for protecting and benefiting the race to which they belonged. This was the Prophet’s desire and it was also the Lord’s purpose, that they might find no permanent satisfaction in Babylon, but always sigh for the city of their solemnities, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth”—that they might never sing the praises of Shushan, but might reserve all their admiration for Zion, where God revealed Himself to His people as He never did to the other nations of the earth.

It is somewhat in the same sense that I beg you, who are the Lord’s people, to remember the spiritual Jerusalem and, for similar reasons, that you may feel that this world is not your rest, that your citizenship is not upon earth, but is in Heaven, that you may sing, from your very heart—

*“Jerusalem, my happy home!  
My soul still pants for you.”*

I shall use the text in two ways and show you, first, that there is a Jerusalem here below which should come into our minds. And, secondly, that there is a Jerusalem above which should come into our minds.

I. First, we will use the text with reference to THE JERUSALEM HERE BELOW WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MINDS, that is, the Church of God on earth. The Church is all one, whether in Heaven or on earth. I may call the heavenly Jerusalem the Upper City where stands the tower of David, built for an armory, and the Temple in all its glory. While here below is the Lower City—but one wall runs around all. There is but one Church of the living God—

*“For all the servants of our King,  
In earth and Heaven are one.”*  
Still, at present, the division stands good because it is so to our experience. And we still have to say, concerning the “one army of the living God”— *“Part of His host have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now.”*

So, taking our text as referring to the Church of God on earth, I say to you, first, that if you are a true Believer, let it come into your mind so that you may unite yourself with its citizens. Some of you who love the Lord have attended to almost everything except the one thing which you ought to have done as soon as you trusted in Christ, namely, cast in your lot with the people of God on earth. You have made your will, you have kept your business affairs straight and right. You have set your family matters in order. All of that is as it should be, but still, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” And there are some of you who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who, if you did think of this matter, would have to say, “I am not an avowed member of Christ’s Church. I trust that I belong to Jesus, but I have not said as much as that by my public profession. I hope that I follow Him, but I am afraid that it is only afar off and that I wear a mask which hides my Christianity. I have not come out boldly and said, ‘I am on the Lord’s side.’ There sits the man of whom Bunyan writes, ‘with a book and his inkhorn before him,’ but I have never said to him, ‘Set down my name, Sir. I, also, belong to Jesus of Nazareth, and I will be numbered with His people.’ They may not be all I would like them to be, but I am afraid they are far better than I am—and if I might but have the lowest place among them, I would be glad. ‘I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.’”

I am not now talking about what is essential to salvation. I have no doubt that there are many true-hearted pilgrims to Zion who steal away to Heaven alone. They do not go on pilgrimage with their fellows and they are not to be commended for this, for they miss many privileges in neglecting Christian fellowship and, besides, they are not so serviceable to their Lord and Master. Let these lone saints seriously think over this question. If all the children of God were to go to Heaven in that fashion, each one, alone, where would there be any visible Church of God on earth at all? How would Gospel ordinances be maintained? How would the war for King Jesus be carried on? But, if one may do it, all may do it—and it is always an evil thing for any child of God to be doing what he would not have the rest of his Brothers and Sisters doing!

I remember that, one night, while preaching here, I told you that some Christians are like rats behind the wall. On the following Wednesday, when I sat to see enquirers, I had several who said that they would not be rats any longer. They could not bear to have such a title as that, so they resolved that they would come out and confess Christ! I was very glad to have barked so loudly as to frighten them out of their holes and I would like to do the same thing again! If you belong to Christ, say so in His own appointed way! In party politics, men are not generally ashamed to show on which side they are. And people of various nationalities, wherever they wander, are not ashamed to be called Britons, or Americans, or whatever they are. Then why should we, who are followers of the Savior, be ashamed to acknowledge His blessed name! Let it not be so, but rather, cry, “If there is a cross to be carried, here is a shoulder, ready to bear it!” Say you not so, my dear Friends? If there is any shame to be borne for Christ, will you stand back there, snug and comfortable, and let others bear it all alone? No. I think I hear you say, “If there is any mud to be thrown at Christ’s followers, let it be thrown at me. If there is any enmity to be shown to the chosen people of God, let me participate in it, for, as I hope to share their glory, so would I willingly bear a portion of their shame.”

Come now, you who have forgotten all about this matter! I beg to repeat my text especially to you—“Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Let this message be to you like the still small voice of Jehovah was to Elijah. And go and put your name down among Christ’s disciples and let it not be merely a nominal thing, but give your person and your purse, your time and your talents to Christ and to His Church—and may the blessing of the Master rest upon you in doing it!

Taking it for granted that you have done this, I would next say to you, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind” by praying for its prosperity. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you.” I think that in all our prayers, there should always be a petition for the one great Church of Jesus Christ. You know that in David’s penitent cry, in the 51st Psalm, when he bemoaned his sin and sought the pardoning mercy of God, he could not close his supplication without saying, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.” So, when your sin and your repentance for it seem as if they must engross your prayer, and you must, with many sighs and tears, seek mercy for yourself, yet, even then, be not selfish, but pray for all who are in a same case with yourself. And pray for that happier band who have found mercy through the bleeding Lamb and are numbered with the people of God. There should be no private prayer—there should be no family prayer—there certainly should be no public prayer, without petitions for the prosperity of the Church of God in every place. Take care that you do not forget that important matter—in this sense, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

And when this has been done, what are we to do next? Why, then, let us labor for the advancement of the good cause. If there is any object in the world worth living for, it is the Glory of the Lord Jesus and the salvation and the sanctification of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood. Now, to this end—that the Church of Christ may be made perfect in Him—there is much to be done in the ingathering of sinners and the helping and comforting and perfecting of saints. And you and I ought to take our fair share of this blessed work! There are some who have no time for any holy duties—from the moment they wake in the morning till they go to bed at night, they voluntarily give up all their energies to making money. I would like to whisper in their ear very softly, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Does not God deserve at least some part of their time? And His Church some little effort for her extension? There are some people who are busy, here and there, and rightly so, in all sorts of philanthropic movements, but they seem to forget that the greatest philanthropic organization on the face of the earth is the Church of the living God! And that there is nothing which can so bless the world as Christ in the midst of His own people.

I would like to step up to these friends and say to them, “‘Let Jerusalem come into your mind.’ Give the Lord Jesus some of your help. Consecrate to His cause some of your thought—some of your most tender affection.” It is a great pity when we cannot do anything for Christ—are there any Christians who are in that sad condition? Are they without hands— without feet—without eyes—without tongues—without hearts? Well, then, I do not think they can do much if that is the case. But until they can prove that they have lost all these parts of their body, I shall say that they can do something for Jerusalem, even if they only remember it! If you cannot preach, you can pray! If you cannot pray aloud, you can plead with God in secret! There are many who cannot preach, but who can give—and there are others who cannot give, who, nevertheless, can speak a word here and there for the Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of weapons waiting for you if you have a mind to wield them. You know what the Israelites took with them when they went out to fight the Philistines. They had only axes, plowshares and suchlike rough implements, but they seized everything that they were accustomed to use on the farm and employed it as a weapon of warfare! It is well to know how to use all the implements of our service in the house, shop and trade in fighting the Philistines and winning victories for the Lord God of Hosts and for His people! So, while you are diligent and energetic in your various philanthropic and other efforts, I would again whisper in your ear, “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Jerusalem should also come into our minds so that we should prefer its privileges to earthly gain. Whenever we are about to make a settlement in any place and have the choice of residence left to ourselves, the first matter we ought to consider is the religious advantages or disadvantages. I admire the action of that Jew who, when he was about to select a city in which he could pursue his business, asked his friend, the Rabbi, “Is there a synagogue in such-and-such a place?” The Rabbi replied, “No,” so the Jew said, “Then I will not go to live there, for I will not settle in any place where there is no synagogue, for I must gather with my brethren for the worship of God.” I wish Christian people always thought and acted in a similar way yet, often, for the sake of a trifling gain, they fix their abode where they are altogether deprived of the means of Grace! Now, if you should be obliged to go live in such a spiritual desert, that is another matter. And you should feel that you are sent there on purpose to turn the wilderness into a fruitful garden by setting up a synagogue, establishing a House of Prayer and so becoming a light in a dark place! But, wantonly, and without any objective except that of financial gain, to select a residence where there will be no spiritual meat for you looks as if you had but slight regard for Christ, or for His Church. At such a time, “let Jerusalem come into your mind,” and say to yourself, “I must go where my soul will be fed, or where I can be the means of feeding the souls of others. This must be one of the chief considerations in my choice of a place to live—“Can I be of service, there, to the Church of God? If not, it is better for me to be useful in poverty than to be useless in wealth—better for me to win souls and have a struggle for bread, than to rise into the highest position of opulence and never have an opportunity of bringing a sinner to Christ.” Will you kindly think carefully and prayerfully on that matter and, in all your settlements in life, “let Jerusalem come into your mind”?

Once more upon this theme, if you are a member of a Christian Church—if you are working for the Church—if you are praying for the Church, “let Jerusalem come into your mind” in this way, always act consistently with your relationship to the Church. I am glad that I was, while only a lad, baptized into the name of the Sacred Trinity. Well do I remember that May morning when I walked into the river at Isleham Ferry and thus declared publicly that I belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ! By that act of immersion, I felt that I had crossed the Rubicon and there was no possibility of ever going back. I had burned the boats behind me so that I could not retreat, nor have I ever wanted to do so! It did not matter to me how many spectators looked on me that day, nor whether they were angels, men, or devils—I wanted them all to witness that, from that day on, I was Christ’s servant—that I bore in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the watermark which could never be taken out—that I was dead to the world and risen with my Lord, to serve Him forever and ever! And I have often felt, when a temptation has assailed me, that it has been a very blessed check upon me to remember that, perhaps of all men in the world, I am the most known as having declared myself on the Lord’s side.

I do not want to be less known, in that respect, but I feel that I must be doubly careful. I must mind how I act, for I have declared, before Heaven and earth and Hell, that I am the Lord’s! When I hear a young person say, “I am afraid to be baptized and to join the Church, for I fear that it will be such a bond to me,” I ask, “Do you not want to have such a bond as that?” Who wants to be free to sin? I do not, I am sure! No, blessed Master, if You have another chain, fling it round Your servant, for there is no freedom like the liberty of serving God and being bound to do so! You remember how sweetly David wrote upon this matter—“O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds”—as if he only felt sure of his freedom when the bonds of the Lord were round about him! And then all other bonds were gone.

If you are apt to be very quick-tempered, the next time you are going to boil over, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Be calm and remember that you profess to be a Christian—that is, one who is like Christ. Then if, in trade, there seems at any time an opportunity of making a dishonest penny, stop, stop, stop! “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” What will men say about the Church to which you belong if they see that you can act as dishonestly as mere worldlings do? This thought ought to hold many a man back from doing what he would have done—“The vows of God are upon me. I am a Red Cross knight. I have enlisted in the army of Christ and it would be shameful for a man who is reckoned to be a Christian—called by that most wonderful of all names that comes from the Divine anointing of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God—it would be shameful for such a man to act as the ungodly would do in the same circumstances.” No, no, my Brothers and Sisters, wait a while—pull up till you have thoroughly considered the whole question. Look at it from all points of view and say, with Joseph, “How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Oh, that the text and our meditation upon it may be a protection to us whenever we are tempted to sin! “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

II. I have saved a good portion of our time for the second part of my discourse which is to be concerning THE JERUSALEM ABOVE WHICH SHOULD COME INTO OUR MIND.

First, let it come into the mind of the Believer. We do not think one hundredth as much about Heaven as we ought to. Most people seem to imagine we cannot know anything about it and they quote half a text, which is almost as bad as telling a lie—“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.” There they stop! But that is not where the Scripture ends, for the Apostle went on to say, “But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” They quote the first half of the passage to prove that we do not know anything about Heaven, whereas the second part tells us that we do know a great deal about it! And if we would but turn our thoughts that way, we might become almost as familiar with the inside of the gates of pearl as we are with the streets of this clouded, foggy city! We may learn much about Heaven, even while we are here, if we are but willing to be taught of God.

Why should the Christian let Jerusalem come into his mind? I think, first, because Jesus is there. A little child, who was dying, expressed his intense delight because he knew that he was going to Heaven. And one who stood by said, “But, my dear, what makes you wish to be there?” His prompt answer was, with flashing eyes, “Because Jesus is there.” The friend then said to him, “But suppose that Jesus should go out of Heaven?” “Then I will go with Him,” replied the child, “for He has prayed that those whom His Father has given Him may be with Him where He is.” That is just what we feel! Jesus is the Husband of our hearts—should we not think much of the place where He dwells? If a wife were banished from her home for a while, I know that she would like to look at the portrait of her beloved and at a view of the house where she hoped to dwell with him again. And in like manner should your thoughts go out to your Well-Beloved while you are, for a time, barred from enjoying His company and you should think much of the place which He has gone to prepare for you, as He told His disciples, “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” Shall Jesus talk like that and yet shall not Jerusalem come into your mind? Oh, surely, it shall, for His dear sake! Because He is there, our heart instinctively turns that way. We watch for His appearing, with our window open towards that Jerusalem, looking for and hastening unto the day when He shall come to us! And meanwhile, the heavenly Jerusalem comes often into our mind because Christ is there.

Further, the child of God should have Jerusalem upon his mind in all his earthly enjoyments. Sometimes God permits His own dear children to have many comforts on earth. They are not always in great tribulation and then the danger is lest they should begin to love this world and the things that are in it. Are any of you, dear Friends, growing rich? Are you in good health and strength? Has God surrounded you with children? Are you blessed with every joy in this life? Then remember that these are the things that make it hard to die unless you have some counterattraction to put side by side with them. “Let Jerusalem come into your mind” for, when a man once thinks aright of Heaven, the highest joys of earth become very secondary!

I have heard of a nobleman who lay at the gates of death and his king sent him a new title and fresh honors. He was to be a knight of some noble order. The nobleman looked at the insignia of knighthood and said, “These are fine things for you who are here below and, therefore, I heartily thank His Majesty for sending them to me. But I am going to another country where distinctions like this have no value whatever.” So you may say, if you have the comforts of this life, “These are fine things, here, and I heartily thank God who gave me all of them in His kindness. But I am going to a country where these things are nothing at all and, therefore, I will have little or no regard for them. My heart is in Heaven—my heart is not here. My treasure is up yonder and it has drawn my heart away up to itself and there it abides.” Oh, yes! In the times of your greatest happiness, still cling to your Lord! In the days of joy as well as in the nights of sorrow, let Him be your All-in-All! When God’s light fills your sky with sunshine, still love Him as much as when you are in the darkness and, according to the judgment of the flesh, everything is going ill with you.

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us equally allow the heavenly Jerusalem to come into our mind in poverty and persecution. Ah, then is the time, when it is bleak below, to think how blessed are they who are with Jesus above! Renwick, the great Scotch divine and martyr for the Truth of God, when he was hunted over the mosses and the mountains of the land, said to certain faithful friends who gathered around him, “I have lain two nights on the bleak hillside and they have been wild and stormy nights, and I have had nothing to cover me except the curtains of Heaven. And I have experienced the most intense delight when, between the times of tempest, I have seen the stars shining in Glory—and I have thought how every saint above shall shine yet more brightly forever and ever. And when I have thought of the bliss of those who are before the Throne of God, I have laughed to think how little men can do to hurt any child of God.” The good man was right and you may say the same as he did if you are hunted by cruel persecutors. If you can but maintain fellowship with Jesus, you need not fear them! They can but kill the body and afterwards there is nothing more that they can do. But, when the glorified spirit walks the streets of gold and beholds the magnificence of his everlasting inheritance, he looks down on his persecutors and says, “What can you do to me now? I am immortal and you cannot harm me! My heritage is up here and you cannot take it from me.” O you who suffer poverty and persecution, “let Jerusalem come into your mind,” for this will help you to bear up under the greatest trials!

So, too, should Jerusalem come into our mind whenever we are heavy and downcast. Some of the best of God’s saints get into that condition. I know plenty of Christian people who are not good enough to be despondent—I mean that they do not think enough, for, if they really did think and meditate, they would soon be partakers of that heaviness of which Peter speaks when he says, “Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials.” I believe that most of God’s children sometimes get down in the dumps. There is a coal cellar to God’s house as well as a banqueting hall and, although I should like to always live in the banqueting hall, I have many a time been down in the coal cellar—and I have learned more, there, than I have learned upstairs! Well, dear Friends, whenever you get down there in the very basement of God’s great house, begin to think of the upper stories—of those windows of agate and gates of carbuncle that are up yonder! Think of how you will lean out of the windows of Heaven to look down upon this poor dusky earth. Think of how you will walk up there among cherubim and seraphim, familiar with their joyous sonnets—and then all the sorrows of your mortal life shall seem to have been but as a pin-prick, or “as a dream, when one awakes.” Oh, the bliss of being able, even when you are despondent, to mount up to Heaven by faith and walk with God! Thus, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Further, it is well to let Jerusalem come into our mind in the time of bereavement. Who has not lost a friend, a child, a wife, a husband, a beloved one of some sort? Well, when you take out your handkerchief because the tears flow fast, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” That eminent man, Mr. Halyburton, when he was dying so triumphantly—and perhaps there was never a death more triumphant than was his—said, “I have 10 brothers and sisters, and a father and mother in Heaven, and I shall make the 11th of their children when I get there. And this is part of the joy that I have in departing, that I shall see my kindred before the Throne of God.” Yes, your dear infant children—you shall see them again! Refrain from weeping, Rachel—you are the mother of immortals! True, their little coffins are beneath the ground, but their spirits are not there. Every day they behold the face of our Father who is in Heaven! And some of us have parents or grandparents who have been called up above. Well, we are following them and we shall be there, too, in God’s good time! I would that we might be unbroken families before the Throne of God—our children and our children’s children, all gathered there and not one left out! When you linger at the side of the silent grave, weep not too much, but “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

I also think it a suitable time to remember this Jerusalem when you are growing very old—when the threescore years and ten are over—when you have taken out a fresh lease for another ten or a dozen years and have almost run that out. Now you are living by the day and are liable to have notice to leave at any moment. Well, certainly, now is the time to “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” There are no furrows on the brows of the glorified, no limping limbs, or failing eyes, or closing ears! The gray old man shall be as young as a child there! “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” You may well say, “What joy is this to think of Jerusalem!”

There was a nobleman, who invited good Mr. Foxe, the man who wrote The Book of Martyrs, to come and spend a merry Christmas with him, “for,” he said, “Mr. Foxe, next Christmas I hope to have such entertainment for my friends as you will approve.” Mr. Foxe said, “I do believe that it will be a high day for me next Christmas, for I shall be where they keep holiday forever! What do you think of the state of immortals when they quit their bodies?” His lordship was all at sea when Mr. Foxe talked to him like that—but so it proved, for Foxe had, by that time, gone up to Heaven to see the martyrs whose lives he had written about and I know that he did spend his Christmas far more merrily than they did in the mansion below! What better thing can happen to you, dear old saints, than to get Home to your Father’s House? Here you are, as it were, left out in the cold for a while, but the great Door will soon open and the angel will come to beckon you in. Some who have gone before have been watching for you at the gate and you will have a joyous welcome! Therefore, when your aches and pains are upon you, and all the ensigns of old age are flying, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Do the same in times of sickness. And if your sickness should be unto death, then all the more, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.” I was thinking of the little son of a Duke of Hamilton, a long way back, when there was graciousness in that family. This lad would, in a short time, at his father’s decease, have become a duke. He was a very gracious child and he was taken away very early. When he was near his end, he called his next brother to him and he said to him, “Douglas, in a little while you will be a duke, but I shall be a king!” Oh, that is blessed for you when you are sure of such glory as that! You might well give up a dukedom and go to Heaven in any boat that God might choose to send! I would not have any choice about that matter. Some people are always dreading sudden death, but, for a Christian, what can be better than to die all of a sudden and to go Home when all is right and ready? But, anyway, whichever way we go, whether in the swift gondolas of sudden death, or in the slower barges of lingering sickness, we shall get to port all right— and that is the chief matter, to sail into the Fair Havens where we shall abide forever! So, in times of sickness, “let Jerusalem come into your mind.”

Now I have to conclude with a word to those who have, at present, no part or lot in the New Jerusalem. I should like to be the medium through which the still small voice should reach some of you who do not yet know the Lord.

Listen. What if you should never enter the New Jerusalem? Then, say, “Farewell,” to all the saints, for you will be divided from them forever! Say, “Farewell,” in your heart to all those blessed ones you loved on earth and who, in their death, exhorted you to follow them. Take leave of them, for you shall never sit down with them, or see them again unless it is from such a distance that there will be no communion between you and them, for between them and you there will be a great gulf! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, must I never see your pearly gates and ruby walls, and never see the King except to hear Him say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire”? “Let Jerusalem come into your mind.” Do not be any longer halting between two opinions! If you do not enter the New Jerusalem, where else can you go? There is but one other place, though even some so-called Protestants, nowadays, seem to be seeking to revive a belief in “purgatory”—yet there is no such place!

I heard of one, the other day, who said to the preacher, after he had been preaching according to Christ’s Word, the doctrine of everlasting punishment, “Sir, I believe that I shall go to Hell for a season, but afterwards get round to Heaven.” “Man,” said the preacher, “even if what you say is true, when there is a straightforward road to Heaven, what a fool you must be to want to go round by way of Hell!” Yet there are still some such foolish folk—they think that they must go round about when there is set before them an open door on which is inscribed, “Believe and live.” There are some who will have no Hell whatever and, as I think of them, I am reminded of a story that I heard of a little boy, whose uncle had imbibed this false doctrine. The uncle had been telling the child the story about the babes in the woods. “Uncle,” said the boy, “where did the little babies go to after the robins had covered their bodies with leaves?” “They went to Heaven, Johnny.” “And where did their wicked uncle go to?” “Oh, to Heaven, Johnny!” Johnny’s looked in utter disbelief. “Why, Uncle!” he said, “then he will kill the babies again!” Just so, if their natures are not renewed, wicked men would do in Heaven the same as they did here! And that cannot be. Do you see the folly of such teaching? Christ’s message is, “You must be born again.” You must be renewed in nature. You must come to Christ and put your trust in Him, or else, into the New Jerusalem it is not possible for you to enter!

Now, in closing, I want each one of you to ask these two or three questions of yourself. “How is my life today in reference to Heaven? Am I living so that it would be safe to let me into Heaven? Am I so living that it would be possible for God to be righteous and to let me be perfectly happy?” Listen to that question and honestly answer it, for God will do no unrighteous thing! Neither will He ever marry Heaven and sin together. There is an eternal division between those two! Mark the next question—“What objection can I possibly have to being saved tonight? What reason can there be against my believing in Jesus Christ while He bids me do so? It will not make me miserable to have my soul saved—it cannot make me unhappy to be made holy! The right way must be the best way and the best way must be the happiest way. Christ will not refuse me if I go to Him tonight. I have no reason to think that He will, but I have every reason to know that He will not, for He has said, ‘Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’” So may it be! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **REVELATION 21:9-27.**

Verses 9-22. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. The less there is of true religion, the more there usually is of outward ritualism. When true religion shall fill every heart and God shall be the supreme joy of His people, they will need no temple.

23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Outward means are abolished when their mission is accomplished.

24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. The Church shall be the metropolis of the world. It shall be honored and esteemed among the nations of mankind. When men are godly, then will they reverence the abode of God, namely, the living Church, built up of living stones, upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ!

25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. There will be no need to shut out enemies at night, for the day shall last right on. The Church’s most intimate communion with God, her constant commerce with the skies, will have then begun.

26, 27. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Into this holy city, the graceless, the Christless, the faithless shall never come. Here we have a mixture of light and darkness, but, in those better days, it shall be all light and the darkness shall have fled far away forever.

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?  
NO. 1620

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On a night when the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers, the ordinary hearers vacating their seats for the occasion.

**“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.” Lamentations 1:12.**

SYMPATHY with suffering ones is never content to act her part alone. The man who is sorrowful for another is sure to invite others to join him in his sympathy. It seems to him so sad a thing that he would have all men weep over it with himself. It is so great a grief that he would hang the heavens with blackness and drape the world in sackcloth. Hence Jeremiah, when he saw the sorrows of Jerusalem, complained of all who dared to pass her by without a lamentation. He beheld that ancient and glorious city besieged by her adversaries, invaded by their fierce armies and given over to plunder, to murder, to fire and desolation. He beheld the streets running with the blood of her sons and daughters, her houses broken down and her glorious Temple defiled and laid in ashes.

Do you wonder that he wept and called upon others to weep with him? He pictured Jerusalem as sitting by the wayside, like a maiden who has been sorely wounded and is in bitter grief, crying out in her loveliness and anguish, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” In all the annals of history there never was sorrow equal to the fate of Jerusalem! Many cities have been destroyed, but none have fallen amid such a tempest of terrors. Some have been devoured with famine, wasted with pestilence, or broken down by war—but as for you, O Jerusalem—all these evils met upon you as when the vultures hasten from afar and meet upon the slain. Beautiful for situation, yet terrible for desolation! Joy of the whole earth and yet the queen of sorrow! How utterly were you spoiled! Had grape-gatherers gathered the grapes, they would have left, here and there, a cluster, but, O Jerusalem, you are thoroughly stripped—no fruit remains in you—your desolation is complete! How terrible was your lot and how grievous was your fault! Well did the Prophet, in the foresight of your tremendous doom, cry to all the nations, “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?”

But, Friends, the fact of sympathy’s eager love of companionship is true in other instances. I, too, share the sympathetic avarice of Jeremiah’s pity. Do you ask what grief I have and for whose woes I am a mourner? I point you to the Cross and to the Man of Sorrows there. All faithful servants of Christ who love their Master would have their hearers mourn for Him, even as the Prophet foretold—“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for Him.” When they think of Calvary and of their wounded, bleeding Lord, they cannot help imitating Jeremiah and picturing their Lord as crying from the Cross, “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” Therefore in all ages of the Church this has been a favorite text—not as directly meaning what we shall say upon it, but as suggesting an adaptation and asking to be used in our case as Jeremiah used it in his own.

We apply to Jesus and His sufferings, tonight, the words which the Prophet wrote in reference to Judea and her national sorrow. We hear the Son of God saying in His death pangs to all this vast assembly, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” And this is my first head tonight—the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are unparalleled. When we have dwelt enough upon this, we will proceed to note, secondly, that they have a deep interest to many. And we will conclude, thirdly, by enquiring whether they have not some interest for you?

O that God the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, would now bear His testimony in all your hearts for His mercy’s sake.

I. First, then, THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD UPON THE CROSS WERE ALTOGETHER UNPARALLELED. I tell no idle tale tonight! I draw no picture of romance, but the sorrows which we now relate are matters of fact! Out of the excellent Glory let the Lord confirm it tonight, if it is His truth, by the witness of His Spirit. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came down in boundless pity among the sons of men and took upon Himself our human nature! Quitting the infinite honors of the skies, He came to the lowliness of the manger and the labor of the carpenter’s shop—and here He lived, suffering as a real man, all the sorrows and infirmities of our mortality.

In our nature He lived some 30 years or more, enduring much of poverty and labor. And at the end, thereof, He died, not amid the applause of all mankind, as He deserved, but nailed to the Cross—like a felon or a slave, a spectacle of scorn and infamy—the despised and rejected of men! The sufferings of this Divine One were unparalleled, first, because of the dignity of His Person which gave such point to the insult which He endured. Kings have died. Philosophers have died. Philanthropists have died, but never such a One as this, for He that bled on Calvary was King, Priest and Prophet—a right royal Man, and more—the Son of the Highest! God that made the heavens and earth was in personal union with that Man who died upon the Cross of Calvary.

What a stoop it must have been for Him—from the brightness of the Father’s Glory to be made the image of shame! A dethroned monarch is always the object of compassion and a once famous general, sitting at the city gate and begging for a penny from every traveler that passes by has been, in all ages, spoken of as a person to be deeply pitied. But what shall I say of Him who stood as the center of angelic hosts, the prince of the kings of the earth? Aside He flung His most Divine array! He girded Himself with garments of this flesh and blood and then became a Man among men and for men—only to be despised of men. Being here among His own, His own received Him not! Instead of receiving Him, they dragged Him to the judgment hall.

They scourged Him. They took Him into the common hall of the soldiers and they spat in His face! They blindfolded Him, they buffeted Him. They mocked at all His holy offices. They put an old soldier’s cloak about Him and then brought Him out and cried, “Behold the Man!” They nailed Him to the Cross and then stood there and said, “If He is the Christ, let Him come down.” They made fun of His prayers and when He said, “Eloi, Eloi,” they said, “He calls for Elijah.” They spared Him nothing that shame could invent—and all this was poured on One whose feet honored the ground they trod upon, the glances of whose eyes were angels’ Law, the words of whose mouth were the music of God’s ears. “He was despised and rejected of men,” even He who was and is the King of kings, the Lord of lords! Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which was done unto Him!

There was also this strange point about our Redeemer’s suffering, namely, the perfect innocence of His Character. Many a man has died innocent of that which was laid to his charge, but no man has been perfectly innocent of every kind of fault. In this Man there was never taint of evil. He was born without tendency to sin, for the natural corruption of our nature was not in Him. And He lived never doing wrong to man, or woman, or child and never, by omission or by commission, violating the Divine will of the Most High. He was absolutely perfect, so that He could say when Satan came to assail Him, “The Prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me.”

Now, herein is a sorrow never to be forgotten—that He must bleed and die and, moreover—that He must so suffer as to be connected with sin. It is anguish and agony for even the breath of evil to blow upon innocence. He was never guilty and never could have been so in any sense—and yet sin was laid to His charge for our sakes—and He died accused of treason and of blasphemy! In Him was no sin and yet the sins of men were laid upon Him! Here, bring them here, the sins of ages! Heap them on His back—the sins of men that lived before He was on earth, the crimes of multitudes who transgressed in His own day and the sins of all the ages since—your sins and mine! They are all brought together and massed together—the total sum—how dreadful!

Hear the Word of God, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The Innocent, therefore, not only suffers, but suffers in strange connection with sin—and this must have caused an awful shrinking to our Lord’s most holy soul. You and I are comparatively hardened to sin and, therefore, it does not so alarm us as it did the perfect soul of Christ who had no spot or trace of evil upon Him. There was one tried for murder years ago and some thought it an argument for his innocence that he stood in the dock calm and composed. But others said, “Not so! Innocent men are the very persons who shudder most at having such a crime laid to their charge and he who could bear the charge without emotion is most probably the man who has committed the crime.”

Truth lies in that observation. For the innocent Christ to be made sin for us—for the wrath of God to roll over Him instead of us—must have caused within His spirit a depth of anguish which the most tender heart cannot fathom! Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow! Was there ever dignity that suffered such indignity, or innocence that came into contact with such a mass of sin and suffered for it all? But this is not all, nor half of it! There was another wonder about the sufferings of Christ, namely, that in His case there was such a conjunction of griefs. Have you ever noticed that when you have one trouble, as a rule some other one is absent? Of course, if the north wind blows, the south does not, also, blow and if we have the troubles of summer, we do not also endure the evils of winter at the same time. One grief often strangles another in its arms.

We read in Acts of a place where two seas met. Rough navigation there, my Brethren, where two seas meet, for one sea is often more than enough for a sailor! Sometimes you and I have grief on grief and sorrow upon sorrow—and things go hard, then. As to the Savior, it seemed as if every form of grief was let loose against Him on that dark, that dreadful night! All the winds of woe escaped from their cave at that dread hour! He was heavy within Himself, deserted by His friends who ought to have defended Him, betrayed by His bosom companion, slandered by false witnesses, hunted down by false-hearted men! He had no one to speak for Him and He was unable, for a certain reason, to speak for Himself. Griefs of body were added to His sadness of soul. Was there a part of His blessed form that escaped from suffering? I know of none. His whole corporeal frame was the center and seat of pain—a furnace of fever, the melting crucible of death. From the thorn-crowned head to the bleeding feet, all, all were wounds and bruises for our sake!

But the bodily sufferings were only the body of His sufferings—there was an agony of heart, mind and soul. O Brothers and Sisters, if, when you have sickness, you can keep your spirits up, it does not matter! And, perhaps, when the spirits sink, you are happy if you have no pain at the same time. But to have body and soul at once in the fire, this is, indeed, torture! This is to do business in great waters where all the waves and billows go over the mariner. Hell from beneath was stirred against our Lord—Satan bade his legions aim all their arrows against His heart! Heaven veiled its sun and left the Sufferer in a chill darkness. God hid His face which made Jesus cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?” Earth’s inhabitants seemed leagued to cast Him out.

There is not, to my knowledge, a mitigating circumstance in the woes of Christ. It is bitter, bitter, bitter! And if there is a mixture, it is wormwood mingled with gall. It was all bitter, all tempestuous, all terrible! No drop of water, for in His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink. No ray of light—the sun is set. No stable ground of comfort—the very rocks rend. Heaven and earth stand arrayed against Him! Well does He cry, “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me.” Oh that these lips had language and could speak aright upon such a theme as this!

But I ask you to notice, next, that there is in our Savior’s sorrow this singular point which is not found anywhere else, namely, that all His sorrow was voluntarily undertaken and voluntarily continued in. When a man feels that it must be, he girds himself to bear the will of destiny. But concerning Christ, He was under no compulsion from any force which He could not, Himself, control. He dies but He says, “No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.” He is betrayed into the hands of wicked men, but He says that He could presently pray to His Father and He would send Him 12 legions of angels! He has not a word to say to Pilate, but He had ten thousand words which He might have spoken if He would, only that He could not, then, have effected the Divine purpose or worked out our salvation. This perfect freedom involved Him in a double labor—He not only had to suffer, but to will to suffer even to the end!

He had, therefore, to put a Divine restraint upon Himself and to bear on when His human nature might have suggested that He should bear no more. It did suggest it, so far as it could do so, without a faulty shrinking. “If it is possible,” He said, “let this cup pass from Me.” But His holy soul came to the rescue of His resolution, for He added, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” It is not in our power to thus yield ourselves to sorrow. If we gave up ourselves once to the hands of pain or death it would be but one act and we should then be out of our own power. But our Lord always had Himself in His own hands and, therefore, He made a continuous offering of Himself by a distinct act of His will until He expired.

Brothers and Sisters, remember that if you were to die for your country, you would only, then, pay the debt of nature a little sooner than it would otherwise be due—the debt would, in any case, have had to be paid in due time. If tonight I died for you, I should but anticipate that hour which may be near enough, now, when I must surely die. Jesus needed not to die. There was no necessity, as far as His Nature was concerned, that He should ever slumber in a grave! Oh, but this is a death altogether unexampled—voluntarily undertaken and voluntarily borne for the good of others! Love led His perfect will in sweet captivity so that He could not do otherwise but die and, with the exception of His own unrivalled love, not another cord held Him, or could have held Him for a moment! Let us give Him our deepest love in return for so special a sacrifice!

And this makes it more singular, still—that those for whom He died thus voluntarily were His enemies! Oh, tell it, tell it all the world over, that Jesus laid down His life for those who hated Him, for those who loved the wages of unrighteousness! Tell it in Hell, tell it on earth, tell it in Heaven! And let the three worlds overflow with wonder at this miracle of love! Let the whole universe hear it—Jesus died for His enemies! His last breath said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He died for those who did not love Him, but thirsted for His blood! He died for those who could not see His beauties—who never will see His beauties unless He work a miracle upon them. He died for you and for me! But oh, how shamefully have the best rewarded Him with chill barren love! How shamefully are some here present rewarding Him at this very moment by living in entire neglect of Him—living as if they had nothing to do with the death of Christ at all!

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die—perhaps for a benevolent man one would even dare to die. But “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Hear that, O you deaf ears, hear that! O you blind eyes, behold the splendor of this love! O you hard hearts, feel the magic of this deed! Christ died for the ungodly, for the guilty, for the profane, for the drunk, for the unchaste, for the worst of men—He died that He might purify them, lift them out of their degradation, make new men of them—and prove what heavenly love can do! Men were utterly depraved and wedded to their sin—as mad about sin as the lunatic is mad in his delirium, as eaten up with it as a leper with leprosy—and yet for such Christ died! He gave Himself, not for our virtues, but for our sins! He came to seek and save, not the good, but those that were lost. For such did He die and, therefore, His death is altogether unparalleled.

Once more, to crown this edifice of wonder—there was this about Christ’s sorrow which was never in any other sorrow under Heaven, namely, that it was expiatory. Christ was dying and suffering in the place of others—and by that dying and suffering He was putting away the sin of others! This is the substance of the Revelation of God, that Jesus Christ has appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself and there is virtue in His blood to cleanse from all sin. I hear certain philosophical divines denying this Atonement, but I beseech you give no heed to them— they would rob you of your only hope of Heaven! Mark this—there is nothing left of Christianity when Atonement is gone. “The blood is the life thereof,” and if you remove its life, the Gospel will die.

What do you see where this atoning Sacrifice is left out of the preaching? Why, very soon, empty places of worship, for the people soon find that there is nothing there for them and they will not go where they are mocked with husks! To deny the great Doctrine of Atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ is to hamstring the Gospel and to cut the throat of Christianity! Look at this house tonight, this spectacle, this gathered throng! Into what corner could another hearer be thrust? One would think, from the vehement eagerness to enter, that we gave some gorgeous entertainment! Come here any night in all the year, or any morning, if you like, and it is still the same.

Well, why do the people come? To see a man in fine raiment? We wear no millinery! To listen to sweet strains of music and the swell of organs? We have none of it! What do they come for? To hear an orator? Far from it! I have never aimed at oratory, or desired to exhibit it! I have preached Christ out of my very soul and lifted Him up as the Savior of men and, therefore, the people throng the house and they always will while Christ is fully preached in language which they can understand! Men need a Savior as hungry men need bread and as thirsty souls need drink! And they know where that is preached which they require!

Go, tell the men that preach their new doctrine that they cannot stir a tiny village with their fine theories after they have preached them once or twice! And yet for 27 years together we can hold a multitude with no magic but the name of Christ—with no mystery but the Cross, the blood, and the one word—“Believe in Christ and live.” Therefore I preach the old, old Gospel yet again, harping forever on that one Divine string which has yet more music in it than all the flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries and dulcimers of modern thought! If you would have sin forgiven, forgiveness is to be found in Jesus, and only there! “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow,” for no other sorrow can wipe away sin—not even the pangs of Hell can effect expiation—but the sorrow of Christ can put your sins away! Oh, seek a share in the boundless merit of the Crucified! Turn not away, but seek your Savior’s face at once!

II. Thus have I spoken upon the first head and pretty well exhausted my time—therefore only a minute or two upon the second—THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS HAVE HAD A DEEP INTEREST IN THEM FOR MANY. Oh that I could set Him forth before you! There He is! Look upon Him! He is before my eyes. I see those languid eyes closing in death, I see that glorious head bowing upon His bosom. I see and I adore! I note with grief the gashes made by the nails in His dear hands and feet from which flows the ruddy stream which scatters roses among the lilies of His pure and spotless flesh! I look into His heart and see it breaking—the soldier has opened a door through which your soul may gaze! My Savior’s death is to me all things—I could live and die contemplating it.

It stirs my blood, it opens the fountains of my eyes and makes my inmost heart dissolve. Is it not a thing of power to others, also? Did I hear one ask, “What good has this sorrow ever brought to anyone? Has anybody derived benefit from it?” Let me tell you! Multitudes have found, in the sufferings of Christ, the cure for their despair. Read the biographies of converted men and you shall find cases upon cases where they had been ready to commit suicide—but the sight of a crucified Savior encouraged them to hope and gave them rest. No, you need not read books—speak to any godly man of your acquaintance and he will tell you that the wounds of Jesus were and are the fountains of his hope! Many of you could speak for yourselves and say that nothing could have brought you back from despair on account of sin but a sight of Christ.

I cannot speak without remembering my own case and how bitter were my griefs, how dark my days, how hideous my nights till I saw One hanging on a tree and my state was changed from continual sorrow into perpetual joy! Can I hear Him dishonored and not be moved? Do you think that those of us who owe all the light we have to Jesus crucified can ever think lightly of Him? I pray we never may become so mean, so base! We have a deep and abiding interest in Jesus, for He turned our darkness into day! In others, the sorrows of the Cross have worked a complete transformation of their lives. The Apostle Paul, on the way to Damascus, was going to hunt Christians to death—but the voice of One who said, “I am Jesus whom you persecute” changed his mind so completely that he became the greatest of all preachers of Christ!

You have, most of you, I dare say, heard of the life of Colonel Gardiner, a dissipated officer who indulged, as too many soldiers do, in wantonness. One night he had made an appointment of the most vicious kind and reached the place an hour too soon. Waiting there, alone, he thought that he saw upon the wall, the Savior on the Cross and he thought that he heard Him say to him, “I did all this for you. What have you ever done for Me?” He fled the house and you know what an earnest soldier of Christ, from that moment, he became! Such miracles have been worked in every age and will be worked to the end of time! Nor are they so rare that you need search far for them. One and another will tell you, if you will listen— some here can tell you for themselves—that the sight of Christ has changed them altogether in a manner as astounding as a miracle!

It has been with them as marvelous a change as if Niagara, leaping down her profound abyss, were suddenly spoken to by the voice which made that mighty flood and her waters began to leap upward, ascending the steep fall which they have rushed for ages! The transformation of the lives of men by the sight of the Cross of Christ is as great a marvel as though rivers should seek their source, or midnight brighten into day! It is matchless, superb—there is nothing like it—and they that have once felt its transforming power laugh at infidelity. “What?” they say, “no truth in the Cross? Let the man that has been a leper, the man that has been lame or blind suddenly receive a cure and then tell him that there is nothing in it. ‘Pshaw!’ he would say, ‘there is nothing in you, or you would not make the remark!’” And he goes his way and that is all the answer that he deigns. Matters of actual experience may be contradicted, but they cannot be disproved! Men may say what they will, but we are still of the same opinion when once the Cross has worked its marvels upon our souls.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, think what power the Cross has had on other men’s minds to gird them to heroic deeds. I shall never forget when I shook the hand of Livingstone. I count it one of the great honors of my life to have known him and even men of the world will join in doing homage to his name. It was the love of Christ that made him tread pathless Africa and die among the heathen! He was not the first by many a thousand who counted it all joy to succumb to climate and to perish among strangers for the Cross of Christ! Moffat still lives and what a life! There was a John Williams, of whom you older men can remember, who laid down his life at Erromanga for Christ’s sake. These are but the later ranks of a mighty host that counted life not dear to them for Jesus’ sake!

Look at the first centuries—how men marched to the rack to be tortured, to the stake to be burned, to the amphitheatre to be devoured of beasts for Christ’s sake! The lifting up of the little finger of Christ was enough to move hosts of men and women to court death and defy the flames! The Roman empire, with all its legions and cruelties, could not stand against the insignificant, unlettered, humble, but earnest and intense followers of Jesus! The sufferings of Christ made them strong to suffer! Later ages tell the same story. Our own land has seen the heroes of the Cross enduring unto the end. Over there at yon Smithfield, why, there were men and women there who early in the morning, while yet the sun was scarcely up, were summoned forth to stand at fiery stakes and burn—and they were seen to clap their hands, when every finger was a candle—and cry, “None but Christ! None but Christ!”

And the crowd that stood around them, who were they? There were cruel men and brutal priests, but there were also men, women and children, of whom it is written, in the humble Church records of the day, that they went there to see their pastor burn to learn the way! Oh, that is grand to learn the way to die when their turn came—for the idea of ever yielding up to the papacy, or of giving up Christ because they must die for Him or else deny Him never entered into their heads! Even boys and girls learned at their mother’s knee so much of Jesus’ sufferings that they became invincible! Yes, and we should be so, again, if it ever came to the same pass, for the old name and the old love still linger in the hearts of Christians today with all their faults and infirmities! And, if it came to battle and to push of pike again, we are as ready, by the good hand and Grace of God, as were our Puritan forefathers—our Protestant ancestors— ready to seal the faith with our blood! This is what the Cross of Christ can do! It can make men suffer for His name sake.

Ah, but you may not be called to that, you say, “What is the use of the Cross of Christ to us in everyday life?” Why, it is of this use—that men who love the suffering Savior become patient in their everyday sufferings! They say to themselves—

*“His way was much rougher  
And darker than mine.  
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer,  
And shall I repine?”*

They learn to hate sin by seeing the agonies by which Redemption was obtained. They learn to be upright by seeing with what a price they are bought. They learn to be self-denying at the feet of the Crucified. This is the good of the Cross to them and this is the way they learn both to live and to die!

This black cloth which casts its somber hue around my platform is the memorial of one dear soul, my Sister, who learned to love the Savior while she was yet young and, in her early days, joined with this Church. And in her death, when it was a pang to draw each breath, she found her joy, her victory, in resting in the Divine Savior! She was a soldier’s daughter and was not ashamed to join with the despised people of God! And in her long pains and agonizing death she found sustaining power in the doctrine of the Cross and found victory in death.

Hold, then, Your Cross before my failing eyes, O Jesus! Let me see You when I can see nothing else! At the sight of You I will leap the stream of death! I will defy death, as Samson defied the lion. I will find honey in the vanquished monster if You are there. It is not death to die if the death of Christ is but the life of the soul! This is what multitudes of men and women have had to do with Christ. They have not passed Him by, but bowed at His feet and found life, light, joy, perfection, Heaven!

III. And I close with this last appeal—what, dear Hearers—WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH HIM? “Is it nothing to you, all you that past by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” Now, I do not suppose that Jesus Christ means much to some that are here present, I mean people that are getting on in the world. Everything is going very easily with you. You are rising like a balloon! You are filled and inflated with prosperity! You are getting as much money as you can count. You are going on very well without a Savior. You have your portion in this life. I should not wonder if you turn on your heel and despise Him and say that you do not need a Savior. “We will meet another day, young Sir, when all that wine is sour and that gold is corroded and those pleasures, like the dew of the morning, shall have disappeared beneath the burning sun of care.”

But for a while, I doubt not, Jesus Christ will be nothing to you. It is dreary talk and a weariness to hear about Him. But is there one here heavy of heart? Are there not many here conscious of fault? Are you wrong? Would you be right? Are you guilty? Would you be forgiven? Ah, then, the Cross for you! Jesus is for you! Turn aside and look at Him! Look till your eyes are full of tears. Look till you brush those tears away and say, “I see it all. Jesus has suffered in my place. I am forgiven! My Father has adopted me. I am His child. I am glad.” Oh, guilty ones, there is something in Christ for you, for He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God!

Perhaps there is another here who is not so much laboring under a sense of fault as under a sense of aimlessness in life. Do you feel, “Well, somehow, I have no purpose in life. I keep on like a blind horse round a mill, but I do not go anywhere and, what is more, I do not know what I am toiling for.” To bring up my children? Well, perhaps that is done. They are all settled in life and, you say, “I do not know what more is to be done. I do not seem to have any objective worth striving after.” My Master’s sorrows may enlist you. The Red-Cross Knight, when he bore the cross upon his arm as he fought with the Saracen, (though he was under a grave delusion, for Christ would not have us fight with deadly weapons), yet felt strong because he thought that the name of Christ was named upon him.

But if you become a true knight of the red Cross by living for the glory of Christ, you will rise to a noble enthusiasm and find an aim in life of which you will never tire! The love of the Crucified shall be a wellspring of vigor to your own heart. It shall make you brave against all odds and shall bring you great reward and sure victory. Oh, if I had not an objective in life, today, I would wish to give myself to Christ and then begin to tell to others His dear name that I might win their hearts to the love of my sweet Lord! For, as it is, I know of no man I would change with, so long as I have but opportunities of spreading abroad the fame and name of Jesus Christ, my suffering Lord and royal Master!

Perhaps you are anxious to benefit others. Oh, if you are, you need to be doing something real and effective. The world is going to the bad. There is a great deal of mischief abroad. You say, “I want to do good.” Friend, turn aside, look at Christ’s sufferings and see whether you have not, there, the fulcrum for your lever! To move rocks and mountains, here, is an unrivalled force—not steam power or dynamite, but something stronger—but an ounce of the Doctrine of the Cross would blast all the walls of error and burst the dungeons of misery, if rightly applied! Come to Christ and see if you have not there, by the power of the Holy Spirit, an irresistible agent of good to all mankind.

“Oh,” says one, “I do not believe in Him.” What do you believe in? For whatever you believe in, try to use it for the good of your fellow men. I would like to see you sending city missionaries from street to street to preach what you believe in. Come, be reasonable and do something more than find fault! Some are so fond of pulling down. Would they try a little building up? Come, then! You say that we Christians are doing no good. Just try your own hand at it! Go to the dying! Go to the sick! Take them bottles of your philosophy and comfort them with the elixir of scientific doubt. Go ahead! If somebody says that the current system of medicine is faulty, we reply—Very well, Sir. Have you found the right medicine? “Yes.” Then distribute it, train physicians and build hospitals! Get to work at it. Why not?

Now, you that do not believe in God or Christ, send your own missionaries abroad. Enlighten the heathen by telling them that there is no God, no sin, no Hell, no Heaven, no soul, no anything! Go into the center of Africa and win them from their bloody superstitions by the doctrines of science. Go ahead! If you have a gospel, do not hide it! What? You have no zeal in that direction. But why not? There is no particular use in it, is there? Not worth spending your money on. Miserable comforters! Wretched physicians that cannot heal!

But now, if you want to know whether there is power in the Cross, ask a city missionary to let you go with him for a day. Pitch on the right man and go and see for yourself. He will show you what the Doctrine of the Cross can do in comforting, in sobering, in cheering, in elevating. “I do not believe it,” says one. No one said you did. I will, however, venture to observe that, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” A good old English proverb, my dear Sir! Here is a ship filling with water and you do not believe in pumps. Very well. I am going on pumping! You are anxious to discuss. Discuss away, but meanwhile I pump! Let every Christian man here make practical use of the Cross of Christ and keep on at it! And if men will not even take the trouble to enquire what are its results—their disbelief is irrational and inexcusable—and they must answer the consequences. Our skirts are clear of their blood.

Dear Friend, what if it should turn out that you have such a connection with the Cross that Christ redeemed you there—that Christ put your sins away there? What if He so bought you there that He means to have you? What if you are so His that He means to save you? What if, when He died there, He bought eternal life for you and insured for you a place in Heaven at the right hand of God to reign there with Himself? “Oh, if I thought that,” says one, “I would come to Him.” Come to Him, then, and it is true, for, “whoever believes in Him has everlasting life!” Let me say that word over again. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” If he only believed a minute ago—if he only believed a second ago—He has not only life but everlasting life! That life, therefore, is a thing that can never die. You have Heaven as well as all the blessings of earth if you believe in Jesus!

But if you say, “I will have nothing to do with Jesus,” I would like you to say so to yourself in a deliberate manner. If Christ is not worth having, say that you will not have Him and say it most distinctly. I feel hopeful when a man will come to a decision one way or the other. The sort of people for whom I tremble are those who say, “I hope it will be all right somehow.” O, Sirs, do not hesitate another hour, but answer me as in God’s name I question you—will you have Christ, tonight, or will you not? Say, “Yes,” or, “No.” I would ask you to write down your decision when you get home. Is Christ’s yours or not? Sit down and say deliberately, “Yes, my Lord, in the merits of Your death I put my trust.” Or else write it if you mean it—“He is not mine at all.”

We have known some get comfort out of this act of decision. There was a poor girl who had long been a Christian, but she was very sad at heart through sickness. And when her minister came to see her, he said to her, “Well, Susan, how is your hope?” She said, “Sir, I am afraid I am not a Christian. I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ.” He said, “Why, I always thought you did. You acted as if you did.” “No,” she said, “I am afraid I have deceived myself and that I do not love Him.” The minister wisely walked to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, “I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ,” and he said, “Susan, here is a pencil. Just put your name to that.” “No, Sir,” she said, “I could not sign that.” “Why not?” “I would be torn to pieces before I would sign it, Sir.” “But why not sign it if it is true?” “Ah, Sir,” she said, “I hope it is not true. I think I do love Him.”

Get to know where you are, Friend. If Baal is God, serve him! If God is God, serve Him! If Christ is a Savior, have Him—if He is not a Savior, do not pretend to serve Him! Decide one way or the other. God help you to decide, tonight, as you will decide when the heavens are on fire, when sun and moon have vanished from their spheres, when the solid earth shall rock and reel and over all shall be heard the trumpet note, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!” There sits the Judge, the Crucified, whose sorrows surpassed all sorrows, but whose Glory, then, shall surpass all glory as He shall divide the saints on the right from the graceless on the left—and from His mouth shall come the final sentence which shall settle the doom of Believers and unbelievers.

God bless you, dear Friends, every one of you. Henceforth and forever may you be the Lord’s. Amen and amen!  
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PLEADING WITH THE INDIFFERENT  
NO. 3360

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 1913.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.” Lamentations 1:12.**

THIS was the lamentation of Jeremiah. As he saw the desolation of the beloved city, as he marked the cruelties inflicted by the invaders upon the Jewish youth, children and maidens, and as he foresaw the long years of bitterness reserved for the captives in Babylon, he felt as if he were a peer in the realm of misery—indeed peerless. He stands foremost, a very emperor of grief, a king of sighs and tears. “Behold, and see,” he said, “if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.”

But may there not have been griefs as great as those of Jeremiah? Is the language that flows from his lips strictly accurate? Like most of the periods which flow from abundant grief, is there not some exaggeration here? If we take the words out of the mouth of Jeremiah and put them into the mouth of Jesus—if we suppose them to be spoken by Him, as, hanging on the Cross He did bear the wrath of God for us, then there is no hyperbole, no exaggeration! The words may be read as they stand— and stand as we read them—and their fullest weight shall not outweigh the truth!

This evening two things challenge our attention— an earnest expostulation—“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?” And a solemn question— “Behold, and see, was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?” First—

I. AN EARNEST EXPOSTULATION.  
The Son of God has become Incarnate. He became Man out of love to men. But men loved Him not and though in Him was every perfection, they hunted and hounded Him to death! The story is told four times over by Inspired authority in this Book, but the mass of mankind feel no concern in it. I come here tonight and I say to many of you—does not the story of Jesus at all interest you? You heard it read just now, did it fall flat and stale upon your ears? Did you say to yourselves, “It is dry work to listen to that. There is nothing there to strike the attention. If I had taken up a newspaper and had read of some murder, my wits would have been all awakened, but in the hearing of this death of Christ, I feel not at all stirred.” Well, then, I ask you—Why is this? Why is it so? If there is anything in all the world that ought to interest a man, it is the death of Christ! Yet I find men, learned men, spending year after year in sorting out butterflies, beetles and gnats, or in making out the various orders of shells, or in digging into the earth and seeking to discover what strange creatures once floundered through the boundless mire, or swam in the vast seas! I find men occupied with things of no sort of practical moment and which, to me, do not seem so wonderfully enchanting. Yet the story of God, Himself, who deigned to become a man and as a Man suffered, and bled, and died, is thought to be too small a trifle for minds to dwell upon it. O reason! Where have you gone? O judgment! Where have you fled? Men spend their strength on trifles, but on God Incarnate they turn their backs!  
It is strange that even the sufferings of Christ do not attract the attention of men, for generally if we hear any sad story of the misfortunes of our fellow creatures, we are interested. The newspaper is accounted more than usually interesting which contains full particulars of shipwrecks, the blowing down of houses, murders, shootings, killings and I do not know what! Everybody has felt he could read such a paper as that because it concerned his fellow men—what they had lost and what they had suffered. Everyone stops to hear the tale of the ancient mariner! Even the wedding guest is held while he, with the earnest eyes, tells how he suffered on the wide, deep, stagnant sea. And yet this story of a Man who came to our earth with no motive but love, and lived here to do nothing but good, and yet was so despised and rejected as to be nailed to a cross, and there made to die in the midst of jeers, sneers, pains and unknown agonies—this does not interest men! I marvel, and yet I marvel not at the strange indifference of this age to the wonders of Calvary! How is it Earth does not stretch out her hands and say, “Come and tell us of the God that loved us and came down to our low estate—and suffered for us men and for our salvation”? How is it that the crowds of this great city do not come and besiege our houses and say, “Tell us yet again this strange, mysterious story of the sufferings of the perfect Son of God”? It ought to interest us, if nothing more! Is it nothing to you, however? Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?  
It ought to be more than interesting—it ought to excite our admiration. You cannot read of a man sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow creatures without feeling at once that you wish you had known that fine fellow! And you feel instinctively that you would do anything in the world to serve him if he still lives, or to help relatives left behind if he has died in a brave attempt. Who does not esteem, though you never knew him, the good man at Bethnal Green who perished but lately in the explosion at the firework factory? He rushes in to seek to rescue others and is found, at last, a handful of ashes bewailed by a weeping wife! One felt at once, “There was a man who had a soul beating beneath his ribs.” But is no admiration to be given to the Son of God who left a Throne of Glory without bound and came here below to poverty, to shame, to a life of contempt and toil—and then voluntarily gave Himself up to a death which never could have been inflicted upon Him if He had not given Himself up to die? Jesus Christ had no motive in suffering but the good of men! Nothing selfish ever crossed His soul. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it was pity that ruled His heart—pity, and only pity—and while we set up our statues in reverence of men who have loved their fellow men and speak of such-and-such a man as “a great philanthropist,” is it nothing to you that Jesus should die for men and shall this greatest of all philanthropists, this first and chief of lovers of the race of men, be altogether forgotten? I would admire Him even if He had not saved me! If I had no share in His blood, I think I would love Him. The life of Christ enchants me! The death of Christ binds me to His Cross! Even if I were never washed in His blood and were even cast away into Hell, if that were possible, I still feel I must admire Him for His love to others! Yes, and I must adore Him, too, for His godlike Character and His godlike sufferings for the sons of men! But why, why is it that such a Christ, so lovely and so admirable, is forgotten by the most of mankind and is nothing to them?  
Now, my dear Hearers, there are some of you to whom I might put this question very closely. You have heard about Jesus very often. This pulpit is always ringing with His name. And you have admired what Jesus did. I know you have and if any spoke ill of Him, you would be very grieved— and you would be among the first to defend His name! And yet—and yet—is that all? Are you always going to be interested and to admire, but are you never going further? Is it, after all, to come to this, that it is nothing to you that Jesus should die? You have no interest in that death, no part, no lot in the salvation which that death brings to the sons of men! I am afraid that with some of you it will be so all your days. Fifteen years have I preached to some of you—15 years! And if those 15 years have not brought you to Christ, is there any reason to believe that 15 more years will do it? No, I fear that with some of you the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and you are not saved. There was a time when this voice did seem to cut into your soul and the Truths of God that were uttered awakened your conscience! But it is all nothing to you now. You could go to sleep under the sound of it and your soul does sleep under the sense of it! What? Will you be lost? Have you resolved to be lost with a Savior lifted up before you? Have you determined that you will never look to Him who is lifted up to save you from the serpent’s bite? Shall Christ, the Water of Life, never be tasted by your lips? Do you elect to perish of thirst? Shall this Bread of Life be never eaten? Do you choose rather to starve than to come to Him? No, you tell me you hope one of these days. Ah, but I have no hope of you for any day but today! And I wish you, too, knew that procrastination is of all things fatal. I would sooner that you resolved to be damned than that you only said, “Tomorrow, tomorrow.” For if today you resolved upon your ruin, you might be startled at the resolution—and you might be led to see your folly and awakened to amend your steps! But if you always say, “Tomorrow, tomorrow,” it will be the will-o’-the-wisp that will tempt you into the fatal morass where souls have been lost by tens of thousands—as yours will be!  
Oh, why should I have to be always coming down these steps and into this pulpit, to say over and over and over again to you that Jesus died— and that if you trust Him you shall live? Why should it need to be repeated over and over? Great God of patience, such a story as this ought to be accepted of the heart at once! If You bear with men who reject it, we may well bear with them, too, but, oh, we pray You let them not go too far with Your long-suffering, nor venture too much upon Your patience, lest You lift Your hand and swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest because they had the Gospel, but they counted not themselves to be worthy of it!  
One thing I would say to you, to all of you to whom it seems as yet to be nothing that Jesus should die—that personally to me it is something that He should die. It is more than something—it is everything—and I will tell you why. It is much to me that Jesus died, for I know I slew Him. I sang those verses just now and I sang them with some bitterness of soul, I was forced to feel—  
*“‘Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”*  
If it were not that I had sinned, as one of the race, there had been no need for Christ to die. But as it was sin that pierced and nailed Him, I had a share in His death. But then I know another thing—that by that death I am delivered from the very guilt that put Him to death! I have looked to Him and I am forgiven. Fleming tells us in a book of his, that a great culprit had been condemned to be hanged at Ayr. He had been a very great offender, but while he lay in prison, God granted him repentance and he was heard to say continually as they took him to the scaffold, “Oh, but He’s a great forgiver! Oh, but He’s a great forgiver!” And I have often felt as if I could stand and cry, yes, even dance and say it, “Oh, but He’s a great forgiver! Oh, but He’s a great forgiver!” My innumerable sins confessed to Him were blotted out, each one, and peace and joy bestowed where all before was fear and trembling! Now, there are hundreds in this house that could say the same. If I were to ask it, and this were the proper time, there are thousands within this dome who could rise and say, “I, too, can say that it is much to me that Jesus died, for though I slew Him, yet by His death I live, and by the blood which I drew from His veins I have been washed and made white.” Now, if it is so much to us, we do sincerely wish, oh, unconverted ones, that Christ were as much to you, for we do think He ought to be! We desire that He should be! We pray that He may be and we tremble, even to horror, lest, after all, He should not be, for if Christ is nothing to you, it will be a hard dying for you, a hard dying—the bed shall be of iron and the pillow shall be cold as ice—and it will be hard passing into a disembodied state! It will be hard coming before God. It will be hard for when your body rises in the day of the Resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, and the sepulchers are burst open, and your body, linked to your soul again, shall stand before the flaming Throne of Christ! It will be hard for you—oh, so

hard—throughout eternity! An eternity without Christ! An eternity without Christ! “Nothing to you, nothing to you,” you say now, but how will it be when conscience shall remind you in eternity, “you heard of Christ, but you said He was nothing to you! You listened to earnest admonitions, but you said they were nothing to you.” How will this stir the fire? How will this fan the flame? How will this prick your conscience and vex your spirit, that Jesus died, and inestimable mercies dropped from the Cross—pardons sealed with blood were distributed freely upon Calvary and broken hearts were healed—and sins were forgiven and the dead were raised and the lost were saved? But it was all nothing to you, nothing to you! Oh, before death comes—and he is on his way to some here present—on his way to meet them soon! Before death comes on the pale horse with Hell following at his heels, I beseech you, as you love your souls, look to the Crucified and be not satisfied till you can say, “He is everything to me! I slew Him, but He saved me! I looked to Him and I live!”  
May God bless this admonition and my heart shall be glad, indeed, if He will but do it. Oh, how little can I do for you, you unconverted ones, how little can I do for you! When I sometimes get a handshake from some of you, and you say, “Well, I have been hearing you for years, Sir, but I am not converted,” I look hopefully upon you, but I cannot help, when I get away, reproaching myself in part and saying, “Have I preached to these people as I ought to?” You make me wake up at night to weep about you and to ask myself again and again, “What more can I say? How shall I put it? With what force and power can I deliver it, if perhaps I may reach their hearts?” Oh, I trust you may yet be brought—and God shall be praised and glorified world without end! Now, let us change to a second point—  
II. A SOLEMN QUESTION.  
The Lord Jesus Christ may be represented here as bidding men see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which is done to Him. Now, observe, that it may be truthfully said that the sufferings of Jesus were altogether unique and by themselves. There were never any sufferings which could match His—and never was there such an illustrious sufferer put to such boundless shame. He was the eye of Heaven, the very sun and star of the bright world! It was the seraph’s bliss to do Him homage. King of kings and Lord of lords was He, and the government was upon His shoulders! And His name was called Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace! All the hallelujahs of eternity rolled up at His august feet! But He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief! And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. They spat into His face. They plucked off His hair. They blindfolded Him. They struck Him with their fists. They scourged Him. The bloody scourges made the sacred drops roll. They gave Him a felon’s death and then stood by and mocked His prayers and made jests about His groans and pangs! Never was One so high brought so low. “Behold and see if there were ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.” Never One so innocent, so falsely accused. He had done no evil. He was no rival of Caesar. He said His Kingdom was not of this world. Instead of doing evil, He had done boundless good. His food and His drink were to do God’s will. His delight was to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick. He was all gentleness, all goodness. From both His hands He scattered His bounties lavishly among the graceless sons of men—and yet they said He was guilty of sedition and of blasphemy! He, seditious? He a blasphemer? Lying could go no farther! Bribed witnesses could not be made to agree! The lie was too massive even for those to compass who were willing to have compassed it! Oh, was ever grief like His—to be treated as a felon and put to death as though guilty—when all the while He did no sin, neither was deceit found on His lips!  
Remember, Beloved, that in our Savior’s death there were aggravations of an extraordinary kind. Before He actually came to die, that dreadful night in Gethsemane had broken His already emaciated frame. There He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. In two or three cases, other persons have sweat drops of blood, but they have invariably died. Our Savior did this and yet lived. Oh, how was the bitterness of His soul expressed in that awful overflow which fell upon Gethsemane’s soil! Then, remember, He was led, deserted by His friends, without any comfort from His God, to be tried by Herod, by Pilate, by Caiaphas—to be scourged, beaten, probably several times with rods and scourges. God forsook Him—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was the very depth of His agony and without one to pity, one to administer comfort, utterly forsaken, our Savior died with aggravations of agonies that were to be found in no other death!  
Still, the singularity of His death lies in another respect. There was never sorrow like the sorrow which was done unto Christ, because all His sorrow was born for others. Whatever you and I may suffer, we deserve it and, directly or indirectly, we may trace it to the fact that we are sinners. But He was not a sinner. In Him was no sin and neither suffering nor death could lawfully have been laid upon Him had He not made Himself the Substitute for His people. Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like His sorrow! He bears the sin of many. He is numbered with the transgressors. He stands vicariously to endure what never could have been His if it had not been that He was a Surety and stood in His people’s place.  
Now, I want your thoughts just one minute. What was it that Christ, as Substitute, had to endure? Answer—Although it may not have been precisely what we ought to have endured, it must have been something equivalent thereto. Now, what ought one sinner to have suffered? Answer—Eternal misery in Hell! What, then, what then must have been the pangs which in Christ’s case stood as the equivalent for the eternal agonies of one sinner? But Christ died not for one sinner, but for tens of thousands, for countless multitudes, whom no one can number! Think, then, my Brothers and Sisters, what must have been the crushing blows which Jehovah laid on Him when those blows were to be an equivalent for the hells of ten thousand times ten thousand of those for whom He suffered! Of course, it were not possible for Him to have endured, even for one, if He had not been God! His Godhead gave Him an infinite capacity for misery and infused a boundless degree of misery into all the pangs He bore. You have no more idea of what Christ suffered in His soul than you have when you take up in a shell, a drop of seawater! What Christ suffered is utterly inconceivable! We are not just to think of Him as dying as another dies. His was a vast soul, so great a soul that it seemed to have all souls within it—and it had the capacity for suffering what all souls might have borne—and the whole of that vast Nature which God had given, that wondrous Nature which He Himself also essentially possessed—was put forth to make an Atonement for human sin. “Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.”  
“Oh, let us now, instead of talking any more, sit down by meditation at the foot of the Cross and look up! ‘Tis the King! ‘Tis the King, but He is crowned with thorns! It is the Prince of Glory, but He is stripped naked to His shame! It is the Ancient of eternal days, but He bows His head to die! He is God, All-Sufficient, yet He cries, “I thirst”! He is the angel’s darling, but He is despised and rejected of men! Hark, He fills Heaven with honor! His Presence gilds Heaven with light, yet there upon the Cross He is covered with darkness! And the music about Him is that of His own sighs, and cries, and groans. Was ever grief like Yours? Needless question! Needless question! All but shameful question, for were all griefs that ever were condensed into one, they were no more worthy to be compared therewith than the glowworm’s tiny lamp with the ever-blazing sun!  
What then, Beloved, what then? If Christ is thus alone in suffering, what then? Why, let Him stand alone in our love. High, high, high set up Christ in your heart! Now, Brothers and Sisters you have many objects of your affection, but oh, lift up my lord, your soul’s Bridegroom, your spirit’s Well-Beloved! Come now, if you have thought well of Him, think better of Him! If you have loved Him, oh, love Him more! Now, ask to have your heart inflamed, as with coals of juniper, which have a vehement heat, and let that heart be all His own! Oh, let there be no such love as your love to Christ! Let it pass the love of women! Let it go beyond a mother’s love, a brother’s affection, a father’s tenderness! Love Him—you cannot match His love to you, but at least seek to let your little stream run side by side with the mighty river!  
If Christ is thus alone in suffering, Brothers and Sisters, let us seek to make Him, if we can, alone in our service. We do not do much for Christ, compared with what we should. Some have learned to give much, but yet what is our giving for such an one as He is? We only give what we can spare—how few of us ever pinch ourselves for Him? He smarted for us and gave up even His very garments for us, but we do not come to that. In the olden times they did—saints, martyrs and Christian missionaries made sacrifice of all and counted it no sacrifice out of love to Him. I wish we had more Marys who would break the alabaster box of precious ointment upon His dear head. Oh, for a little extravagance of love, a little fanaticism of affection for Him, for He deserves ten thousand times more than the most enthusiastic ever dream of rendering! If He is thus, Brothers and Sisters, so far beyond all others in His sorrow, let Him also be first and foremost tonight in our praise. If you have poetic minds, weave no garlands except for His dear brow! If you are men of eloquence, speak no glowing periods except to His honor! If you are men of wit and scholarship, oh, seek to lay your scholarship at the foot of His Cross! Come here with all your talents and yield them to Him who bought them with His blood! Come, here, you with much and yet with little—come with hearts so warm whom He loved so well—  
*“Here then your music bring,  
Strike aloud each cheerful string!  
Mortals join the hosts above,  
Come and praise redeeming love.”*

The Lord give us such a frame of mind as that, tonight, when we come to the breaking of bread, and His be the glory. Amen.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 69:1-21; MARK 15:15-23; LUKE 23:26-33.**

We shall read together at this time a part of the 69th Psalm and afterwards two passages in the New Testament. Although there is no doubt that this Psalm is intended to describe a very large class of sufferers, we think it never had its full meaning perfectly carried out until our blessed Lord and Master suffered at the hands of men. We shall read the Psalm believing that it is full of Christ. It is absolutely certain that we have references hare to His Advent, His passion and His Resurrection.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, a Psalm of David. Verse 1. Save me, O God, for the waters are come into My soul. The waves have not only teased the bank, but they have dashed over the bulwarks and there is a flood within, as well as a flood without.  
2*.*I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me. We had this text explained to us last Friday night when the traveler told us he saw a man sink in the mud, almost swallowed up by it, till by a very desperate grasp of the boat, he made his escape. Christ was, as it were, sucked in by the great deeps of His afflictions—as if He would quickly be swallowed up.  
3*.*I am weary of My crying: My throat is dried. He had been so long in the Garden in that awful agony, with strong crying and tears.  
3, 4*.*My eyes fail while I wait for My God. They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head. See Him now in the street being led away to Mount Calvary—a vast multitude has congregated there, all eager to see Him die!  
4*.*They that would destroy Me, being My enemies wrongfully, are mighty. They have the Roman soldiers at their backs, while the mob applauds them.  
4*.*Then I restored that which I took not away. Christ did not take away our innocence, nor our safety, nor our honor, but He restored them all to us! He has made us clean! He has made us accepted in the Beloved! He has put a crown of pure gold upon our heads and set our feet upon a rock.  
5. O God, You know my foolishness and my sins are not hid from You. These words are not applicable to our Lord, except so far as they may refer to our foolishness and to our sin, which we know were all laid on Him. But one commentator says that He is here speaking according to the manner of the people. They called Him foolish. They charged Him with sin, but He appeals to Heaven, “Lord, You know whether I have been foolish, whether I have any sins or not.” In that sense we might apply it literally to the Savior.  
6. Let not them that wait on You, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for My sake: let not those who seek You be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel. “Let not the shame of My Cross destroy their faith. Grant unto them such confidence in Me that they may take up their cross daily and follow Me, that they may even learn to say with My Apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
7. Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered My face. It was for His Father’s sake that He might bring honor to Jehovah, that He thus suffered reproach. “Shame has covered My face”—that face which is brighter than the sun and which angels desire to gaze upon!  
8. I have become a stranger unto My brethren. “Peter says he knows Me not. All of them have forsaken Me.”  
8, 9. And an alien unto My mother’s children. For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up and the reproaches of them that reproached You are fallen upon Me. Every hard word that was spoken of the Father fell upon the Son—the iniquities which were rebellions against Jehovah all fell upon the Man of Nazareth!  
10. When I wept, and chastened My soul with fasting, that was to My reproach. That was scandal unto them.  
11. I made sack cloth also My garment; and I became a proverb unto them. Just as Michal said of David, “How glorious did the King of Israel become in the eyes of his handmaidens!” Out of mockery, so did they reproach Christ, “How glorious was the King of Israel, so daintily arrayed in a peasant’s robe, or stripped naked upon His Cross.”  
12. They that sit in the gate speak against Me. The judges who there dispensed justice. The merchants who there trade their wares. The idlers who were there to loiter, to hear the news—these all speak against Me.  
12. And I became the song of the drunkard. They made ballads of Him. We may understand that to mean they issued lampoons—every now and then there came out a caricature.  
13, 14. But as for Me, My prayer is unto You, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear Me, in the truth of Your salvation, deliver Me out of the mire, and let Me not sink: let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters. Imagine you hear your Master as He silently prays this prayer in the streets of Jerusalem—the mobs are hooting, but He is praying—women are weeping and He is weeping, too.  
15-20. Let not the flood overflow Me, neither let the deep swallow Me up, and let not the Pit shut her mouth upon Me. Hear Me, O Lord, for Your loving kindness is good: turn unto Me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your Servant; for I am in trouble: hear Me speedily. Draw near unto My soul, and redeem it: deliver Me because of My enemies. You have known My reproach and My shame, and My dishonor: My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart. This is one of the most extraordinary verses in Holy Writ!  
20, 21. And I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink. Now, let us read the incidents in the history of Christ, of which this Psalm is a sort of prophecy and exposition.

**MARK 15:15-23.**  
Verses 15-23. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall which is called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head. And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross. And they brought Him unto the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. I shall have to show you that this was given to Him in mercy. The Romans always gave, before crucifixion, a cup of drugged wine, in order to lessen the sensibilities of the victim. In this case there was not only myrrh in the cup, but gall. A second cup of gall Christ did drink, but this cup, being intoxicating, He would not receive— when He had tasted it, He would not drink. He needed the possession of all His faculties—and in their clearest state—in order to do combat with the dreadful powers of darkness.

*LUKE 23:26-33.*  
Luke supplies some particulars which Mark has left out. Turn, therefore, to the 23rd Chapter of Luke and the 26th verse. Luke, also, tells us of Simon.

Verse 26. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. Now these are the things which Mark has not put in.

27, 29. And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. This was accounted a curse, but their curses would seem blessings to them when compared with the curse of the dreadful slaughter at Jerusalem!

30, 31. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry? If they do these things while yet the Jewish State is standing, what will they do when that State is broken up? If they do these things to innocent persons—a green tree—what will they do to the unhallowed person, the ungodly and the rebellious who are like dry, rotten trees? How will the flame lay hold on those branches out of which the sap of virtue has long ago been dried?

32. And there were also two other, malefactors. It should be “others”— there should be an “s” there.  
32, 33*.*Led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Shall we refuse to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not. If any ask us whether we will leave Him because of the fears which may be excited by the world’s frowns, this shall be our answer—let us sing it—with regard to the world and all its temptations—  
*“No, facing all its frowns or smiles,  
Counting its gain but loss!  
Outside the camp we take our place,  
With Jesus bear the Cross.”*

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #59 New Park Street Pulpit 1

WATCH-NIGHT SERVICE  
NO. 59

**HELD AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
ON TUESDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 31, 1855.

**“Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children that faint for hunger at the head of every street.” Lamentations 2:19.**

IF it is enquired why I held a Watch-Night, let the answer be because I hoped that the Lord would acknowledge the service and thus souls might be saved. I have preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ at all hours and see no reason why I may not preach at midnight if I can obtain hearers. I have not done it from imitation but for the best of reasons—the hope of doing good—and the wish to be the means of gathering in the outcasts of Israel. God is my witness, I would preach every hour of the day if my body and mind were equal to the task. When I consider how souls are being damned and how few there are who cry and mourn over them, I am compelled to cry with Paul, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Oh, that the new year may be far better than the last!

I am almost sorry to see this service in print and fear it will rob many of their week’s food from the regular Sermon—but as it is done, I will pray the Lord to acknowledge it for Jesus’ sake.—C. H. S.

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The Chapel being densely crowded in every part, the preacher entered the pulpit and, after prayer, solemnly read the verse—which the congregation then sang*—*

*“You virgin souls, arise!  
With all the dead awake  
Unto salvation wise,  
Oil in your vessels take—  
Upstarting at the MIDNIGHT CRY,  
Behold your heavenly Bridegroom nigh!”*

Two Brothers then offered prayer for the Church and the World, that the new year might be clothed with glory by the spread of the knowledge of Jesus.—Then followed the

EXPOSITION **PSALM 90:1-12.**

1. “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Yes Jehovah, WE, Your children, can say that You have been our home, our safe dwelling place. And oh, what joy, what peace have we found in His sacred bosom! No home like the breast of the Lord to which, in all generations, true Believers fly. Let me ask the unbelievers where their joy is. Where has your habitation been, you Sons of Sin and Daughters of Folly?

2. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” And the same God, too, loving His people, passing by their sins and remembering not their iniquities. Oh, Beloved, let this thought cheer you—He was, He is, He will be God! Here change cannot climb, here mutation must not approach. Forever and ever He is God!

3. “You turn man to destruction. And say, Return, you children of men.” How many this year have departed? Oh, where had we been had this been our case? Many of us can say we would have been in bliss and we should have returned unto God, but alas, many here would have entered the fires of Hell and commenced their never-ending torture!

4. “For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.”  
5. “You carry them away as a flood.” Who are they who are carried away as a flood? Yourselves, my Hearers! And myself. Though we know it not, we are always in motion. The impetuous torrent of time is carrying us along like a mighty rolling river. We cannot stand against the force which drives us onwards! We are as powerless as the straw! We can, by no means, resist it! Where are we going? Where is the river carrying us? We cannot stem its torrents. We cannot escape its floods. Oh, where? Oh, where are we going?  
6. “You carry them away as with a flood. They are as a sleep—in the morning they are like grass which grows up.”  
7. “In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers.”  
8. “For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled.” No man better understands this than the convicted sinner when smarting under the rod of God. Truly our strength is then utterly consumed and the troubles of our heart are enlarged!  
9. “You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance.” Hear that! “Our secret sins!” Some of you bear Hell’s mark on your forehead. Some of you, like Cain, have the mark of justice on your very brow. Your sins are beforehand with you in judgment! Ah, you are here, tonight, blabbing out the tale of your sad, sad history. But there are persons here who have “secret sins.” You have not been found out yet. The night was too dark for human eyes to see you. The deed was too secret for mortal to behold. But it is set somewhere. Just as we set a stone in a golden ring, so has God set your “secret sins in the light of His Countenance.” Your sins are, this night, before the eyes of the Infinite Jehovah!  
10. “For as our days are passed away in Your wrath. We spend our years as a tale that is told.” The Vulgate translation has—“Our years pass away like those of a spider.” It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider’s web. Constituted most curiously, the spider’s web is. But what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of a human body? And what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh! And vapors are rocks compared with life!  
11. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten.” Mark the Psalmist says, “the days of our years.” How seldom we think of that! Our years we think of—but not “the days of our years.”  
12. “And if [it is a great, “if,” indeed, for how many die before they attain to it!] by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow. For it is soon cut off and we fly away.” Where do we fly to? Is it upwards that we wing our way, on more than eagles wings, to realms of joy unknown? Or is it downward that we sink with all our sins round our necks like millstones? Oh, shall we go down, down, till in Hell we lift up our eye, being in torment?  
13. “Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.”  
14. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Here is heavenly arithmetic! An application of numeration seldom thought of, even by the wise. May we, during the next year, so measure out our time that we may apply our hearts to Jesus, who is true Wisdom. Amen! Lord, may that be granted!  
Now we will sing a verse of that solemn hymn*—  
“When You, my righteous Judge, shall come,”*and then the Pastor will make an evening’s prayer for you before he comes to speak with your souls on God’s behalf.

HYMN  
**“Let me among Your saints be found Whenever the archangel’s trump shall sound, To see Your smiling face—  
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing, While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring**

**With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”**

PRAYER  
O GOD, save my people! Save my people! A solemn charge have You given to Your servant. Ah, Lord, it is all too solemn for such a child. Help him! Help him, by Your own Grace to discharge it as he ought. O Lord, let Your servant confess that he feels that his prayers are not as earnest as they should be for his people’s souls. That he does not preach so frequently as he ought with that fire, that energy, that true love to men’s souls. But O Lord, damn not the hearers for the preacher’s sin! Oh, destroy not the flock for the shepherd’s iniquity! Have mercy on them, good Lord, have mercy on them! O Lord, have mercy on them! There are some of them, Father, that will not have mercy on themselves. How have we preached to them and labored for them! O God You know that I lie not. How have I strived for them that they might be saved! But the heart is too hard for man to melt, and the soul made of iron too hard for flesh and blood to render soft! O God, the God of Israel, only You can save! There is the pastor’s hope. There is the minister’s trust. He cannot—but You can! Lord, they will not come, but You can make them willing in the day of Your power! They will not come unto You that they may have life! But You can draw them and then they shall run after You. They cannot come. But You can give them power, for though, “no man comes except the Father draw him,” yet if He draw him, then he can come! O Lord, for another year has Your servant preached—You know how. It is not for him to plead his cause with You—that is in Another’s hands and has been there, thank God, years ago! But now, O Lord, we beseech You, bless our people. Let this, our Church—Your Church—be still knit together in unity. And this night may they commence a fresh era of prayer. They are a praying people—blessed be Your name! And they pray for their minister with all their hearts. O Lord, help them to pray more earnestly! May we wrestle in prayer more than ever and besiege Your Throne until You make Jerusalem a praise, not only here, but everywhere! But, Father, it is not the Church we weep for. It is not the Church we groan for. It is the world! O Faithful Promiser, have You not promised to Your Son that He should not die in vain? Give Him souls, we beseech You, that He may be abundantly satisfied! Have You not promised Your Church that she shall be increased? Oh, increase her, increase her! And have You not promised that Your ministers shall not labor in vain? For You have said, that “as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, even so shall Your Word be—it shall not return unto You void.” Let not the Word return void, tonight, but now may Your servant, in the most earnest manner, with the most fervent heart—burning with love to His Savior and with love to souls—preach once more the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Come, Holy Spirit! We can do nothing without You! We solemnly invoke You, great Spirit of God! You who did rest on Abraham, on Isaac and on Jacob. You, who in the night visions, speaks unto men. Spirit of the Prophets, Spirit of the Apostles, Spirit of the Church, be You our Spirit this night—that the earth may tremble, that souls may be made to hear Your Word—and that all flesh may rejoice together to praise Your name! Unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit the dread Supreme, be everlasting praise! Amen.

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SERMON

**“Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children that faint for hunger at the head of every street.” Lamentations 2:19.**

This was originally spoken to Zion when in her sad and desolate condition. Jeremiah, the weeping Prophet, had wept his eyes dry for the slain of the daughters of his people. And when he had done all he could, to pour out tears for poor Jerusalem, he then begged Jerusalem to weep for herself! I think I might become a Jeremy, tonight, and weep as he, for surely the Church at large is in almost as evil a condition! O Zion, how have you been veiled in a cloud and how is your honor trod in the dust! Arise, you sons of Zion, and weep for your mother—weep bitterly—for she has given herself to other lovers and forsaken the Lord that bought her! I bear witness this night, in the midst of this solemn assembly, that the Church at large is wickedly departing from the living God. She is leaving the Truth of God which was once her glory and she is mixing herself among the nations. Ah, Beloved, it were well if Zion could now sometimes weep. It were well if there were more who would lay to heart the wounds of the daughter of His people. How has the city become a harlot! How has the much fine gold become dim! And how has the glory departed! Zion is under a cloud. Her ministers preach not with the energy and fire that anciently dwelt in the lips of God’s servants. Neither is pure and undefiled Doctrine proclaimed in her streets. Where are her Evangelists who, with earnest hearts, traversed the land with the Gospel on their lips? Where are her Apostolic preachers who everywhere declared the good tidings of salvation? Alas for the idle shepherds! Alas for the slumbering ministers! Weep sorely, O Zion! Weep sorely, until another reformation comes to sweep your floor!. Weep, Zion—weep until He shall come whose fan is in His hand, who shall thoroughly purge His floor! For the time is coming when judgment must begin at the House of God! Oh, that now the princes of Israel had wisdom, that they might seek the Lord! But alas, our leaders have given themselves to false doctrine! Neither do they love the thing which is right. Therefore I charge you, “Arise,” O Zion, “cry out in the night in the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

We leave Zion, however, to speak to those who need exhortation more than Zion does—to speak to those who are Zion’s enemies, or followers of Zion—and yet not belonging to her ranks—to them we shall have a word or two to say tonight.

1. First, from our text we gather that it is never too soon to pray. “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.” You are lying on your bed. The gracious Spirit whispers—“Arise and pray to God.” Well, there is no reason why you should delay till the morning light! “In the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.” We are told, here, that it is never too soon to pray. How many young persons imagine that religion is a thing for age, or at least for maturity? They conceive that while they are in the bloom of their youth, they need not attend to its admonitions. How many have we found who count religion to be a crutch for old age? They reckon it an ornament to their gray hairs, forgetting that to the young man religion is like a chain of gold around his neck and like an ornament set with precious jewels that shall array him with honor! How many are there who think it is yet too soon for them to bear, for a single moment, the Cross of Jesus? They do not want to have their young shoulders galled with an early burden. They do not think it is true that “it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” And they forget that that “yoke is easy,” and that “burden is light.” Therefore, hour after hour and day after day the malicious fiend whispers in their ear—“It is too soon, it is too soon! Postpone, postpone, postpone! Procrastinate!” Need we tell you once more that oft-repeated axiom, “Procrastination is the thief of time”? Need we remind you that “delays are dangerous”? Need we tell you that those are the works of Satan? For the Holy Spirit, when He strives with man, says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” It is never, Beloved, too soon to pray!

Are you a child, tonight? Your God hears children! He called Samuel when he was but a child. “Samuel, Samuel,” and Samuel said, “Here am I.” We have had our Josiahs. We have heard of our Timothys. We have seen those in early youth who have been brought to the Savior. Oh, remember it is not too soon to seek the Savior, before you arrive at manhood! If God, in His mercy, calls you to Him, I beseech you think not for a moment that He will not hear you. I trust I know His name—more than that, I know I do. “I know whom I have believed.” But He did not call me too early. Though but a child, I descended into the pool of Baptism there to be buried with my Savior. Oh, I wish I could say that all those 14 or 15 years of my life had not been thrown away! Blessed be His name, He never calls us too soon! If He rises early in the morning and sends some into His vineyard to labor, He does not send them before they should go—before there is work for them to do. Young man, it is not too soon! “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

2. Again—it is not too late to cry to the Lord. For if the sun is set and the watches of the night have commenced their rounds, the Mercy Seat is open. No shop is open so late as the House of Mercy. The devil has two tricks with men. Sometimes he puts their clock a little backward and he says, “Stop, there is time enough.” And when that does not work, he turns the hands up and he cries out, “Too late! Too late!” Old man, has the devil said, “It is too late”? Convicted sinner, has Satan said, “It is too late”? Troubled, distressed one, has the thought risen in your soul—a bitter and a dark one—“It is too late”? It is not! Within another 15 minutes, another year shall have come. But if the Spirit of God calls you this year, He will not call you too late in the year! If to the last second you should live, if God the Holy Spirit calls you, then, He will not have called you too late! Ah, you desponding ones, who think it is all too late. It is not—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,*

*The vilest sinner that returns”*  
shall find mercy and peace! There have been some older than you can be—some as sinful and vile and heinously wicked—who have provoked God as much, who have sinned against Him as frequently—and yet, by His Grace, they have found pardon! If He calls you, Sinner, if He calls you tonight, 12 o’clock is not too late, as 1 o’clock is not too early! If He calls you, whether it is at midnight, or cockcrowing, or noonday, we would say to you, as they did to the blind man, “Arise. He calls you.” And as sure as ever He calls you, He will not send you away without a blessing! It is not too late to call on God! The darkness of night is gathering. It is coming on and you are near to death. Arise, Sleeper, arise! You who are now taking the last nap of death, “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

3. Next—we cannot pray too vehemently, for the text says, “Arise, cry out in the night.” God loves earnest prayers. He loves impetuous prayers—vehement prayers. Let a man preach, if he dare, coldly and slowly, but never let him pray so! God loves crying-out prayers! There is a poor fellow who says, “I don’t know how to pray.” “Why, Sir,” he says, “I could not put six or seven words together in English grammar.” Tush upon English grammar! God does not care for that, as long as you pour out your heart. That is enough. Cry out before Him! “Ah,” says one, “I have been supplicating to God. I think I have asked for mercy.” But perhaps you have not cried out. Cry out before God. I have often heard men say they have prayed and have not been heard. And I have known the reason—they have asked amiss if they have asked. And those who cry with weak voices, who do not cry aloud, must not expect to get a blessing. When you go to Mercy’s gate, let me give you a little advice. Do not go and give a gentle tap, like a lady. Do not give a single knock, like a beggar. But take the knocker and rap hard, till the very door seems to shake! Rap with all your might! And remember that God loves those who knock hard at Mercy’s gate. “Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” I picture that scene at midnight, which our Savior mentioned in the parable—it will suit the present occasion. A certain man wanted some bread. A friend of his on a journey had come to his house and was very faint and needed bread to eat. So off he went to his next door neighbor and rapped at his door, but no one came. He stood beneath the window and called out his friend’s name. His friend answered from the top of the house, where he had been lying asleep, “My wife and children are with me in bed and I cannot rise and give to you.” But the man did not care about that! His poor friend needed bread, so he called out aloud—“It is bread I need and bread I must have!” I fancy I see the man lying and sleeping there. He says, “I shan’t get up. It is very cold tonight. How can you expect me to rise and go down stairs to get bread for you? I won’t. I can’t. I shan’t.” So he wraps himself very comfortably, again, and lays down to sleep once more. What does the man down below do? Oh, I still hear him—“Awake, Sir! I must have it! I will have it! My friend is starving.” “Go home, you fellow! Don’t disturb me this time of night.” “I must have bread! Why don’t you come and let me have it?” says the other. But the friend, vexed and angry, lies down on his bed. Still at the door there comes a heavier and a heavier rap and the man still shouts—“Bread, Sir, bread! You will not sleep all night till you come down and give it to me!” And verily I say unto you, though he will not rise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as much as he needs! “Arise, cry out in the night,” and God will hear you, if you cry out with all your soul and pour out your heart before Him.

4. And now our last remark—we cannot pray too simply. Just hear how the Psalmist has it—“pour out your hearts before Him.” Not, “pour out your fine words.” No, “pour out your beautiful periods,” but, “pour out your hearts.” “I dare not,” says one—“there is black filth in my heart.” Out with it, then—it is better out than in. “I cannot,” says another, “it would not run freely.” Pour it out, Sir. Pour it all out—like water! Do you not notice something in this? Some men say—“I cannot pray as I could wish. My crying out is a feeble one.” Well, when you pour out water, it does not make much noise. So you can pour out your heart like water and it will run away and you will scarcely know it. There are many prayers uttered in an attic that nobody has heard—but stop!—Gabriel heard it! God, Himself, heard it! There is many a cry down in a cellar, or up in an attic, or some lonely place where the cobbler sits mending his shoes beneath a window—which the world does not hear but the Lord hears it! Pour out your heart like water. How does water run out? The quickest way it can—that’s all. It never thinks much about how it runs. That is the way the Lord loves to have it! Some of your gentry offer prayers which are poured out, drop after drop, and must be brought to a grand, ecclesiastical, prayer-book shape. Now, take your heart and pour it out like water. “What?” says one, “with all the oaths in it?” Yes. “With all my old sins in it?” Yes. Pour out your heart like water. Pour it out by confessing all your sins. Pour it out by begging the Lord to have mercy upon you for Christ’s sake! Pour it out like water. And when it is all poured out, He will come and fill it again with “wines on the lees, well refined.” “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

Thus do I speak to all who will acknowledge themselves to be sinners in the sight of God—but even these must have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to cry out—O my Lord, grant it!

And now, dear Friends, may Grace be given unto you that you may be able to pour out your hearts this night! Remember, my Hearers, it may seem a light thing for us to assemble tonight at such an hour, but listen for one moment to the ticking of that clock! [Here, the preacher paused and amid solemn silence, everyone heard the clock with its tick, tick, tick.] It is the beating of the pulse of eternity. You hear the ticking of that clock?—It is the footstep of Death pursuing you! Each time the clock ticks, Death’s footsteps are falling on the ground close behind you. You will soon enter another year. This year will have gone in a few seconds. 1855 is almost gone—where will the next year be spent, my Friends? This one has been spent on earth—where will you spend the next? “In Heaven!” says one, “I trust.” Another murmurs, “Perhaps I shall spend mine in Hell!” Ah, solemn is the thought, but before that clock strikes 12, some here may be in Hell! And, blessed be the name of God, some of us may be in Heaven! But O, do you know how to estimate your time, my Hearers? Do you know how to measure your days? Oh, I have not words to speak, tonight! Do you know that every hour, you are nearing the tomb? That every hour, you are nearing judgment? That the archangel is flapping his wings every second of your life and, trumpet at his mouth, is approaching you? Do you not know that you do not live stationary lives, but always going on, on, on, towards the grave? Do you know where the stream of life is hastening some of you? To the rapids—to the rapids of woe and destruction! What shall the end of those be who obey not the Gospel of God? You will not have so many hours to live as you had last year! See the man who has but a few shillings in his pocket—how he takes them out and spends them, one by one? Now he has but a few coppers and there is so much for that tiny candle, so much for that piece of bread. He counts the articles out, one by one—and so the money goes gradually from his pocket. Oh, if you knew how poor you are, some of you! You think there is no bottom to your pockets. You think you have a boundless store of time—but you have not!

As the Lord lives, there is a young man here that has not more than one year to live! And yet he is spending all that he is worth, in time, in sin—in folly and vice! Some of you have not that to live. And yet how are you spending your time? O take care! Take care! Time is precious! And whenever we have little of it, it is more precious! It is most precious! May God help you to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven! I feel like the angel, tonight, who put his hand upon Lot and cried—“Escape! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain—flee to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

And now, I appreciate the power of silence. You will please observe strict and solemn silence until the striking of that clock. And let each one spend the time as he pleases. [It was now two minutes to twelve and profound silence reigned, save where sobs and groans could be distinctly heard from penitent lips seeking the Savior. The clock having struck, Mr. Spurgeon continued—] You are now where you never were before. And you never will be, again, where you have been tonight. Now we have had a solemn meeting and let us have a cheerful ending of it. As we go away, let us sing a sweet hymn to encourage our hearts.

[A hymn was then sung.]

Now may the Lord bless you and lift up the light of His Countenance upon you and give you peace! May you, during this year of Grace receive much Grace. And may you proceed onwards towards Heaven! And may we, as a Church, as members of Churches, as ministers, as deacons, mutually strive together for the faith of Jesus and be edified therein! And may the Lord save the ungodly! If the last year is clean gone and they are not yet pardoned and forgiven, let not another year roll away without their finding mercy!

The Lord dismiss you all with His sweet blessing, for His blessed Son’s sake, Amen. And may the love of Jesus Christ, the Grace of His Father and the fellowship of His blessed Spirit be yours, my Beloved, if you know Christ, world without end. Amen.

Now, my Friends, in the highest and best sense, I wish you all a happy new year.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3262 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SATAN’S ARROWS AND GOD’S  
NO. 3262

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul.” Lamentations 3:12, 13.**

JEREMIAH did not intend these verses to be a description of a sinner under conviction of sin. He was sorrowing over the woes of Jerusalem and the nation that had been so heavily punished for its sin, yet we may rightly apply his words to the most bitter of all human griefs—I mean, of all human griefs except that ruinous remorse which sometimes comes at the prelude of eternal destruction!

Dear Friends, when we preach to you, we do, as it were, shoot arrows at a mark but, alas, how few of them ever reach the target! If any of our arrows are shot without earnestness and zeal, they are almost certain to fall short of the mark. How sad it is that any of us who are sent by God to do such important work as this, should be cold-hearted or lukewarm! Shame on the preacher who does not bend the bow with all his might and throw his whole strength of spirit, soul and body into his efforts to win souls! At times our arrows fly too high. Perhaps we use expressions which out hearers do not understand, or do not talk sufficiently concerning the simplicities of the Gospel. In such a case we ought to repent and be grieved with ourselves that we have not better carried out our commission and so adapted the means we have used as to achieve the end we ought to have had in view. But even when we aim aright and put our whole force into the drawing of the bow, how often do our arrows glint off the steel armor of indifference in which so many of our hearers are encased from head to toe! The point of the arrow is blunted, or the shaft is snapped as we shoot again and again at those who try to prevent the entrance of the Truth of God into their hearts. Year after year I have drawn my bow at some of you—I have used the sharpest arrows and the most polished shafts that my quiver could supply—and have thrown my whole strength into the effort, yet, up till now no arrow has pierced your hearts or reached your soul. But how different is the case when God Himself draws the bow! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, His arrows never miss their mark! The joint in the sinner’s harness is always visible to Him, and though it is but a very small opening which no one else can see, between the plates of the armor the arrow unerringly enters! God knows how to wound mortally, too. As the text reminds us, the arrow is driven right into one’s soul—into those parts of our being where the vital principle is most active—so that there is no hope of escape from the arrows which God sends right into the heart, the soul, the conscience of the one at whom He shoots His shafts.

As God shall enable me, by his Holy Spirit, I intend to describe the case of those who have been pierced by God’s arrows. But I want, first, to speak of some arrows which do not come from God’s quiver at all, but which, nevertheless, cause very much pain to some sensitive spirits. So, first, I am going to try to break the devil’s arrows! Secondly, to endeavor to describe God’s arrows. And then, thirdly, to seek to comfort those who have been wounded by these arrows.

I. First, then, I am TO TRY TO BREAK SOME OF THE DEVIL’S ARROWS.  
I will venture to say that nine out of ten of the terrible feelings which men have when under conviction of sin are not the work of God’s Spirit, but are the result of the uprising of their own unbelief stirred and agitated by the diabolic suggestions of Satan. He knows that it is “now or never” with them—if he can now drive them to despair and keep them from coming to Christ, he will have gained his end. But if now the anxious soul should find shelter and rest in the Atonement of Christ, the Prince of Darkness will have lost it forever and, therefore, he exerts all his power and stirs up all his fellow fiends to do their utmost to keep the poor soul in despair!  
One of the arrows which the devil shoots at such a time is this is that he says to the troubled soul, “Your sins are so great that it is not possible for God to forgive you. You have sinned so grossly and so long— remember your sin on such-and-such a day and on such-and-such a night? If you had not committed such-and-such a sin, you might have been forgiven, but now there is no hope for you! Besides, think of the many ways in which your offenses have been aggravated. You have sinned against light and knowledge—though you have often been reproved, you have hardened your neck and you shall surely be destroyed—and that without remedy. Your case is utterly hopeless.” Now, although part of Satan’s speech is quoted from the Scriptures, I dare to affirm that this arrow never came out of God’s quiver! That quotation has no reference to one who sincerely repents of sin and comes to God seeking mercy for Jesus’ sake. However great your guilt may have been, remember that “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” If you had gone as far in sin as Satan, himself, could have led you, that great promise of the Lord Jesus Christ would still have been available for you, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man.” If the guilt of a thousand sinners had been concentrated in you, yet still, if you did but wash in the—  
*“Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”*—  
there is potency enough in that precious blood to make you whiter than the newly-fallen snow! O poor troubled one, let this arrow be broken in pieces once and for all! Let the thought of God’s everlasting mercy and His boundless power to forgive snap it in two and cast it to the ground!  
Another of the devil’s arrows which often goes whizzing through the air is this—“The Holy Spirit cannot soften such a hard heart as yours. You cannot repent as a sinner should do—sin has got too firm a hold upon you. Why, you know that you can listen to a most earnest discourse and yet not be in the least impressed by it! Or if you are for a time moved by the message, you soon go back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit and as the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire. There is no tenderness left in you! Your conscience is seared as with a hot iron! The Holy Spirit is powerless to do anything in such a case as yours.” That is another lie—a gross and slanderous lie! What is there that the Holy Spirit cannot do? O my Brothers and Sisters, when anyone is talking about what the Deity can do, the word, “powerless,” must never be mentioned! Even the word, “difficult,” is not to be put side by side with the name of God! “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear.” Why, one drop of Jesus’ precious blood could melt a mountain of ice as huge as a million worlds! One flash of the Holy Spirit’s celestial fire could make a rock of granite run like the water that gushed from the smitten Rock in the wilderness! There is no doubt about the hardness of your heart and the badness of your nature—you are probably much worse than you think are—but it is impossible that your depravity could exceed the potency of the Holy Spirit’s influence to renew your nature and change your whole life! So let this diabolical arrow also be smashed to atoms so that even the devil, himself, cannot use it again!  
Here is another shot from Satan’s quiver. The devil says to the poor troubled soul, “It is too late for you to repent. If you had repented and turned to God years ago, you might have been saved. When you were a young man, you had your day of Grace, but that is now over. Do you not remember being in a certain Chapel one Sunday night when the minister was so earnestly pleading with sinners and many were smitten down under conviction of sin? You also seemed to be impressed, but your anxiety was all gone in the morning—so you missed your opportunity and now the gates of Heaven are shut against you forever! You may seek the Lord, but you shall not find Him! You may call upon Him, but He will not answer you.” That is another of Satan’s lies, for there is no man living who has arrived at a period when it is too late for God to save him! We rightly sing—  
*“While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return.”*  
Did not Christ save the dying thief? He was fastened to a cross and was soon to die, but when he repented of his sin and pleaded with Christ to remember him, he received the gracious assurance that he should be that day with Christ in Paradise! If old age could keep men out of Heaven, there are many now before the Throne of God who would never have been there! If you are seventy, or eighty, or even 90 years of age, it is a sad and solemn thing that you should have lived so long without Christ—but this is no reason why you should die and be damned! God’s message to you is still this, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” The commission to Christ’s servants is still the same as when He gave it to His first disciples, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature”—not merely to every creature— under 50 years of age, but to everyone of the whole human race! If you are over a 100 years old, yet, as you are a creature, I have to preach the Gospel to you and the Gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!” So, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, however great your age may be, or however many times you may have refused to believe on Him, there is no doubt about God’s willingness and power to still receive, pardon and accept you!  
Another of Satan’s arrows is this. He whispers in a sinner’s ear, “You are not one of God’s elect. You are shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is no use for you to think of being saved—a stern decree has blotted out all possibility of hope for you.” But how does the devil know that? This is one of the things that God has never revealed to anyone, and I am sure that Satan has never been allowed to read the names in the Lamb’s Book of Life, so do not let this arrow trouble you for a moment! Why should not you be one of God’s elect as well as any other man? Have you been a drunk? Many drunks have been saved in spite of their drunkenness! Have you been addicted to profane swearing? There are many who once uttered the foulest oaths, but who were afterwards washed in the precious blood of Christ—and who are now singing the new song before the Throne of God in Glory! Have you been a willing servant of the devils? There are many who long served him here below, who are now playing their golden harps in the Presence of God above! You cannot tell whether you are one of the elect or not until you believe in Jesus—when you do that, you will have positive proof that God chose you unto salvation and gave you to His Son long before He formed the world! The Doctrine of Election is not one about which you need trouble yourself just now. Begin to read your Bible and the Gospel according to Matthew, and see there how you are bid to repent and invited to come to Christ. When you have done that, you can go on to the Epistles and read about election and all the other Doctrines of Grace, but your first business is to repent of sin and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!  
I have also known Satan whisper to a man, “It is no use for you to pray. You know that you have been praying for a long time, but you have got no comfort from it, so give it up, for it is an utterly useless exercise! It is no use for you to believe. There was a man the other day who said that he believed, but he was just as great a sinner afterward, so what good is it for you to believe?” Here again we have Satan’s lies sat in contrast with God’s Truth. It is of great use for everyone to pray, for our Savior said, “Everyone that asks, receives and he that seeks, finds. And to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” There is not one case of true prayer that is exempt from this general rule! Then as to Satan’s assertion that there are some who say that they have believed and yet they are not saved, we can reply that it is one thing to say that we believe, but quite another thing to really believe! No doubt there are some who say that they believe who are no better for it, but it is equally true that, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Faith does justify the soul—“being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So will you believe Satan’s lie or God’s Truth?  
I do not know what other arrows the devil may have shot at any of you. He may, perhaps have told you that you have committed the unpardonable sin, but that is certainly more than he knows. If you now desire to be saved, you may depend upon it that you have not committed that sin which is unto death! And if you are now believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the best possible proof that this sin cannot be laid to your charges, for whomever believes in Him is not condemned, but has everlasting life! Cling to the Cross of Christ and you shall never sink down to Perdition.  
II. Having thus tried to break some of the devil’s arrows, I want, next, TO ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE SOME OF GOD’S ARROWS.  
Here I will give you a piece of my own experience. When God began to deal with me, one of the first arrows that flew right into my heart was this, “You God see me.” I recollected that God knew all about my sins, that He had seen them or heard them, and had noted them all down in His Book of Remembrance. I was greatly alarmed, for I had forgotten many of them and had dreamed that God also had forgotten them.  
Then came another arrow, bearing this motto, “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” I realized that God knew all about my motives and thoughts. He had seen my selfishness when I was seeking to do what was right merely that I might be saved by it. He had watched all the wanderings of my heart, and all the evil imaginations of my mind—and I was almost driven to despair as I thought what must be the fruit of my doings!  
Then came another sharp arrow and it was labeled thus, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” I knew that I had sinned and I felt that I must die, for the Law can show no mercy—it can only punish the guilty. Then I heard that terrible sentence, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them.” Then was I sorely afraid, like Belshazzar was when he saw the mysterious handwriting on the wall!  
Then came another arrow bearing this inscription, “Your commandment is exceedingly broad,” and I began to see that the Law of the Lord was much more than I had thought it to be. I had fancied that if I kept the letter of the commandments, I would be accounted innocent, but I found that the commandment which said, “You shall not kill,” meant that if I hated my brother, I would be a murderer! And that, “You shall not commit adultery” not only referred to that shameful act, but also included the lascivious look and the unclean thought! Ah, me, where was all my fancied righteousness, then? In view of the spirituality of God’s Holy Law, I might well say with Moses at Sinai, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”  
Another arrow that came to me was marked, “Without Me you can do nothing.” I found that by my own unaided power, I could not pray, I could not repent, I could not believe—but there I lay, as helpless as the dirt beneath my feet—and with no more power to save myself than a sere leaf driven by the blast of a tornado would have had!  
Ah, these were sharp arrows, indeed, and just when I seemed covered with wounds all over me, I thought I had another arrow shot into me bearing this terrible message, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” When I went to sleep, I determined that I was in Hell—and when I woke up, I wondered that the earth did not open and swallow up such a sinner as I felt myself to be! Life became almost unbearable to me.  
Then there came another arrow which caused me to suffer still more. It bore this missive, “You have sinned against light and knowledge. You were not ignorant, as many lads were, of what you ought to do. You had received gracious instruction and you knew what the Gospel was! You sinned against your father’s prayers and your mother’s tears.” I recollected the Sunday evenings at home when my mother had prayed with me and pleaded with me to lay hold on eternal life, yet I had still refused to turn to God and to trust in Jesus as my Savior—and this thought came to my mind, “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you.”Thus did the arrows of God’s quiver enter into my soul!  
These are God’s arrows and the messages they bear are all true. It is true that God sees us. It is true that He reads our thoughts and motives. It is true that He punishes sin. It is true that His commandments are exceedingly broad. It is true that we are powerless to save ourselves. And if, my dear Hearers, you are feeling the force of any of these Truths of God, I congratulate you that God has thus made you a mark for His arrows!  
III. Now, thirdly, I want TO SEEK TO COMFORT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WOUNDED BY THESE ARROWS.  
My dear afflicted Friends, thus troubled and distressed in mind, please consider why God sends these arrows to you. Remember that they are not sent to destroy you, but to save you—and to save you by destroying some things of which you are very fond! They are sent, first of all, to destroy your false peace. God cannot bear that you should say, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace and, therefore, He shoots these arrows to kill your carnal ease that you may be stirred up to seek His face. They are also sent to slay your self-righteousness—and they are blessed arrows that can do that! When Mr. Hervey asked a poor farmer what was the hardest thing to get rid of, he expected him to answer, “Sinful self.” But the reply was, “Righteous self.” And certainly, of the two, righteous self is much harder to part with than sinful self. These arrows are also sent to kill your strength. Remember, Sinner, when you can do nothing, then God will do everything! When you are so completely emptied that you have nothing left, God will give you everything! If you wish to save yourselves, do it, but God will have no share in the work under such conditions. If He is to save you, He must be Alpha and Omega—He must have all the praise because He gives all the power!  
Next, as God’s name and Nature are both Love, He cannot take any pleasure in seeing you suffer. He has a purpose in setting you as a mark for His arrows. He has a design in causing the arrows of His quiver to enter your soul. He does not wound you out of ill-will toward you, but He is aiming at your good all the while. So thank Him for shooting at you and beg Him not to spare any of His arrows, but to keep on shooting until He has killed the last relic of evil and self-righteousness that has kept you from coming to Christ!  
Further, do not imagine that you are the first person who has suffered in this way. All the people of God, in their measure, pass through a similar experience. If they do not become God’s target at the time of their conversion, they find that His quiver is emptied against them sooner or later. Therefore, my poor wounded Brother or Sister, look upon your pathway as being the pathway of the saints—it is the King’s Highway which has been trodden by the pilgrims to Heaven in all ages!  
Once more, you are one of those who are especially invited in this blessed Book. Listen—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—that must mean you! “And I will give you, rest.” This is what you need. “Ho, everyone that thirsts”—that means you! “Come you to the waters, and he that has no money”—that means you! “Come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Whoever will”—that must mean you, for you are willing enough to be saved—“let him take the water of life freely.”  
If you cannot get any comfort out of these invitations because you fear you are not the person described in them, remember that there is a general call given in the Gospel. Not only are we invited to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and bid to repent of sin, but as Paul said at Athens, “God now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Be thankful that it is not too late for you to obey that command! The door of Heaven is not yet closed against you! The gate of Hell has not yet been fastened as your eternal prison—you are still on praying ground and on pleading terms with God—so “seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”  
Above all, my dear Hearers, remember that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—sinners, mark you—not the righteous, the good, the excellent, but the sinful, the bad, the guilty! God loved not men because of their goodness. Christ bought not men because of their moral beauty. The Holy Spirit quickened not those who were already alive—but “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Look by faith, Sinner, to Him as He hung upon the Cross! It is God’s eternal Son, “very God of very God,” who died there, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Recollect how He cried, “It is finished,” before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. What was finished? Why, the road from Hell to Heaven! The pathway along which the vilest sinner may travel to Glory—the Fountain in which the most scarlet sins may be washed away—the Redemption by which the bond-slaves of sin and Satan are forever set at liberty! All this and more than this was finished on Calvary! And if you will trust in Jesus now, a finished salvation shall be yours this very moment! May the Holy Spirit enable you, just as you are, to rest upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will find that He who wounded you with His arrows, shall heal you by His Grace, and you shall be His forever and ever! God grant it, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LAMENTATIONS 3:1-35; JEREMIAH 31:22-37.**

I am about to read a portion of Holy Scripture which may seem very strange to some of you, but it belongs to a part of the congregation, and I hope it may be the means of giving them comfort. I read is as a picture of the suffering of a soul under a sense of sin. I think it is a most graphic portrait of a heart that is awakened and made to feel its lost estate. If there are any such here, they will be sure to see themselves in the picture.

Verse 1. I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. It is a mistake that most souls make when in trouble, to suppose that no others ever felt as they do. John Bunyan describes Christian as being very much comforted by hearing someone quoting Scripture as he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for then he perceived that there were others in the same case with his own. Do not think, poor troubled Soul, that no one was ever so broken in pieces as you are—your path of sorrow is a well-trodden one,

2. He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light. A Hebrew method of saying that it was a thick darkness without any light, either star-light or moon-light. You who have passed through this state of conviction know what it means—no comfort from ordinances, no comfort from God’s Word, no comfort from your daily mercies. Every stream of comfort seems dried up to you—and sin lies heavily upon you.

3. Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. As if when a man is about to strike, he smites not with his open hand but turns his hand, so the Prophet says God did with him. He felt that he was being smitten with the heaviest blows that God seemed able to give.

4. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones. As men through excessive grief sometimes appear to grow prematurely aged, so the Prophet says he had gone through grief. He felt as if his bones were broken. The sore vexations of his spirit had dashed the solid pillars of the house of Manhood from their place.

5. He has built against me, and compassed me with gall and travel. That is to say, as the besiegers erected a mound against a city and threw up earthworks, so the Prophet says God seemed to have thrown up earthworks from which He might fire off the great guns of the Law against him.

6. He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. As though he had to live in a tomb, where neither life nor light could come to him.

7. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy. “My way seems blocked up, nothing prospers with me.” As the convict sometimes drags about his chain, and has a ball at his foot, so the Prophet felt as if God had clogged him with a heavy chain so that he could not move because of its terrible weight.

8. Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. Which was the worst trial of all!  
9. He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked. It was believed that hewn stones made the strongest wall as the joints would the more closely fit into one another. Jeremiah seems to speak as if God had taken care and trouble to build, not as men do roughly with common stones, but with polished and well-shapen troubles built like strong barriers in his way.  
10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He felt as if the Justice of God was about to spring upon him. He was afraid to move, lest the couched lion should leap upon him and tear him to pieces. John Bunyan, in his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, describes in his own experience precisely what the Prophet here speaks of.  
11-13. He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul. And all this while, to aggravate his grief, he found no comfort anywhere.  
14. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. It is just so with a man who is under a sense of sin. His companions ask him why he is so melancholy. He has an attack of the mopes, they say. They do not want his society, they will chase him from their midst. I marvel not that they want not his company, for well do I know that he wants not theirs, but this adds much to his grief, to find that they make derision and laughter of his woe.  
15. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. What a strong expression the Prophet uses! As a drunken man has lost his wits and staggers he knows not where, even as is a sinner when he really begins to taste the bitterness of sin. He does not act as if he were endowed with reason—despair and sorrow have driven his senses away.  
16. He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes. The Easterns usually baked their cakes on the hearth and very frequently there would be in the cakes pieces of grit, perhaps large lumps of cinder and sometimes small gravel stones, which would break the teeth. “So,” the Prophet seems to say, “when I went to try to get some nourishment by the eating of bread, I was disappointed—my teeth were broken with gravel stones.” I remember when I used to go up to the House of God to try to get comfort, but instead thereof, I came away more wretched than I went—for sin, that great devouring dragon, still followed me everywhere.  
17-21. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope are perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to

my mind, therefore have I hope. [See Sermon #654, Volume 11—MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Notice the gracious change that has taken place, as if the sun had risen after the blackness and gloom of the night! Now the birds of joy begin to sing and the flowers of hope begin to open their golden cups.

22. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fails not. Bad as our state is, we are not yet in Hell—we are not yet beyond the reach of hope!

23. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. We had new mercies this morning, and we have had fresh mercies this evening. God has not forgotten us! The very breath in our nostrils is a proof of His goodness to us. Let us, therefore, dear Friends, still hope for yet further favors from Him!

24, 25. The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks  
Him. [See Sermon #2436, Volume 41—“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can you get a hold of this

blessed Truth of God, any of you troubled ones who are here? Brokenhearted Sinner, can you get a grip of this comforting assurance? If so, there will soon be peace for you!

26, 27. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in  
his youth. [See Sermon #1291, Volume 22—THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] For this  
yoke, though it may seem to be very heavy for a time, when it has humbled us and brought us to Christ, will bring us innumerable blessings!

28-33 . He sits alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the LORD will not cast off forever: but though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Unless He has some gracious motive for it, He never afflicts or grieves them, and when He does act thus, it is as when a father smites his child. It is because it must be done and not because he loves to do it. See, then, the great mercy of God! May it lead the sinner to repentance, yes, and lead us all to put our trust in the Lord!

[The following Exposition is the concluding portion of the one published with Sermon #3261, Volume 57—THE COVENANT—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

The passage here expounded is Jeremiah 31:22-37.

Jeremiah 31:22. For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Here is a prophecy of the birth of Immanuel, God With Us, born of a woman by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Mary was indeed blessed among women and we rejoice in that Man who was thus miraculously born to be the Savior, Christ the Lord.

23-20 . Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. There are good times in store for Israel! Jerusalem shall then be the “habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”

26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me. Jeremiah woke up with a pleasant impression of his vision upon him, and well he might, for was there ever a more blessed one than that of which we have just read?

27, 28. Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the LORD. All the ingenuity of Heaven seems to be taxed to bless Believers! And just as man sought out many inventions for evil, God, in His Infinite Love and Mercy seeks out many inventions for the good of His people.

29, 30. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. We live under a personal dispensation—there is no such thing as hereditary godliness or salvation by proxy! Every man must for himself repent, and for himself believe. Vain and foolish is the idea that because we have had Christian parents, therefore we also are Christians!

31, 32. Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an Husband unto them, says the LORD. What bliss it is to know about this new Covenant! Let us notice its tenor.

33. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward

parts, and write it in their hearts —[See Sermons #1687, Volume 28—THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART and #2992, Volume 52—GOD’S WRITING UPON MAN’S HEART—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not on the tablets of stone,

not on the walls of the Church, but “I will write it in their hearts”— 33. And will be their God, and they shall be My people. You may have  
heard it said that Christ will not leave His people, but that His people  
may leave Him—but in this promise the second contingency is provided  
for as well as the first!  
34-37. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every  
man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from  
the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus says the  
LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the  
moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the  
waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances  
depart from before Me says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall  
cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD, If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out  
beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have  
done, says the LORD. What a God of Infinite Mercy He is!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE

NO. 654

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” Lamentations 3:21.**

MEMORY is very often the servant of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past and every gloomy feature in the present. Memory stands like a handmaiden clothed in sackcloth, presenting to her master a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. Like Mercury, she hastens with winged heel to gather fresh thorns with which to fill the uneasy pillow and to bind fresh rods with which to scourge the already bleeding heart. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom will transform Memory into an angel of comfort.

That same recollection which may, in its left hand, bring so many dark and gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs! She need not wear a crown of iron. She may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars! When Christian, according to Bunyan, was locked up in Doubting Castle, Memory formed the crab-tree club with which the famous giant beat his captives so terribly. They remembered how they had left the right road, how they had been warned not to do so and how in rebellion against their better selves they wandered into By-Path Meadow.

They remembered all their past misdeeds, their sins, their evil thoughts and evil words—and all these were so many knots in the club—causing sad bruises and wounds in their poor suffering persons. But one night, according to Bunyan, this same Memory which had scourged them, helped to set them free—for she whispered something in Christian’s ear and he cried out as one half amazed, “What a fool am I to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle.” So he put his hand into his bosom and with much joy he plucked out the key and thrust it into the lock.

And though the lock of the great iron gate, as Bunyan says, “went damnable hard,” yet the key did open it, and all the others, too. And so, by this blessed act of memory, poor Christian and Hopeful were set free! Observe that the text records an act of memory on the part of Jeremiah— “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” In the previous verse he tells us that memory had brought him to despair—“My soul has them still in remembrance and is humbled in me.” And now he tells us that this same memory brought him to life and comfort yet again—“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.”

We lay it down, then, as a general principle, that if we would exercise our memories a little more, we might, in our very deepest and darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort! There is no need for God to create a new thing in order to restore Believers to joy. If they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past they would find light for the present. And if they would turn to the Book of Truth and the Throne of Grace, their candle would soon shine as before. I shall apply that general principle to the cases of three persons.

I. First of all, to THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE. This is no unusual position for an heir of Glory. A Christian man is seldom long at ease—the Believer in Jesus Christ through much tribulation inherits the kingdom. If you will kindly turn to the chapter which contains our text, you will observe a list of matters which recollection brought before the mind of the Prophet Jeremiah and which yielded him comfort.

First stands the fact that however deep may be our present affliction, it is of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed. This is a low beginning, certainly. The comfort is not very great, but when a very weak man is at the bottom of the pyramid, if he is ever to climb it, you must not set him a long step at first. Give him but a small stone to step upon, the first time, and when he gets more strength, then he will be able to take a greater stride. Now, consider, you sons of sorrow, where you might have been!

Look down now through the gloomy portals of the grave to that realm of darkness which is as the valley of the shadow of death—full of confusion and without any order. Can you discern the sound as of the rushing to and fro of hosts of guilty and tormented spirits? Do you hear their dolorous wailing and their fearful gnashing of teeth? Can your ears endure to hear the clanking of their chains, or your eyes to see the fury of the flames? They are forever, forever, forever shut out from the Presence of God, and shut in with devils and despair!

They lie in flames of misery so terrible that the dream of a despairing maniac cannot realize their woe. God has cast them away and pronounced His curse upon them, appointing them blackness of darkness forever. This might have been your lot. Contrast your present position with theirs and you have cause rather to sing, than to lament! “Why should a living man complain?” Have you seen those foul dungeons of Venice? They are below the water-mark of the canal! To get to them you must wind through narrow, dark, stifling passages. Then you creep into little cells in which a man can scarcely stand upright where no ray of sunlight has ever entered since the foundations of the palace were laid! They are cold, foul and black with damp and mildew—the fit nursery of fever and abode of death!

And yet those places were luxury to inhabit compared with the everlasting burnings of Hell! It were an excess of luxury to lost spirits if they could lie there with moss growing on their eyelids, in lonely misery—if they might but escape for a little season from a guilty conscience and the wrath of God! Friend, you are neither in those dungeons nor yet in Hell! Therefore pluck up courage and say, “It is of the Lord’s mercy we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

Slender comfort this may be, but then, if this flame shall yield but little heat, it may lead to something better. When you are kindling your household fire before which you hope to sit down with comfort—you do not first expect to kindle the lumps of coal—you set some lighter fuel in a blaze and soon the more solid material yields a genial glow. So this thought, which may seem so light to you, may be as the kindling of a heavenly fire of comfort for you who now are shivering in your grief. Something better awaits us, for Jeremiah reminds us that there are some mercies, at any rate, which are still continued. “His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.”

You are very poor and have come down for wealth. This is very difficult, still you are in good health. Just walk into the hospital, ask to be permitted to witness the work done in the operating room. Sit down by one bedside and listen to the story of pain and weariness, and surely you will leave the hospital feeling, “I thank God that with all my poverty I have not sickness to complain of and therefore I will sing of the mercies which I enjoy.”

Are you sick and have you dragged your weary body to this house this morning? Then I shall invite you to accompany me to those dark cellars and miserable attics where poverty pines away in wretched unpitied obscurity in the heart of this great city. And if you note the hard-earned meal too scant to yield sufficient refreshment, and the miserable heap of straw which is their only rest, you will escape from the foul den of filthy penury and say, “I will bear my sickness, for even that is better than filth, starvation and nakedness.”

Evil your plight may be, but there are others in a still worse condition. You can always, if you open your eyes and choose to do so, see at least this cause for thankfulness—that you are not yet plunged into the lowest depth of misery. There is a very touching little story told of a poor woman with two children who had not a bed for them to lie upon and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep that some of the draft and cold might be kept from them.

One of the children whispered to her when she complained of how badly off they were, “Mother, what do those dear little children do who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?” Even there, you see, the little heart found cause for thankfulness. And we, if we are driven to our worst extremity, will still honor God by thanking Him that His compassions fail not but are new every morning. This, again, is not a very high step—but still it is a little in advance over the other—and the weakest may readily reach it.

The chapter offers us a third source of consolation. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore will I hope in Him.” You have lost much Christian, but you have not lost your portion. Your God is your All— therefore, if you have lost all but God—still you have your all left since God is All. The text does not say that God is a part of our portion, but the whole portion of our spirit! In Him we have all the riches of our heart

concentrated. How can we be bereaved since our Father lives? How can we be robbed since our treasure is on high?

It is daylight and the sun is shining bright and I have a candle lit, but someone blows it out. Shall I sit down and weep because my candle is extinguished? No, not while the sun shines! If God is my portion, if I lose some little earthly comfort I will not complain, for heavenly comfort remains. One of our kings, high and haughty in temper, had a quarrel with the citizens of London and thought to alarm them by a dreadful threat that would cow the spirits of the bold citizens—if they did not mind what they were doing he would remove his Court from Westminster. Whereupon, the Lord Mayor begged to enquire whether His Majesty meant to take the Thames away, for so long as the river remained His Majesty might take himself wherever he pleased!

Even so, the world warns us, “you cannot hold out, you cannot rejoice—this trouble shall come and that adversity shall befall.” We reply, so long as you cannot take our Lord away we will not complain. “Philosophers,” said the wise man, “can dance without music.” And true Believers in God can rejoice when outward comforts fail them. He who drinks from the bottle as did the son of the bondwoman may have to complain of thirst. But he who dwells at the well as did Isaac, the child according to promise, he shall never know lack! God grant us Grace, then, to rejoice in our deepest distress because the Lord is our sure possession, our perpetual heritage of joy.

We have now advanced to some degree of hope but there are other steps to ascend. The Prophet then reminds us of another channel of comfort, namely, that God is forevermore good to all who seek Him. “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.” Let Him smite ever so hard, yet if we can maintain the heavenly posture of prayer we may rest assured that He will turn from blows to kisses! When a beggar wants an alms and is very needy, if he sees another beggar at the door of some great man, he will watch while he knocks and when the door is opened and the man is liberally entertained and generously helped, he who has been looking on knocks with boldness in his turn.

My Soul, are you very sad and very low this morning? The Lord is good to them that seek Him! Thousands have come from His door but none have had reason to complain of a cold reception, for in every case He has filled the hungry with good things. Therefore, my Soul, go boldly and knock, for He gives liberally and upbraids not! In all states of dilemma or of difficulty prayer is an available source. Bunyan tells us that when the City of Mansoul was besieged it was the depth of winter and the roads were very bad, but even then prayer could travel them.

And I will venture to affirm that if all earthly roads were so bad that they could not be traveled, and if Mansoul were so surrounded that there was not a gap left through which we could break our way to get to the king, yet the road upwards would always be open! No enemy can barricade that! No blockading ships can sail between our souls and the haven of the Mercy Seat. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the Throne of God. And though she may be outward bound with only griefs and groans and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings! There is hope then, Christian, for you are allowed to pray—

*“The Mercy Seat is open still,  
Here let our souls retreat.”*

We are getting into deeper water of joy! Let us take another step and this time we shall win greater consolation still, from the fact that it is good to be afflicted! “It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth.” A little child needs to be coaxed to take its medicine. It may be very ill and Mother may assure it that this medicine will work its cure. But the child says, “No, it is so bitter, I cannot take it.” But men need not thus to be persuaded. The bitter is nothing to them. They think of the health which it will bring and so they take the draught and do not even wince.

Now we—if we are little children and have not called to remembrance the fruit which affliction bears—may cry and murmur. But if we are men in Christ Jesus and have learned that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” we shall take the cup right cheerfully and willingly and bless God for it! Why should I dread to descend the shaft of affliction if it leads me to the gold mine of spiritual experience? Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky?

Go Sun, for in your absence we shall see ten thousand suns! And when your blinding light is gone, we shall see worlds in the dark which were hidden from us by your light. Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink which you cannot read till the fire of trouble brings out the letters. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Your statutes.” Beloved, Israel went into Egypt poor—but they came out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They had worked, it is true, at the brick kilns and suffered bitter bondage, but they were bettered by it. They came out enriched by all their tribulations.

A child had a little garden in which it planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought, tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up, but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father’s gardener and when he came to look at it, he said, “I will make it a nice garden for you, that you may grow whatever you want.” He fetched a pick and when the little child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground and began to make the earth heave and shake, for his pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which lay under almost all the little plot of ground.

All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet and so he did—for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root—he soon filled the ground with flowers which lived and flourished. And so the Lord has

come and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort—to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity and would not let your soul flourish! Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results and thank your Father’s tender hand.

One step more and surely we shall then have good ground to rejoice. The chapter reminds us that these troubles do not last forever. When they have produced their proper result they will be removed, for “the Lord will not cast off forever.” Who told you that the night would never end in day? Who told you that the sea would ebb out till there should be nothing left but a vast track of mud and sand? Who told you that the winter would proceed from frost to frost, from snow and ice and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest? Who told you this, I say? Do you not know that day follows night? That flood comes after ebb? That spring and summer succeed winter?

Then have hope! Hope forever! God fails you not! Do you not know that your God loves you in the midst of all this? Mountains, when hidden in darkness are as real as in daylight and God’s love is as true to you now as it was in your brightest moments. No father chastens always—he hates the rod as much as you do! He only cares to use it for that reason which should make you willing to receive it, namely, that it works your lasting good. You shall yet climb Jacob’s ladder with the angels and behold Him who sits at the top of it—your Covenant God.

You shall yet, amidst the splendors of eternity, forget the trials of time—or only remember them to bless the God who led you through them and worked your lasting good by them! Come, sing on your bed! Rejoice amidst the flames! Make the wilderness blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with your exalting joys! These light afflictions will soon be over and then, “forever with the Lord,” your bliss shall never wane!

Thus, dear Friends, Memory may be as Coleridge calls it, “the bosom spring of joy,” and when the Holy Spirit bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

II. For a short time, we will speak TO THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN WHO HAS LOST HIS EVIDENCES OF SALVATION. It is our habit, in our ministry, to avoid extremes as much as possible and to keep to the narrow path of the Truth of God. We believe in the doctrine of predestination. We believe in the doctrine of free agency and we follow the narrow path between those mountains. So in all other Truths. We know some who think that doubts are not sins—we regret their thinking that.

We know others who believe doubts to be impossible where there is any faith—we cannot agree with them. We have heard of persons ridiculing that very sweet and admirable hymn, beginning—

*“ ’Tis a point I long to know.”*  
We dare not ridicule it ourselves, for we have often had to sing it—we wish it were not so—but we are compelled to confess that doubts have vexed us. The true position, with regard to the doubts and fears of Believers, is just this—that they are sinful and are not to be cultivated, but to be avoided—but that, more or less, most of Christians do suffer them and that they are not proof of a man’s being destitute of faith. The very best of Christians have been subject to them. To you who are laboring under anxious thought I now address myself.

Let me bid you to remember, in the first place, matters of the past. Shall I pause and let your heart talk to you? Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Perhaps you do not. Well, do you remember happy seasons when He has brought you to the banqueting house? Cannot you remember gracious deliverances? “I was brought low and He helped me.” “You have been my help.” When you were in those past circumstances, you thought yourselves in overwhelming trouble. You have passed through them and cannot you find comfort in them?

At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy that when the frail boats of the Portuguese went sailing south, they named it the Cape of Storms. But after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many Cape of Storms, but you have weathered them all and now, let them be a Cape of Good Hope to you. Remember, “You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.”

Say with David, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.” Do I not remember this day some hills Mizar where my soul has had such sweet fellowship with God that she thought herself in Heaven? Can I not remember moments of awful agony of soul when in an instant my spirit leaped to the topmost heights of ecstasy at the mention of my Savior’s name? Have there not been times with me at the Lord’s Table, in private prayer and in listening to His Word, when I could say—

*“My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away,  
To everlasting bliss”?*

Well, let me remember this and have hope, for—  
*“Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is forever mine.”*

He never loved where He afterwards hates. His will never changes. It is not possible that He who said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands,” should ever forget or cast away those who once were dear to Him.

Possibly, however, that may not be the means of comfort to some of you. Recall, I pray, the fact that others have found the Lord true to them. They cried to God and He delivered them. Do you not remember your mother? She is now in Heaven and you, her son, are toiling and struggling onward here below. Do not you recollect what she told you before she died? She said God had been faithful and true to her. She was left a widow. And you were but a child then. And she told you how God provided for her and for you and the rest of that little needy family in answer to her pleadings. Do you believe your mother’s testimony and will you not

rest with your mother’s faith upon your mother’s God?

There are grey heads here who would, if it were the proper season, testify to you that in an experience of fifty and sixty years in which they have walked before the Lord in the land of the living, they cannot put their finger upon any date and say, “Here God was unfaithful.” Or, “Here He left me in the time of trouble.” I, who am but young have passed through many and sore tribulations after my sort and can say and must say it, for if I speak not, the timbers of this house might cry out against my ungrateful silence—He is a faithful God and He remembers His servants and leaves them not in the hour of their trouble! Hearing our testimonies, cannot you say in the words of the text, “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope”?

Remember, again, and perhaps this may be consolatory to you, that though you think you are not a child of God at all now, yet if you look within you will see some faint traces of the holy Spirit’s hand. The complete picture of Christ is not there, but cannot you see the crayon sketch—the outline—the charcoal marks? “What,” you say, “do you mean?” Do you want to be a Christian? Have you not desires after God? Cannot you say with the Psalmist, “My heart and my flesh pants after God—after the living God”?

Oh, I have often had to console myself with this! When I could not see a single Christian Grace beaming in my spirit, I have had to say, “I know I shall never be satisfied until I get to be like my Lord.” One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see—see enough, at least, to know my own defects and emptiness and misery. And I have just enough spiritual life to feel that I want more and that I cannot be satisfied unless I have more. Well, now, where God the Holy Spirit has done as much as that, He will do more! Where He begins a good work, we are told, He will carry it on and perfect it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Call that to mind, Brothers and Sisters, and you may have hope.

But I would remind you that there is a promise in this Book that exactly describes and suits your case. A young man had been left by his father heir of all his property, but an adversary disputed his right. The case was to come on in the court and this young man, while he felt sure that he had a legal right to the whole, could not prove it. His legal adviser told him that there was more evidence wanted than he could bring. How to get this evidence he did not know. He went to an old chest where his father had kept his papers, turned all out and as he turned the writings over and over and over, there was an old parchment. He undid the red tape with great anxiety and there it was—the very thing he wanted—his father’s will in which the estate was spoken of as being left entirely to himself. He went into court boldly enough with that!

Now, when we get into doubts, it is a good thing to turn to this old Book and read until at last we can say, “That is it—that promise was made for me.” Perhaps it may be this one—“When the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them. I the God of Jacob will not forsake them.” Or this one— “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” May I beg you to rummage the old Book through? And you, poor doubting, despairing Christian, will soon stumble on some precious parchment, as it were, which God the Holy Spirit will make to you the title-deed of immortality and life!

If these recollections should not suffice, I have one more. You look at me and you open your ears to find what new thing I am going to tell you. No, I am going to tell you nothing new, but yet it is the best thing that was ever said out of Heaven, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” You have heard that a thousand times—and is the best music you have ever heard! If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And if I may not go to the Throne of Grace as a child, I will go as a sinner!

A certain king was accustomed on set occasions to entertain all the beggars of the city. Around him sat his courtiers, all clothed in rich apparel. The beggars sat at the same table in their rags of poverty. Now it came to pass, that on a certain day, one of the courtiers had spoiled his silken apparel so that he dared not put it on, and he felt, “I cannot go to the king’s feast today, for my robe is foul.” He sat weeping till the thought struck him, “Tomorrow, when the king holds his feast, some will come as courtiers happily decked in their beautiful array and others will come and be made quite as welcome who will be dressed in rags. Well, well,” he said, “so long as I may see the king’s face, and sit at the king’s table, I will enter with the beggars.” So, without mourning because he had lost his silken habit, he put on the rags of a beggar and he saw the king’s face as well as if he had worn his scarlet and fine linen! My soul has done this full many a time and I bid you do the same! If you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner! Only come and you shall receive joy and peace.

There was a lamentable accident which occurred in the North in one of the coal pits. A considerable number of miners were down below when the top of the pit fell in and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were down below sat together in the dark and sang and prayed. They gathered to a spot where the last remains of air below could be breathed. There they sat and sang after the lights had gone out because the air would not support the flame. They were in total darkness, but one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit that had been worked years ago.

He said it was a low passage, through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground—the passage was very long, but they crept through it and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other pit and their lives were saved. If my present way to Christ as a saint gets blocked up. If I cannot go straight up the shaft and see the Light of my father up yonder—there is an old working, the old fashioned way by which sinners go, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go— come, I will crawl along lowly and humbly, flat upon the ground—I will crawl along till I see my Father and cry, “Father, I am not worthy to be called Your son. Make me as one of Your hired servants, so long as I may but dwell in Your house.”

In your very worst case you can still come as sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—call this to mind and you may have hope.

III. I must have a few words with SEEKERS. Always in this congregation we have some who are seeking the Lord—would to God we had many more! It were glorious preaching if all were either seeking or had found. If it were not for the mixed multitude who neither seek nor find, our work were easy work, indeed. Some of you are seeking God today and you are very much troubled with the fear that you cannot be saved. I will have a few words with you to recall to mind some common-place Truths of God which may give you hope.

First of all some of you are troubled about the doctrine of election. I cannot, this morning, explain it to you. I believe it and receive it with joy! And you may rest assured, however much it troubles you, it is true. Though you may not like it, it is true! And remember it is not a matter of opinion as to what you like or do not like— as to what you think or do not think—you must turn to the Bible and if you find it there you must believe it.

Listen to me. You have got an idea that some persons will be sent to Hell, merely and only because it is the will of God that they should be sent there. Throw the idea overboard because it is a very wicked one and is not to be found in Scripture! There could not be a Hell inside the man’s conscience who knew that he was wretched merely because God willed he should be—for the very essence of Hell is sin and a sense of having willfully committed it. There could not be the flames of Hell if there were not this conviction on the mind of the person suffering it, “I knew my duty but I did it not—I willfully sinned against God and I am here not because of anything He did or did not do, but because of my own sin.”

If you drive that dark thought away you may be on the road to comfort. Remember again, that whatever the doctrine of election may be or may not be, there is a free invitation in the Gospel given to needy sinners, “Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Now you may say, “I cannot reconcile the two.” There are a great many other things that you cannot do. God knows where these two things meet though you do not. And I hope you do not intend to wait till you are a philosopher before you will be saved—because it is likely enough that while you are trying to be wise by persistently remaining a practical fool you will find yourself in Hell where your wisdom will not avail you.

God commands you to trust Christ and promises that all Believers shall be saved. Leave your difficulties till you have trusted Christ and then you will be in a capacity to understand them better than you do now. In order to understand Gospel doctrine you must believe in Christ first. What does Christ say, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Now election is the Father’s work. The Father chooses sinners. Christ makes the Atonement. You must go, then, to Christ the atoning Sacrifice before you can understand the Father as the electing God. Do not persist in going to the Father first. Go to the Son as He tells you.

Once more, remember that even if your own idea of the doctrine of election were the truth, yet if it were so, you can but perish should you seek the Lord—

*“I can but perish if I go, I am resolved to try; For if I stay away I know I must forever die. But if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the King have tried,  
That were to die, delightful thought,  
As sinner never died.”*

Trust Christ even if you should perish and you shall never perish if you trust in Him! Well, if that difficulty were removed, I can suppose another, saying, “Ah, but my case is of great sin.” Recall this to mind and you will have hope, namely, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” Paul says, “I am chief.” “I am chief.” Paul was the chief of sinners and he went through the door of Mercy. And now there can be none greater than the chief, and where the chief went through you can go through! If the chief of sinners has been saved, why not you? Why not you?

We heard Mr. Offord say the other day that he knew a good woman who, when the Salt-Ash Bridge was made down at Plymouth, would not go on it. She said she did not believe it was safe. She saw locomotive engines and trains go over it so that the bridge sustained hundreds of tons at a time, but she shook her head and said she wondered people were so immensely presumptuous as to cross it.

When the bridge was totally clear and not an engine on it she was asked if she would not walk on it then. Well, she did venture a little way, but she trembled all the while for fear her weight should make it fall. It could bear hundreds of tons of steel but it could not bear her! You great Sinner, it is much the same case with you. The stupendous bridge which Christ has flung across the wrath of God will bear the weight of your sin, for it has borne ten thousands of thousands across before and will bear millions of sinners yet to the shore of their eternal rest. Call that to remembrance and you may have hope.

“Yes,” says one, “but I believe I have committed the unpardonable sin.” My dear Brother, I believe you have not, but I want you to call one thing to remembrance and that is that the unpardonable sin is a sin which is unto death. Now a sin which is unto death means a sin which brings death on the conscience. The man who commits it never has any conscience afterwards—he is dead there. Now, you have some feeling. You have enough life to wish to be saved from sin. You have enough life to long to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! You have not committed the unpardonable sin, therefore have hope.

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “But,” you reply, “Oh, I cannot repent! My heart is so hard.” Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins and you may come to Him to get repentance and need not bring it to Him! Come without any repentance and ask Him to give it to you and He will give it. Rest assured there is no fear whatever that if the soul seeks

softness and tenderness it has that softness and tenderness in a measure even now, and will have it to the fullest extent before long. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have a general unfitness and incapacity for being saved.” Then, dear Friend, I want you to call this to remembrance, that Jesus Christ has a general fitness and a general capacity for saving sinners.

I do not know what you need, but I do know Christ has it. I do not know the full of your disease, but I do know Christ is the physician who can meet it. I do not know how hard and stubborn and stolid and ignorant and blind and dead your nature may be, but I do know that “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” What you are has nothing to do with the question, except that it is the mischief to be undone. The true answer to the question of how you are to be saved lies yonder in the bleeding body of the immaculate Lamb of God! Christ has all salvation in Himself. He is Alpha, He is Omega. He does not begin to save and leave you to perish, nor does He offer to complete what you must first begin.

He is the foundation as well as the pinnacle. He commences with you as the green blade and He will finish with you as the full corn in the ear. O that I had a voice like the trumpet of God that shall wake the dead at last! If I might only have it to utter one sentence, it would be this one, “Your help is found in Christ.” As for you, there never can be found anything hopeful in your human nature. It is death itself! It is rottenness and corruption. Turn, turn your eyes away from this despairing mass of black depravity and look to Christ! He is the sacrifice for human guilt. His is the righteousness that covers men and makes them acceptable before the Lord!

Look to Him as you are—black, foul, guilty, leprous, condemned. Go as you are! Trust Jesus Christ to save you and remembering this, you shall have “a hope that makes not ashamed,” which shall endure forever. I have labored to speak comfortable words and words in season and I have tried to speak them in homely language, too. But, O Comforter, what can we do without You? YOU must cheer our sadness. To comfort souls is God’s own work! Let us conclude, then, with the words of the Savior’s promise, “If I go away, I will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you forever.” And let our prayer be that He would abide with us to His own Glory and to our comfort forevermore. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations 3:1-33.*Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #3170 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE NOVELTIES OF DIVINE MERCY  
NO. 3170

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1909.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“His compassions...are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22, 23.

THE Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah is very dolorous. When you look upon the dragons, owls, pelicans and bitterns of the wilderness, you have a fit picture of his mournful state. He was full of grief, like a bottle needing vent. His heart was ready to burst with wormwood and with gall.

But the whole current changes when the Prophet brings to his remembrance the mercy of God! No sooner does he think of the compassions of the Most High than at once he takes his harp from the willows and begins to sing as joyously as ever that sweet singer of Israel, David, sang before him. And, truly, if we, too, instead of harping upon our miseries, would but reflect upon our mercies, we would exchange our mournful dirges for songs of joy!

It is true that God’s people are a tried people, but it is equally true that God’s Grace is equal to their trials! It is quite true that through much tribulation they enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but then they do enter—and the thought of the Kingdom that is coming sustains them in their present tribulation! They wade through the waters of woe, often breast-deep, but the billows do not, and shall not, go over them! They shall still be able to sing even in the midst of the tempest. I would suggest to any here who are in the habit of complaining—and I would remind you that it is a very bad habit—and to any of you who have become chronic murmurers, that this temper of mind is exceedingly sinful. While, on the other hand, the remembrance of God’s mercy and grateful talk about it is a virtuous habit—one which is honoring to God as well as strengthening and profitable to our own souls. Imitate Jeremiah, then, and if you can find no comfort in your present outward circumstances, meditate upon the unfailing mercies of God!

What a blessed word that is which the Prophet here uses, “compassions”! David uses the word, “pity,” more frequently, but he means the same thing. It is a humbling word, though exceedingly consolatory. I have often felt very deeply chastened in my own soul at the remembrance of the text, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” What? Is this the Lord’s attitude towards even the strongest and the best of saints? Does God only pity them? Yes, it is even so— those that do exploits, those that lead the van in the day of battle, those to whom we look up with respect and admiration, God looks upon with Infinite Love—but that love still takes the form of pity. He can see their weakness where we only see their strength. He can discover their defects where we merely admire the work of the Holy Spirit in them. And, therefore, He regards them with pity. Yet it is a Father’s pity, the pity of a Father who smiles at the weakness of the child, knowing that the attempt which it is making, though a feeble one, will educate it for something better! And foreseeing that it will, by-and-by, outgrow its weakness and be able to do greater things.

God has compassion for the best of His people, but it is compassion prompted by love. It is not the pity that is akin to scorn, but the pity which melts from love, as the honey drops from the honeycomb. I would again ask our dear friends who are tried and troubled to think of the Infinite Pity of God towards them. He has smitten you, but still, not as hard as He might have done! Out of pity He has stayed His hand. He has spoken sharply to you through your own conscience, but if He had spoken as loudly as your sins deserved, there would have been loud thunder-claps instead of gentle admonitions! He has withered your gourds, but if He had done to you what stern justice might have demanded, it would not have been the gourd that would have withered, but you, yourself, would have wasted away!

Admire the compassion of God toward you! Even if one child in your family is sick, they are not all sick. If the Lord has taken away one of your friends by death, there are many other friends still left to cheer and comfort you. You have had heavy losses in business, but you are not bankrupt. You are not in good health, but still, you have not been stricken with the diseases which have attacked some others—your pain is bearable. It is true that the weather is dull and heavy to your spirit, but it is not the blackness of “the valley of the shadow of death.” Take heart even in the midst of affliction and chastisement, for the compassion of God is still to be seen!

Moved by such thoughts as these, the Prophet penned the remarkable words before us, “His compassions are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.” I have been admiring the first sentence of the text which suggests to me the novelties of Divine Mercy. And as I speak upon it, I mean to get you to preach to yourselves, to wake up your recollections, to ask you to turn over a few pages in your old notebooks, to make you look at your diaries and remember what God has done for you since you first savingly knew His name.  
I. First, then, I want to remind you that GOD’S MERCIES ARE ALWAYS NOVELTIES—“They are new every morning.”

The water that is in the cistern may be sufficient for a long time, but if it is stored, it will not remain fresh. It may have been fresh the first morning it flowed into the cistern, but it will not be fresh tomorrow. And the longer it lasts, the more stagnant it will become. But the water that gushes from the springhead is always fresh! I drank of it when I was a boy. I went to it in the prime of manhood. I stoop to drink of it now that my hair is turning gray and it is still as fresh and sparkling as ever. God is not the cistern, but the Fountain! Our treasures which we lay up on earth are the stagnant pools, but the treasure which God gives us from Heaven, in Providence and in Grace, is the crystal Fountain which wells up from the eternal deeps and is always fresh and always new! There are no gray hairs upon the Angel of the Covenant, no wrinkles upon His brow. I may say of Him what the spouse in Solomon’s Song says of her Beloved, “His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.” Mercy is as old as eternity and is always God’s darling attribute, yet it is always young, active and bright and fair! Mercy is not a tree that yields its fruit but once in the year—our trees bear such fruit as that which may be stored through the winter and kept till, perhaps, it becomes rotten. But the mercy of God is like the Tree of Life which bears its fruit every month—at all times and at all seasons we may have a share of the compassions of God—and we shall find that “they are new every morning.”

The thought that God’s mercy is always new is a pleasing one, but that it is new every morning is very amazing. If you had to preach year after year, as some of us do, you would find it no small difficulty to have something new to say every Sunday. But God has something new for us every morning! I suppose the writers in our newspapers often have to exercise their brains to give us something new every day, but God, with the greatest ease, sends to the many millions of His people something new every morning! He does not need to repeat Himself. If He sends the same mercy, there is something about it which shows it to be fresh and new. God never gives us old money that has been worn and defaced—His mercy always comes to us fresh from the mint with all the brightness and clearness of new coinage! “His compassions are new every morning.” Not only some mornings, but EVERY morning from the first of January to the last of December! God never has to stay His hand, He never has to pause to think of something fresh. His mercies come to us freely, spontaneously, “new every morning.” Let us think for a little while what this means.

In the first place, every morning brings a new mercy because every morning ends the night. The night is the time of danger and dismay. Why do we ask, concerning the sick one, “How did he pass the night?” We seldom enquire, “How did he pass the day?” Is it not because somehow or other we connect the night with the idea of insecurity and danger? We wear the image of death upon our faces while we sleep—and how slight the difference is between a sleeping man and a dead man is plain to all beholders. Every morning we may say, “What a mercy that our bed did not become our tomb! What a mercy that in the night we were not alarmed with fire, that our couch was not consumed and ourselves in it—that the house was not broken into by wicked men, that no convulsions of Nature terrified us, that no cry of anguish, like the shrieks that woke up every parent in Egypt, was heard in our house because our child was dying!” Such cries have been heard by some of us and we have had dreadful nights which we shall never forget! Let us live as long as we may, but every morning in which we wake without such alarms and tears, or after a quiet, restful night in which God has given to His beloved, sleep, we have had a new mercy and we may at once look up to the Lord, and say, “We praise You that another night is gone! Your mercies are new every morning.”

But every morning also brings a new mercy because every morning ushers in another day. That is a new reason for praise, for we have no right to an hour, or even a minute, much less to a day. To the sinner, especially, it is a great mercy to have another day of Grace, another opportunity for repentance, a new reprieve from death, a little more space in which to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven. Ah, Soul, suppose you had never seen the light of another rising sun but had heard, instead thereof, the dreadful sentence, “Depart, accursed one, into the darkness which shall never be pierced by a ray of light”? How terrible would have been your portion! So what a mercy it is that you are still spared!

The Christian may thank God that he has another day in which he may walk with God as Enoch did, another day in which he may trust God as Abraham did, another day in which he may work for Christ as Paul did, another day in which he may reap the Gospel harvest, another day in which he may gather pearls for Immanuel’s crown, another day in which he may be ripening for Glory, another day in which he may hold communion with his Lord, another day in which he may be making advances in the blessed pilgrimage towards the Celestial City! God gives us our days—may He teach us their value, for they are pearls of great price. And then as each new morning breaks, we may truly say to Him, “Your mercies are new every morning, for the morning has brought us another day.”

Further, a new mercy comes to us each morning, at least to the most of us, because each morning brings supplies for the day. I have often thought to myself, “What a mercy it is to know that when I wake there is a breakfast provided for me!” There are many, alas, who do not know from where their first meal in the day is to come. That is a sorrowful thing, and a very trying discipline—but it is certainly not the case with the most of us, for we always have enough for the next day in our cupboard. When we rise in the morning, we are not quite like the sparrows who have to seek their food. They begin to chirp as soon as they wake— there is nothing in their barn, yet they sing, as Luther understood then—

*“Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,*

*God provides for the morrow.”*  
Then they set to work to find their daily bread and find it they do, for God feeds the fowls of Heaven—and your day’s provision is waiting for you! There is the manna for you outside the camp and you know where to gather it. As you do so, remember the mercy of the Lord and bless His holy name!

But you say that you have not all you could wish to have and, therefore, you are not happy. Ah, dear Friends, let us all obey the Apostle’s injunction, “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.” And let us all learn the lesson of which the Apostle wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Let me again remind you—because I am afraid some of you, especially those of you who have abundance, do not always remember it—that you are daily dependent upon God’s Providence, that you as much receive your daily bread from God as if the ravens brought it, that you as certainly obtain all that you receive from the hand of God as if it dropped from the clouds, or as if the wind brought you quails! Be thankful, then, that as each day brings to your household fresh needs for daily bread, clothing and shelter, God is also pleased to give such mercies as you need every morning.

In spiritual things, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, how richly may the text be illustrated! “His compassions are new every morning,” because every morning I commit fresh sins. Strange creature that I am, I can scarcely open my eyes to the light before my complex nature begins to display the darkness that still lingers within me! Miserable mass of humanity that I am by nature, I can hardly breathe without offending in the thoughts and imaginations of my heart. And even though I may watch my eyes, guard my tongue and keep the members of my body pure, yet still my heart goes a-wandering and my tongue, before long, speaks idle words! Yet the mercy is that with the new sin, there always comes the new pardon, for “His compassions are new every morning.” So, before we leave our bedchamber, we go afresh to the—

*“Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”—*

and once again we wash and are clean! When we go forth to our business and tug and toil to earn an honest living, we are all too prone to wander from our God—yet even then we may still think of our blessed Master who girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin and washed His disciples’ feet—and then said that they were clean every whit. We are like those disciples, for our daily pollutions need a daily cleansing. We have been once washed in the precious blood of Jesus and we are clean in the sight of God, but we need to be daily cleansed from our daily defilements—and every morning brings us this Divine Grace.

Then, we scarcely leave our bedchamber, no, we do not leave it, before the new morning brings new temptations. Some mornings especially bring us temptations that we have never experienced before, insinuations gain an entrance into our mind which never perplexed us till that moment. We scarcely know how to deal with them—and young Christians, especially, are often staggered when these diabolical shafts are winging their way towards them! Then, when we go downstairs to begin the duties of the day, we do not know how long we shall be before we shall be sorely tempted to sin. If we did but know at what hour the tempter would come, we might be on the watch for him, but lo, Satan and sin come like a thief in the night! The time when a child of God is most likely to be tempted to sin is when he is in the holiest frame of mind. You may think that is an odd remark, but I make it as the result of my own experience. I have often found that when I have been nearest to God in prayer, or when I have most enjoyed a service, I have just then been met by somebody who said something gross, or wicked, or unkind. And I have been tempted to answer and perhaps have answered in a way for which I have afterwards been sorry. If you are like I, Beloved, you know that after having been lifted up by some ecstatic experience, you are not well prepared to meet these contrary individuals—so that in your moments of highest joy, something may occur to cause your feet to trip!

Well, now, it is such a mercy for me to remember that when I begin each new morning, though I cannot tell what temptations may come to me, I do know that God’s mercies are new every morning and, therefore, that there will be fresh Grace to enable me to resist the fresh temptations! We may rest assured that we shall be taken with no temptation but such as is common to man—and that God will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape for us. Put on the whole Gospel armor and then let the shafts of the tempter fall where they may—they shall not wound you. Or if a wound is received by you between the joints of your harnesses, there is a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—and a heavenly hand shall reach down with those healing leaves that your wounds may be healed. Let us be glad, then, that there is daily Grace to enable us to overcome daily temptations!

We do not completely know, when we wake in the morning, what will be the particular tasks of the day, for each new day brings new duties. Even though we should know completely, as we do know in part, the service appointed for the day, yet it would be a sad thing to wake up to new duties and new responsibilities if we had not also, new strength with which to discharge them. Every day brings a new duty, or it may be an old duty in a new shape, cast in another mold. All that I did yesterday cannot exonerate me if I am idle today—and all the service that I did for my Master a year ago will not excuse me if I waste this year. I must take each hour of time on the wing and I must seek to get wealth from it as it passes by me. This is your consolation, Beloved, that there shall be daily strength given to you for the daily duty to which God calls you! Depend upon it, if God will allow us to work or fight for Him, He will not let us go in our own strength or at our own charges, but He will provide His soldiers with suitable weapons—and He will provide the workers in His vineyard with the best tools for their service. There is daily Grace, then, for daily duties.

I might go on to mention that each day will bring its trials, anxieties and necessities, but I should also have to remind you that each morning brings the promise, “As your days”—note that the word is in the plural, not, as so many misquote it, “As your day,” but, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” As long as days shall last and till time shall be swallowed up in eternity, God’s compassions shall be new every morning—to meet our new needs, our new relations, our new responsibilities, our new temptations and our new sins!

II. Now, I will try to illustrate this subject in another light, for this text is like a kaleidoscope—you may turn it as many times as you will and there will constantly be a fresh form of beauty to be seen. Remember, therefore, that SOMETIMES THE MERCIES WE RECEIVE ARE ACTUALLY NEW IN THEMSELVES.

You must all have had certain periods in your lives when new mercies were bestowed upon you. I cannot mention them all, but just think of the Ebenezers, the stones of help, all along your pathway—and the stones of Bethel that you have set up after some distinguishing favors which have made such days and nights memorable to you. Such mercies as these have been new in a peculiarly special sense.

Sometimes the mercy is new in substance—you have received what you never received before. At other times the mercy is not so much new in substance as it is new in the way of its coming. I am sure that yesterday, when after praying for the last two or three months that God would remember the various works we have in hand—and we received a thousand pounds for the Stockwell Orphanage from some unknown donor—I felt that it was a new mercy of a very special character! Money has been sent to me, many times, for the Lord’s work under my charge, but it has each time been sent in a different way, or in a different form—and each time it has well-near overwhelmed me! When I heard of the generous gift yesterday, I was sitting with a dear Brother who had just been saying to me, “My dear Friend, there are some people who say, ‘Our Brother Spurgeon does not know where to stop—he is always going on from one good thing to another—if he should make a failure, it would be a very dreadful thing!’ Now,” said my Friend, “don’t you think it would be a great catastrophe? What a large amount is required for the College!” And then he mentioned other things and closed by saying, “Suppose there should be a failure in the income?” I said, “I never suppose any such thing! I have no purpose to see and no end to gain, and no motive in carrying on all these institutions, but God’s Glory. I was forced into these works against my will and God cannot leave me—He must carry on the work and I am persuaded that He will do so—my motive is Jehovah Jireh.” Just at that moment, the post came and the letter was opened which told me about the thousand pounds. My Friend said, “My dear Brother, let us kneel down and praise the Lord for His mercy.” And so we did. And with many tears he thanked God, oh, in such a warm-hearted manner—and he evidently felt how foolish it was to talk about things failing that are undertaken for God, because God is sure to help us! My Friend said it was a blessed means of Divine Grace to him and that he would remember that day as one of the choice days in his life in which God had showed that He would help those who, in His name, undertake work for the poor and needy and try to aid His cause. Well now, was not that a new mercy? It was not a new thing for us to receive help, but the mercy came in a new way—and it is in such a fashion as this that God’s mercies “are new every morning.”

Then sometimes, when you do not get the mercy in exactly a new way, yet it seems new to you because you are in a new condition. You have more knowledge and can better comprehend the value of the mercy. You have more experience and can better understand your own need of the mercy. The mercy which comes to a young man of 20 has a special brightness about it—the mercy which comes to the same man at 70 may not have so much sparkle about it, but there will be, I think, if the man is a full-grown Christian—and age is not always identical with growth in Grace—a deeper and more solemn sense of obligation when the mercy comes to him. As we advance in life, the glitter of our thoughts may depart, but the solid gold of them will remain and increase and multiply— that is to say if we really grow mature in spirit as well as old in years. The Lord grant that we may! I am sure that the light in which the aged Christian man regards a mercy is, in some respects, a different light from that in which the young man regards it. The babe in Grace is very grateful for God’s mercy and sees that the mercy is very precious. But the fullgrown man in Christ Jesus has a gratitude of a far richer and deeper kind. Thus, this mercy of God is new to us because we see it in a new light and it finds us in a new state.

III. Now, thirdly, to come to the practical point of my discourse, I want to ask this question—As GOD’S MERCIES ARE NEW EVERY MORNING, WHAT THEN?

Then I call upon you for new praise. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ whose new mercies you and I, my Brothers and Sisters, are always receiving, that our hearts and our lips should praise Him hour by hour, and even moment by moment! Weave new crowns for Christ! Sing new sonnets in honor of His blessed Person and of the mercies which so constantly flow to us from Him—

*“Your mercy, my God, is the theme of my song, The joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue! Your free Grace alone, from the first to the last Has won my affections and bound my soul fast. Great Father of mercies! Your goodness I own, And the Covenant love of Your crucified Son! All praise to the Spirit, whose whisper Divine Seals mercy, pardon and righteousness mine!”*

I ask you not merely for praise in words, but for praise in new actions which shall speak far more loudly than words. Be not content with what you have already done for God, but out of gratitude to Him be constantly doing something new if it is possible. As the soldier seeks to be always pressing forward, so let us be always trying to do more and more for God. Let us be even as the eagle when he soars to the skies, continually circling higher and higher. God grant that we may not rest on our laurels, saying, “We did such-and-such when we were young,” or, “We gave so much yesterday to the cause of God,” but, as the new mercies continue to come to us, let there constantly be on our part new returns of service for God.

And I ask not only for new actions, but also for new faith. Let every new mercy confirm our confidence in the God of Mercy! All these compassions of our Covenant-keeping God are so many swift witnesses against our unbelief. All these loving kindnesses of the Lord are so many strong evidences for the confirmation of our confidence in Him. God may well say to us, “At what time have I been false to you? Have I received you for a season and then cast you away? Have I been slack in blessing you? Have I stinted you in mercy? Have I withheld My loving kindness from you?” You dare not say that God has been stingy towards you! His mercies have been “new every morning.” Shall God, then, have to say to you, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifice: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities”? Let not the Lord have to upbraid us thus but let our grateful enquiry be, “What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us?” And so let us give Him new praise, new gratitude and new service to prove our gratitude!

I ask you, then, for new confidence in God. Or if you cannot mount so high as that, at any rate I ask all here who have proved the faithfulness of God to offer to Him new prayers. If you have already been heard by Him, pray to Him again. The beggar in the street says to you, “Help me this time and I will never ask you to help me again.” Talk not like that, O you who beg at God’s door of Mercy, but—

*“From His mercy draw a plea,*

*And ask Him still for more!”*  
“Open your mouth wide and I will fill it,” is the Lord’s gracious exhortation and promise! Spread your wings and soar away to the very Throne of God and then expect that He will still exceed your faith and do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or even think!

Gathering up much matter into a little space, I ask of all Christians the exercise of a holy ingenuity in inventing new plans for honoring Christ. I ask the exercise of a holy perseverance in carrying those plans into action. I ask for the blazing of a holy zeal every morning to make the carrying out of those plans to be always earnest and fervent so that as the Lord’s loving kindnesses are new every morning, so also may be our grateful recollections and our loving service!

IV. I have no time left for speaking at length upon the second sentence of the text, GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS, though I had intended to do so. I shall, therefore, only utter these few remarks upon it.

“Great is Your faithfulness,” so great that there has never been an exception to it. You have never, O Lord, at any time acted towards any of Your people otherwise than according to Truth and righteousness! A man may be quite honest and upright, and yet if he conducts an extensive business, it will be very difficult for him to escape a charge of having sometimes overstepped the mark. He may never have done so, but still, it will be very difficult, especially if he has many employees, for him to escape the charge of having done so. But our God has had thousands of millions of people to deal with throughout all ages and yet there stands not beneath the cape of Heaven, nor yet above the stars, nor in Hell itself, a single soul who can say that God, in any transaction, has ever dealt with him otherwise than according to absolute faithfulness!

But, further than that, no item in the whole roll of Divine promises to us has been unfulfilled by God. Old Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you.” If a man makes many promises, I will defy him to keep them all, because even if he is both able and willing to keep them, yet he will not always be able to remember them. But God remembers every promise that He ever made and He takes care to honor each of those promises in the experience of those who believe in Him! They who trust in the Lord shall find Him to be faithful, not only in great things, but also in little things! While He keeps the oath of His Covenant fast forever, His faintest Word shall abide firm and steadfast, and the least Truth which He has ever declared shall never grow dim.

The glory of God’s faithfulness is that no sin of man has ever made Him unfaithful. Unbelief is a most damning thing and yet, even though we believe not, God abides faithful! His children may rebel against His Law and they may wander far from His statutes. And He may chastise them with many stripes, yet He said, “My loving kindness will I not utterly take away from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.” God’s saints may fall under the cloud of His displeasure and provoke the Most High by their transgressions—yet He will have compassion upon them, will turn unto them and say—“I, even I, am He that blots out their transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember their sins.” So no sin of man can make God unfaithful—

*“Let us, then, with gladsome mind,  
Praise the Lord, for He is kind—  
For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.”*

And, once again, no crisis that can by any possibility ever arise can compel God to be unfaithful to His people. Even though the whole world should go to wreck and ruin, yet He would still bear up the pillars of His people’s hope. When His saints cannot be safe under Heaven, He will take them up to Heaven. When He shall bid the great fountains of fire leap up to consume this world and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, if we are alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man, we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air! God provided an ark for Noah before He sent the deluge. And He had a mountain refuge ready for Lot before He destroyed Sodom. If David must be driven from the court of Saul, he shall be sheltered in Engedi. And if, by-and-by, the Philistines shall come up against the land, God will still take care of His servant! At the worst pinch, God will always be there—you may reckon it as certain that He has never forgotten His people! When the clock strikes and the bell tolls the hour, God will arise for their defense and show Himself to be strong on behalf of all those who put their trust in Him!

Settle it in your minds, Beloved, that God cannot lie! Believe every man to be a liar if you must, but never believe that God can fail you! If you speak in your soul after this fashion, “Sometimes I see the wicked prosper and I am in tribulation and distress. And my spirit says, ‘Has God forgotten me? Will He give all the good things to those who curse Him and cause His people to be chastened forever?’” Say that to yourself very softly and then add, “Yet, though all things seem thus contrary to the Lord’s people, I know that God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” Say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Say with old Eli, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” “Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Hold to your faith as the ancient warrior hung to his shield, for therein lies your safety. God help you to cling to him! When you cannot rejoice in the light of His Countenance, trust in the shadow of His wings and even there, like David, you shall find a safe retreat!

Here I leave the subject with you for your private meditations. And I pray God to quicken in every one of His people a life of holy joy and confidence. Oh, that all of you whom I am addressing knew at least something of the experiences of God’s people! You who only live the life of sense and have no faith in Jesus, little know what I mean, for though I have talked largely of the sorrows of God’s people, yet the joys of faith are unspeakable! One drop of God’s Love would sweeten a sea of gall. Yes, I was almost about to say that even the pangs of Hell would lose their bitterness if a drop of the Love of Christ could once flow there and be tasted by those who are lost!

Christian, you already know what it is to find roses among the thorns and to prove your pangs and your sufferings to be soul-enriching things—messengers from the King bringing you to His banquet of wine— and leading you to the discovery of the treasures which He has laid up for you. You know this, so tell it to the ungodly and perhaps their mouths will be set to watering after the good things of Christ’s table! When they once long for them, they shall have them, for Christ never refuses a hungry one. And if there is such an one here, a poor, empty, destitute soul, remember, dear Friend, that Mercy’s door stands always open and that Christ, the Host of the Gospel Inn, stands always ready to receive every soul that comes, having written this gracious promise over the door of the Inn, “Him that came to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #451 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHOICE PORTIONS  
NO. 451

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For the Lord’s portion is His people.”  
Deuteronomy 32:9.  
“The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”  
Lamentations 3:24.**

The love of God changes us into its own image, so that what the Lord says concerning us, we also can declare concerning Him. God is love essentially, and when this essential love shines forth freely upon us, we reflect it back upon Him. He is like the sun, the great father of lights, and we are as the moon and the planets—we shine in rays borrowed from His brightness. He is the golden seal, and we, His people, are the wax receiving the impression.

Our Heaven is to be likeness to Christ and our preparation for Heaven consists in a growing imitation of Him in all things. See, Brethren, how the Lord gives the Word, and our heart, like an echo, repeats every syllable. The Lord loves His people and we love Him because He first loved us. He has chosen His saints and they also have made Him their chosen heritage. The saints are precious to Jesus and unto us who believe He is precious. Christ lived for us, and for us to live is Christ—we gain all things by His death and for us to die is gain.

The Church is the looking glass in which Christ sees Himself reflected. She is like a fair songstress taking up the refrain of Jesus’ canticles of love, while He sings, “My sister, My spouse,” she answers, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” It is most delightful to perceive how, through Divine Grace, Believers come to have the same feeling towards their God which their gracious Lord has towards them.

Our two texts present us with an interesting instance—the Church is God’s portion—He delights in her, He finds in her His solace and His joy. But God is also, as the result of this, the Church’s portion—her full delight and bliss. Beloved, the love is mutual. And whereas the Lord is married to His people, we perceive that it is no forced match on either side. He voluntarily gave Himself to her and she joyfully surrenders her all to Him. His whole heart He gave unto His chosen people, and now they as voluntarily, though led by Divine Grace, give themselves to Him. And while He clasps His Church in His arms, saying, “You are My portion,” she returns the embrace and rapturously cries, “You are my portion, O Lord.”

As God shall help me, and relying only on His Divine assistance, I shall try to work out these two texts at some length. We shall commence with, “The Lord’s portion.” We will then proceed to the second, “His people’s portion.”

I. “THE LORD’S PORTION IS HIS PEOPLE.”

1. The text teaches us that the Church of God is the Lord’s own peculiar and special property. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. The world and they that dwell therein.” By creation, as well as by Providence, Jehovah is the liege Lord and Sovereign possessor of the entire universe. Let none venture to dispute His claims, or say that He is not the great Owner of all things, for thus says the Lord, “Behold, all souls are Mine.” But He has a special property in His Church.

As a king may have ample possessions, to all of which he has undoubted right, still he has royal mansions and crown lands which are in a very special sense his own. So has the Lord of All a peculiar interest in His saints. As Osborne and Balmoral and Windsor belong to our sovereign by a tenure which differs from her title and claim to the United Kingdom, so the Church is the peculiar heritage of the King of kings. The whole world is God’s by common right. He is Lord of the manor of the universe. But His Church is His garden, His cultivated and fenced field, and if He should give up His rights to all the rest of the wide earth, yet He never could relinquish His rights to His separated inheritance. “The Lord’s portion is His people.”

How are they His ? We answer, first, by His own sovereign choice. Before they were fashioned, all creatures lay in His mind’s eye in the mass of creatureship, and it was in His power to make whom He would as vessels unto honor. He did so ordain to make His chosen and set His love upon them. When they lay in the impure mass, having all fallen, it was still in His power, through the plan of redemption, to raise up some and to make these His own special heritage. This He did altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which He foresaw in them.

He had mercy on whom He would have mercy and ordained a chosen company into eternal life. These, therefore, are His by election. As our text says, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance, or as the Hebrew has it, “the cord” of His inheritance, an allusion to the old custom of measuring out lots by a line or cord. So by line and by lot the Lord has marked off His own chosen people, “and they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.”

They are not only His by choice, but by purchase. He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing, so that about His title there can be no dispute. Not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord’s portion has been fully redeemed. There is no mortgage on His estate, no suits can be raised by opposing claimants, the price was paid in open court and the Church is the Lord’s freehold forever.

See the blood-mark upon all the chosen, invisible to human eye but known to Christ, for “the Lord knows them that are His”? He forgets none of those whom He has redeemed from among men. He counts the sheep for whom He laid down His life and remembers well the Church for which He gave Himself. Should any fraudulent adversary dispute His claim, He shows His pierced hands and points to His wounded side. The emblems of His passion are the seals of His possession.

They are also His by conquest. Old Jacob, when he lay dying, gave to Joseph one portion above his brothers, which he had taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. The Lord Jesus can truly say of His people that He has taken them out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. Your conquering hand, O Jesus, when nailed to the Cross, rent away Your children’s’ chains. You have trod our foes in Your anger and trampled them in Your hot displeasure. Behold their blood is sprinkled upon Your garments and You have stained all Your raiment.

Upon your necks, O you tyrants of the Church, has the Anointed put His feet. He has dashed you in pieces with His own right hand! He has broken the ties of the young lions and delivered His Israel out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. He has obtained His saints as a portion which He divides with the great, and as a spoil which He has taken from the strong. We are Christ’s this day by conquest in us. What a battle He had in us before we would be won! How long He laid siege to our hearts! How often He sent His terms of capitulation.

But we rejected all overtures of submission. We barred our gates. We fenced our walls against Him. The Law, with its great battering ram, smote our gates till the posts rocked in their sockets, but we fortified our strongholds and fought stoutly against the Most High, vowing that we would not be subdued. But ah, do you not remember that glorious hour when He carried our hearts by storm, when He put His Cross against the wall and scaled our ramparts, planting on our strongholds the blood-red flag of His atoning mercy?

O Brethren, we are, indeed, the conquered captives of His omnipotent love. Thus chosen, purchased and subdued, the rights of our Divine possessor are undeniable, and we, His people, are the regalia of His royalty, the gems of His crown, the sheep of His pasture, the children of His love, the darlings of His heart—if He could renounce all else which owns His sway, yet can He never give them up of whom it is written, “the Lord’s portion is His people.”

2. In the second place, the text shows that the saints are the objects of the Lord’s special care. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth”—with what object?—“To show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” The wheels of Providence are full of eyes. But in what direction are they gazing? Why, that all things may “work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” God is omnipresent and omniscient— has an eye to all creatures and all things.

He sees all immensity. He beholds all things at one gaze. Yet, “the eyes of the Lord,” in a special sense, “are upon the righteous.” And though His ears are open to all things, yet, in a peculiar manner, “His ears are open to their cry.” It is true the Lord is the eternal Watcher of the universe and never sleeps. Yet, in a very distinct sense, He is the guardian of His Church. “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” “Behold He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

He encompasses all things by the Word of His power and He upholds all things by His might. But His power, His presence and His protection, are more peculiarly with His Church, for He is to her “a wall of fire round about her and a glory in her midst.” The Church, then, as God’s portion,

is His peculiar care. When she lay at first in her barrenness, as a corner of the vast howling wilderness, He took her under His care. He fenced and hedged her. He began to dig up by the roots her nettles, her thorns, her briers. He sent the spirit of burning into her, by which the weeds of evil were consumed. He plowed her deep with convictions. He harrowed her with the Law. He scattered into her the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

When He saw her tender blades springing up, He watched over every one of them, sending the dewdrops, and the rain showers, and the sunbeams, and the wind, just when they were needed. And He continues still to watch, even when her harvest grows ripe and the blade has given place to the full corn in the ear. He will watch until He himself, descending from the Great White Throne, shall take the golden sickle and reap the sheaves and return to His eternal garner rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

Dear Friends, it is sweet to reflect how careful God is of His Church. We are jealous of our eyes, but the Lord keeps His people as the apple of His eye. What a wonderful affection birds have for their young. They will sooner die than let their little ones be destroyed! But like as an eagle flutters over her nest, so does the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem. What love a true husband has for his spouse! How much rather would he suffer than that she should grieve! And just such love has God towards His Church. Oh, how He cares for her! How He provides for her as a king should provide for his own queen! How He watches all her footsteps, guards all her motions.

He has her at all times beneath His eyes and protected by His hands. Hear how He tells of His care in providing for His Israel. “Now when I passed by you and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over you and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine. Then I washed you with water. Yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you, also with broidered work and shod you with badger’s skin.

“And I girded you about with fine linen and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments and I put bracelets upon your hands and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver. And your raiment was of fine linen and silk and broidered work. You did eat fine flour and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful.”

Never was there care so tender, so perpetual, so faithful, so affectionate, as the care of God over all His chosen ones, for indeed, it is no fiction and no metaphor—the Lord’s portion really is His people. He covers us with His feathers and under His wings do we trust. His Truth is become our shield and buckler. The Lord is mighty in battle for His Church. He puts out His omnipotence when He first of all delivers her, and no less might does He show every day when He keeps her from falling. And He will present her at last spotless before His face. Never was castle upon a mountain summit, fortified by nature, so impregnable as is the Church of God—

*“Munitions of stupendous rock  
Her dwelling place shall be;  
There shall her sons without a shock  
The wreck of nature see.”*

3. The text includes the idea that the Church is the object of the Lord’s special joy, for a man’s portion is that in which he takes delight. Brethren, how very strong the Scripture is as to the delight which God has in His saints. I am sure you and I cannot see anything in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us. We cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened, conscious of our sinfulness. I am afraid that God’s people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections and our follies that they must rather lament our infirmities than admire our graces.

Oh, who would not rejoice in this transcendent Truth of God, this glorious mystery? The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy! I do not read anywhere that God delights in the cloudcapped mountains, or the sparkling stars—but I do read that He delights in the habitable parts of the earth and that His delights are with the sons of men. I do not find it written that even angels give His soul delight, nor does He say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, “I will be a father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters.” But He does say that to the poor fallen race of man—debased, depraved, dejected by their sin—but saved, exalted, glorified by His Grace!

See what terms He uses. He calls them His dwelling place. “In Jewry is God known, His name is great in Israel, in Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion.” “For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for His habitation.” Where is a man most at ease? Why at home—

*“Wherever we wander, there’s no place like home.”*Beloved, the Church is God’s home. And as at home a man unbends himself, takes his pleasure, manifests himself to his children as he does not unto strangers—so in the Church, the Lord unbends Himself, condescendingly manifesting Himself to them as He does not unto the world. O could you think of it, that the chosen of God are as dear to Him as your humble cottage is to you, as the rooftree of your ancestors and the place of your birth?

We are expressly told that the Church is the Lord’s rest. “This is My rest forever, here will I dwell for I have desired it.” As if all the world beside were His workshop and His Church His rest. In the boundless universe He is busy marshalling the stars, riding upon the wings of the wind, making the clouds His chariot. But in His Church He is at rest, in Zion the Everlasting One spends His Sabbaths!

Yet further, there is an unrivalled picture in the Word where the Lord is even represented as singing with joy over His people. Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, “He will rejoice over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” As He looked upon the world, He spoke and said, “It is very good,” but He did not sing. And as He views the works of Providence, I hear not that He sings. But when He gazes on you and on me, the purchase of Jesus’ blood—His own chosen ones—the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself no longer but, wonder of wonders, and miracle of miracles, God, the Eternal One, sings out with the joy of His soul! Truly, “the Lord’s portion is His people.”

Once more, remember that the Lord represents himself as married to His Church. What does He say to her? “You shall be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married. As a young man marries a virgin, even so shall your God marry you. And as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, even so shall your Lord rejoice over you.” He puts the affection, you see, in the most brilliant light. It is not only the affection of the husband to the wife, but seeing that some men are changeable, and their love grows cold, the Lord selects that hour of first love when the bridegroom, fresh and newly married, rejoices over his bride. The joy and love of the young honeymoon of married life is but a faint picture of the complacency and delight God always has in His people.

Dear Friends, this is a subject to be thought of rather than to be talked about, for I find thoughts in my heart this morning, rather than in my head, and I cannot get them out. But this I know, there cannot be a closer union between any two beings than there is between Christ and His people, for they are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. There cannot be a warmer love than this. A mother’s love is nothing compared to it—yes, “she may forget her sucking child and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb. Yet will I never forget you, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”

The husband may repulse from his arms the chosen one whom once he loved so tenderly but, “He hates putting away.” Whom once He has embraced He embraces forever. “I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness.”

Oh that this love were shed abroad this morning in our poor frozen hearts! Oh that we felt God’s delight in us! For if by faith we knew all this, and by sweet experience could attest it, surely we should be better prepared to join with Jeremiah in the second text and say, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”

4. Our text teaches us that God’s people are His everlasting possession. You will say, “Why?” There is an allusion here to the division of the portions among the different tribes. That which was the portion of Asher never could be the portion of Zebulon and that which belonged to Simeon never could belong to Dan. For there was a Law made, that if any man should lose his inheritance by debt, or should be driven to the necessity of selling it, yet at the Year of Jubilee it always came back again to him, so that, you see, no Israelite ever lost his portion.

Now, God maps out for Himself His people. He says, “These are My portion.” And do you think, Brethren, God will lose His portion? No—if He should sell His portion into the hand of the enemy for a season, yet at the Year of Jubilee it would return to Him. Glory be to God, that Year of Jubilee is come! We were sold once. It did seem as if we were no more the people of God. But the high priest has died, the Year of Jubilee has been proclaimed, and now God’s inheritance has come back to Him, and if it could be alienated again, He would recover it.

If a man is a child of God and is suffered to fall, he shall certainly be brought back by bitter repentance before he dies, that his soul at the last may be saved, for God shall not lose His heritage. Have you not noticed, in reading Scripture, how the Israelites always clung tenaciously to their portion? When Ahab said to Naboth, “Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you the worth of it in money,” Naboth said to him, “The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you.”

And so, Brethren, God will never sell His children at any price. Nor if He could have better people instead, would He change them. They are His and they shall be His while time lasts. And when time ends and eternity rolls on, He never can, He never will, cast away His chosen people. Let us in this rejoice and be exceedingly glad. “The Lord’s portion is His people.”

II. We turn to our second text—“THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAYS MY SOUL.”  
Dear Friends, this sentence implies that true Believers have the Lord as their sole portion. It is not, “The Lord is partly my portion,” not “The Lord is in my portion.” No, He Himself makes up the sum total of my soul’s inheritance. The Lord Himself is my portion. Men of this world, we are told, have their portion in this life. In the field they have it in their abundant crops, and in the house they have it in comfort, in riches. Some of them have it in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day.  
But how is it God gives them so good a portion here? You may have seen a farmer when he has his meal prepared for his swine, he passes two or three of his little children in the yard as he is going out at feeding time. Why does he not give some of the meal to his children? He scoops it out till he has filled the hog’s trough full, and then the swine come and eat till they lie down, full to bursting, their eyes standing out with fatness. How is it he does not give some of it to his children?  
“Oh, no,” says he, “This is not the children’s meat,” and as it is not meet to take the children’s bread and give it unto dogs, so it would not be meet to take the swine’s meat and give it unto children. When Martin Luther had a large sum of money sent to him, he gave it all away directly to the poor, for he said, “O Lord, You shall never put me off with my portion in this life.” Now when God’s children receive anything in the way of gifts from Providence, they thank God for it, and endeavor to use it for His honor and glory—but they still insist that it is not their portion.  
You know, when you go to a shop to buy goods, they give you the brown paper and the string in the bargain—so when we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things are added to us. For godliness has the promise of the life that is now, as well as of that which is to come. But we don’t go to buy the brown paper and the string, they are not what we are looking after—so with the true Christian, his portion, that which he seeks after—is his God. This is his only portion, he seeks nothing besides.  
When Abraham had many children by his wife Keturah, you remember it is written he gave them their portions and sent them away. But he never did so with his Isaac. Lord, let me be Your Isaac! Give the world its portion. Give the emperor his crown. Give the rich man his money bags, send him away. But let me be a stranger with You as Isaac in his father’s tent.  
The man who has such a portion as this, ought not to wish for anything beyond. What can be needed beyond this portion? We are walking in the sunlight today—a fine glorious summer’s day—if anyone of you should be crying in your pew this morning, and I should ask, “What are you weeping for?” and you should reply, “I am weeping because I cannot see the stars,” we should think you mad. For he that has the sunlight can do without the starlight—so with the Believer. Why should he be weeping because he has lost this or lost that?—  
*“You at all times, will I bless;  
Having YOU, I all possess;  
How can I bereaved be,  
Since I cannot part with YOU?”*  
St. Augustine was likely, very often, to pray, “Lord, give me Yourself.” A less portion than this would be unsatisfactory. Not God’s Grace merely, nor His love. All these come into the portion but, “the Lord is, my portion, says my soul.” More than His attributes, more than His love, more than His Covenant, is Jehovah Himself the special portion and privilege of His own Beloved ones. “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” As God is our only portion, so He is our own portion—“The Lord is my portion, says my soul.” I hope He is your portion, dear Brethren. But whether He is or not does not concern me so much as whether He is mine.  
Come, Brethren, have you got a personal grip of this portion? Are you sure it is yours? Pray for sinners. Ask that God may bring them in, but see, first of all, to your own personal interest in these precious things. Let it go round these pews now. Can you say, “The Lord is MY portion?” Let it not be a general declaration but a particular affirmation—“The Lord is MY portion.” Yes, with streaming eyes and bursting heart, many a soul here that can now see Jesus hanging on the Cross taking away all its guilt, can say, though almost choked with tears, “Yes, blessed be His name, the Lord is my portion.”  
Some of you are very poor. You have nothing in the world, but you can say, “The Lord is my portion.” Like the old woman who, when she had nothing to eat but a dry crust of bread and only a cup of water to drink, broke the bread and said, “All this, and Jesus Christ, too!” We have heard of a great man who once took a poor Believer and said—“Look over there at those hills.” “Yes, Sir.” “Well, all that is mine. That farm yonder, and that one yonder, and beyond that river over there—it is all mine.”  
“Ah,” said the Believer—“look at yonder little cottage, that is where I live and even that is not mine, for I have to rent it. And yet I am richer than you. I can point up yonder and say—there lies my inheritance, in Heaven’s unmeasured space. And you may look as far as ever you can, you cannot see the limit of my heritage, nor find out where it ends nor where it begins.”  
Oh, what a blessing, Brethren, it is as if you and I can say, “He is my heritage!” Do not, I beseech you, be satisfied with generals—come to particulars. I know people think they are going to Heaven in the lump but they never will. Men go to Hell in bundles but they go to Heaven separately. “But we are a Christian nation.” Nonsense about a Christian nation! We are as fairly an un-Christian nation as we are a Christian nation. “Oh but we were all made Christians when we were sprinkled.” You are not such fools as to believe this abominable superstition. You know better! How can a drop of water on the forehead change the heart or affect the nature, or floods of water, for that matter? You know better than that.  
Have you been born again from above? If you have not, you are not the children of God, and you have not a child’s portion. Have you passed from death unto life? If not, you have not the portion of the living in Zion. You may, perhaps, have had your portion as the prodigal son did, who said, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” But unless you are converted, unless you have been brought to put your faith in Christ, you can never have that portion which belongs to the true-born heir of Heaven, for to him God has said—“Son, you are ever with Me and all that I have is yours.”  
But again, the Lord is to His people an inherited portion. Many men have to thank God that their fathers were born before them, for they worked and made their money, and left their estates to them. It is not every man who is rich that owes his riches to his own industry, and certainly, if you and I are so rich as to have God for our inheritance, we owe it to the fact of our birth. How came I to be the child of God? I was born so—O no, you were born an heir of wrath. I know I was the first time but the second time I was born in the image of His Son, begotten again unto lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.  
You cannot earn this inheritance by working for it. You cannot purchase it. You can only gain it by inheriting it. Ask yourselves very solemnly whether you know anything of the new birth, and if you do not, as the Lord my God lives, and as your soul lives, you can have no lot or portion in this matter until you do. “If children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” But if not children, then not heirs and the heritage cannot be yours.  
But further, Brethren, this heritage is also ours by choice. We have chosen God to be our heritage. Believer, I ask you, supposing it could be left to you now whether you would have God to be your portion, or have the most splendid earthly destiny, which would you have? Oh, you would say, “Let me have my God.” At first, I grant you, the will of man is not free to choose Christ, for man chooses evil and not good and the Lord must choose our inheritance for us, or else we shall never choose it. “You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you,” was the word of Christ through the Apostle to all His people. But if we are really called according to the purpose of electing love we can sing*—  
“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn;  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
I choose Him in return.”*

Better to have Christ and a fiery stake, than to lose Him and wear a royal robe. Better Christ and the old Mamertine dungeon of the Apostle Paul, than to be without Christ and live in the palace of Caesar. Christ Jesus, You blessed portion of our souls! You are altogether lovely. And if we had to begin again, we would, by Your Grace, begin with You.

Again, dear Friends, God is his people’s settled portion. When you were married, some of you, there were marriage settlements to be made, deeds to be drawn up, and lawyers called in and witnesses to sign the marriage covenant. I suppose that when the Princess Alice gets her portion, it will be settled upon her in some way or other. For where there are great portions, there should be settlements. Blessed be the name of the Most High, there is a marriage settlement made upon all the Lord’s people—their portion is settled on them.

“Yes, and amen in Christ Jesus,” all the promises have been made to the chosen seed. Heaven and earth may pass away but the Covenant of Grace shall not be removed. The covenant of day and night may be broken. The waters may again cover the earth, sooner than the decree of Divine Grace be frustrated. Every promise of the Covenant is a consequence to every heir of Heaven, nor can Satan break them. No Parliamentary act passed on earth, no deed perpetrated in the conclaves of Hell, can ever affect the eternal, immutable, everlasting settlements of Covenant Grace which are made in Christ Jesus, ordered in all things and sure. The Lord is my settled portion.

The Lord is my all-sufficient portion. God fills himself. And as Manton says, in his exposition of the 119th Psalm, “If God is all-sufficient in Himself, He must be all-sufficient for us.” And then he uses this figure—“That which fills an ocean will fill a bucket. That which will fill a gallon will fill a pint. Those revenues that will defray an emperor’s expenses, are enough for a beggar or a poor man—so when the Lord Himself is satisfied with Himself, and it is His happiness to enjoy Himself, there needs no more— there is enough in God to satisfy.” This is clear reasoning, Brethren, and surely if the expenses of Heaven’s court never did affect God’s riches, all the expenses of our trial and affliction while we are here, never can diminish the unsearchable riches of God which are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But you will tell me that man’s wishes are very large and that it is hard to satisfy them. Ah, my Brethren, I know they are—with anything here below. You may have heard, I dare say, of the gentleman who told his servant, “You have been a very faithful servant to me, John, and as you are getting old, I should like to give you a pension. Now, what do you think would satisfy you?” “Well, master,” said he, “I think if I had fifty pounds a year I should be very well satisfied, indeed.” “Well, think it over,” said the master, “and come to me and let me know.”

So the day comes. “Now, what do you want to satisfy you?” “Well, Sir, as I said before, I should never want for anything, or wish for anything in this world, if I had fifty pounds a year.” “Well, John, it shall be done. There is the settlement for you—you shall have it.” That man went out of the door and said to a friend, “I wish I had said a hundred.” So, you see, it is not easy to satisfy man. When he thinks he is satisfied, he still sees something beyond, the horse leech in his heart still cries, “Give, give.” But God is a satisfying portion. You cannot wish for anything more than this—

*“All my capacious powers can wish,  
In You is richly stored;  
Nor can my soul conceive a joy  
Which is not in my Lord.”*

I think I may add—and the experience of every Believer will bear me out—we have today a portion in which we take intense delight. I have tried in a poor way to show that God had a delight in His people. Beloved, do not His people, when they are in a right state of heart, have an intense delight in Him? Friends, we have known what it is to have delight in our children, delight in our Church. We have had delight in this House of Prayer. We have delight in one another, in sweet companionship and communion. But if you have ever tasted delight in God, you will say with Rutherford, “I have eaten the bread of angels and my mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of this world.”

God gives us “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” “I will satiate the soul of My priests with fatness and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord.” Oh the delights that we have in God! They are not ankle-deep delights, nor knee-deep delights. But they are a river to swim in. Here we can bathe our souls—here we riot and revel in inexhaustible luxuriance of delight. Here our spirit stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle. Here she expands herself and only wishes she were more capacious, and therefore she cries, “Lord, expand me, enlarge my heart, that I may hold more of You.”

Often have we felt in the spirit with Rutherford, when he cried, “Lord, make me a heart as large as Heaven, that I may hold You in it! But since the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You, Lord, make my soul as wide as seven heavens, that I may contain Your fullness.” “O that the Lord would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coasts.”

And lastly, this is to the saints of God an eternal portion. Ungodly Man, you have your portion now. It will melt, Sir! When the last fire comes, it will be consumed. But the lot of the Believers will outlast the fire. The conflagration which devours all the work of man’s hands shall not be able to touch, nor even to scorch any part or parcel of the portion of Believers. Indeed, it is in the world to come that Believers shall have their portion. Here they have none except trials and troubles—“in the world you shall have tribulation.” But as God cannot be seen and as He is the Believer’s portion, so their portion cannot be seen.

It is a good remark of an excellent commentator upon that passage, “For which cause He is not ashamed to be called their God.” He writes to this effect, “If it were only for this world, God would be ashamed to be called His people’s God, for His adversaries would say, ‘Look at those people, how tried they are, what troubles they have, who is their God? And, says he, the Lord speaks as if He might be ashamed to be called their God, if this life were all. But the Scripture says, ‘Why God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.’ ”

Thus may the Lord turn upon His enemies and Say, “I am their God and although I do chasten them sorely, and lead them through the deep waters, yet see what I am preparing for them—see them as they shall be when I shall wipe all tears from their eyes and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” It is in the prospect of bliss so ecstatic, joy so boundless, glory so eternal, that He is not ashamed to be called their God.

We are not ashamed, Brethren, to call Jehovah our God. Now let us go our way this morning to our homes. Let us eat the fat and drink the sweet in God. Let us put on our beauteous array and be appareled with the sun and have the moon under our feet. Let us go forth as princes of the bloodroyal, and act according to our quality. Let us rejoice in the Lord always. Let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, until our adversaries shall have their mouths watering while they say, “Let us live the life and die the death of the righteous.” “The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places and we have a goodly heritage.”

Dear Friends, I shall only ask in conclusion—are there not many here who cannot say, “You are my portion, O Lord”? Will you do me this favor this morning? When you get home will you think what your portion is, and cast your accounts up? If you cannot put God in the list, I tell you that when you have cast all your portion up, it comes to nothing. It may glitter for a season, but it shall go out like brambles that crackle under the pot but which die out afterwards in a little heap of white ashes. You have nothing if you have not God.

Ask if it is worth while for the sake of this empty world to lose eternal things—and if you are convinced it is not, then may God lead you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and in the Lord Jesus only. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Or, to give you the full, as Christ puts it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” He that with his heart believes in Christ and with his mouth makes a profession of faith, (and it should be done in Baptism), shall be saved. God grant us His Grace to believe, then our portion is sure forever and ever, in this world and in the world to come.

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“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK!”  
NO. 2436

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, OCTOBER 27, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“The LORD is good to the soul that seeks Him.”  
Lamentations 3:25.**

I DO not know whether it has ever struck you what a grand man Jeremiah was. If you were to read the book of his prophecy through, from beginning to end, and make yourself familiar with the circumstances under which the Prophet spoke and wrote, I think you would come to admire him as one of the greatest men who ever lived, for he was not, like Isaiah, brightened and cheered by having a joyful message to deliver, but he had received a sorrowful burden from his Lord—and he faithfully carried it out—and when the people rejected his testimony and refused his message, he went on delivering it all the same. There was no gleam of success to gladden his ministry, yet he never flinched! Nobody seemed to believe in him—he was the jest and the by-word of the people, but that did not matter to him at all. He was tender and affectionate, so that he cried, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

Yet he was as stern and unflinching as if his face had been made of adamant stone. I think him second to no man in the whole list of human beings who have ever lived. Therefore, when I found some of those with whom I have been in controversy of late describing one of my protests against false doctrine and worldliness as a, “Jeremiad,” or a Jeremiah’s Lamentation, I said to myself, “That is the highest compliment they could pay me.” If they call me a fool, even, I will, nevertheless, accept the epithet with delight! I count it no dishonor to have to lament as Jeremiah did, and to have to bear a sorrowful testimony even as Jeremiah did— and in that great day when the Lord rewards His servants, the rewards will not be in proportion to the way in which their testimony was received, but in proportion to the fidelity with which they delivered it! If Jeremiah is rejected of men, yet, if he has delivered his Master’s message, he is not rejected of his Master! And in that great day when God, the Judge of all, shall bring us to account, we who have spoken out of the depths of our soul and have had our testimony made jest and a byword, shall receive none the less honor from our Lord if we have faithfully delivered it!

I begin with this thought, concerning the man who uttered my text, because the people who speak somewhat sorrowfully and sadly are said to be “pessimists.” It is an ugly word, yet I have had it applied to myself. Whereas other men who speak very brightly—possibly more brightly than they ought to speak—those who have rose-colored glasses for everything, are called “optimists.” Well now, when a man is in deep distress of mind and in sore trouble of heart, if a person comes to him, and says, “Oh, my dear Sir, there is really not much the matter with you! It is a very simple thing to cure, and I will soon get you through it,” you say to yourself, “That gentleman is an optimist,” and you make very large deductions from what he has to say because you feel that he is inclined to flatter, and to put a brighter face upon things than they ought to wear!

But if another person comes, who is called a pessimist, one who always makes the worst of everything—a man who writes “Jeremiads” and who utters lamentations—if he, nevertheless, says something very bright and cheering, you say to yourself, “Now I know that what he says is true. There must be something really cheering and hopeful when such a man as that, who dares to look at the dark side of things, can yet venture to encourage me.” Well now, it is the Prophet Jeremiah, in his Book of Lamentations, who says to you who are seeking the Lord, “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.” You do not need to take any discount off his words of cheer! Depend upon it, what he says is true! If he of the weeping eyes. If he of the sorrowful spirit, nevertheless, in all the bitterness of his misery, bears testimony that the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him, then, depend upon it, it is so! So we begin at an advantage. I pray you to believe the text because of the man who was inspired to utter it.

I shall try briefly and earnestly, first, to describe a seeking soul. Next, to assure him that God is good to him. And then further to cheer him on in his seeking.

I. First, I am to try to DESCRIBE A SEEKING SOUL.  
Everybody does not seek the Lord. There are many who say to God, by their actions if not by their words, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” The man who seeks the Lord is the man who feels that he needs Him. He is under a sense of need—a need which he could hardly describe, but which, nevertheless, weighs very heavily upon him. He needs something very great, but he hardly knows what it is. He feels that he has a void—an emptiness within that needs filling. There is a something that he believes would content him if he could get it, but he has not got it yet. He feels that he is not right with God. He feels like one who is far off from God. He feels guilty and he needs pardon. He feels sinful and he needs renewing. He feels everything that he ought not to be and he wants to be changed, to be made a new man. That is the one who seeks the Lord—a man does not seek after that which he does not want— but a conscious and urgent need drives the troubled soul to seek after God.  
This seeker, also, is one who, though he does not know it, has a measure of faith, for he believes, deep down in his heart, that if he could once get to God, all would be well with him. He has heard of God in Christ Jesus and he says within himself, “Oh, if I could but find this blessed Mediator! If I could but discover this glorious Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, it would be well with me.” He has not believed so as to appropriate Christ, but he believes so much as to wish that he could appropriate Him. This is the man who seeks the Lord. We do not seek for that which appears to have no value in it, but, in proportion as a man has, first, a sense of his need, and secondly some idea of the value of the great blessing which he needs, he becomes an earnest seeker! I hope I am talking to some persons of this kind as I am describing their true character.  
Further, this seeker sometimes seeks very unwisely. He goes to seek God where he will never find Him, like the holy women did when they went to the sepulcher to find the risen Christ, and the angel asked them why they were seeking the living among the dead! When a soul wants God, and needs salvation, it will begin to seek the Lord by its own doing, by its own feelings, by its own strange eccentricities, perhaps. It wants God and it must have Him! You know how a starving man will break through stone walls to get at the food that he so terribly needs, and, often, a man who is seeking after God would go through stone walls, or over them, if he might but find Him—yet that is not the way to seek the Lord. “Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ, again, from the dead).” Christ is not far off, He is very near you—and yet the seeker is unwisely seeking after God as though He were far away—and for Christ as though he had to do some strange and wonderful thing in order to find Him. Some of you think that you must have a remarkable dream. Others expect an angelic vision. Some are waiting to hear a very extraordinary sermon and to feel very amazing emotions. This is the nature of seekers, that they often seek in a very unwise way. But still, they do seek—and it is a mercy that they do— for, “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”  
I will tell you what true seekers do when they act wisely. I notice that they often get alone. When you begin to seek the Lord, my young Friend, you will steal away by yourself. Father and mother will say, “We do not quite know what has come over him, he seems so different from what he used to be. He gets up into his little room—we think he must go there to pray.” If his parents are gracious people, they begin to have great hope of him. I remember times when I was never so happy as when I could get alone. Seekers, true seekers, will find some quiet place. That is a difficult thing to find in this noisy London, yet a real seeker will make even a crowded street to be his place of retirement, or he will walk down some back alley and be thinking, and crying, and seeking and groaning! But in the country, how often have I known young lads to get down a sawpit, or up a hayloft, or in the corner of a barn, or anywhere where they could but sit in quiet meditation and try to think their way to Jesus’ feet, that they might find Him if they could. That getting alone is a good sign. When a stag is wounded, it delights to hide in the recesses of the forest that it may bleed and die alone. And when God has shot His arrow of conviction into a human heart, one of the first signs of the wounding is that the man likes to get alone.  
I will tell you another thing about the true seeker. You will find that he begins to bring out his Bible, that much-neglected Book. Now that he is seeking the Lord, he knows that—  
*“Within this sacred Volume lies,  
The mystery of mysteries.”*  
And he begins to study his Bible as he never did before! It is a blessed sign when the young man or the young woman begins to take an interest in the Word of God and searches the Scriptures, saying, “Lord, bless this Book to me. The Christ is here. He feeds among the lilies of Your revealed Truth. Oh, that I might meet Him, and that I might call Him mine!”  
And as, perhaps, in his study of the Scriptures he meets with difficulties, you will find that this seeking young man is anxious to go and hear the Word preached, for the Word rightly preached has a warmth about it and a vividness which are not always so manifest to the seeker in his reading of the Word. If you are true seekers, I know that you will want to go and hear a preacher who touches your conscience, who speaks to your heart and who longs to bring you to Christ. My dear Hearers, I do not mind where you go on the Sabbath if you really hear the Truth of God faithfully preached. As far as I am concerned, there are plenty of people here, but I do wish that, on the Sabbath, and on weeknights too, you would not have any desire to go and hear a “clever” preacher, or to some fine musical service, but that you would say, “We have to care, first, for our immortal souls, and we long to seek and find eternal life, therefore let us go where the minister preaches Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Let us go where we can hear the Gospel of the Grace of God, for that is what we need.” You cannot afford to throw away a single hour, either in listening to human oratory or to any other kind of performance. With you, it must be, “Give me Christ, or else I die.” Therefore, be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached.  
That is, then, another mark of a true seeker—he loves to be alone, he searches the Scriptures, he goes as much as he can to hear the Gospel preached.  
And there is another sign of the true seeker that I always love to see— he likes to get into godly company. He does not care, now, for the friends he once so much admired—his merry friends who laughed away the years—if he can but get where he can hear a few poor people talking about Jesus! Something like John Bunyan, you remember, who saw three or four godly women at Bedford talking about the things of God and the tinker drew near and listened to their gracious conversation, though their talk about the new birth was beyond his comprehension! That is good seeking when you turn eavesdropper to hear about Christ, when you like to listen to some poor neighbor who does not know much more than you know, yourself, but who, in her simple language, talks about an experience of the things of God to which you have not as yet attained, but which you wish you had felt and known!  
There is another mark of a seeker that is still better—“Behold, he prays.” Possibly, he used to repeat a form of prayer, but he has given that up and now he talks to God straight out of his heart and asks for what he really needs. And he not only does that morning and evening, but he is praying during most of the day! If you watch him from the other side of the counter, you may hear a sigh every now and then. Or when he is at his work, driving the plane, or using the hammer—if you are close to him, you may see his lips moving and you may catch such words as these, “Savior, reveal Yourself to me. Blood of Christ, cleanse me. Spirit of God, renew me.” That is one of the men who are seeking the Lord!  
I think there will be one more mark that you will see upon a sincere seeker—he will quit all that is evil as much as possible and he will seek after that which is good—and especially he will seek after faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has heard it said that he that believes in Him has everlasting life and he says to himself, “Oh, that I could believe in Him!” You will see him, now, trying to believe, very much like a little child tries to take his first steps in walking alone. His mother holds out an apple and baby makes a daring venture to try, with three or four steps to get across to where mother holds out the bribe! Oh, I love to see poor souls trying to trust Christ, trying to rest in Jesus! They often make sorry work of it, but still, the Lord accepts it, for with their hearts they are really trying to rest in Jesus! If, poor trembling Seeker, your faith should bring you no comfort because it is so weak—keep on trusting to Christ!  
When the bronze serpent was lifted up, all who looked to it were healed. There were, doubtless, some clear bright eyes that saw the bronze serpent from its head to its tail and, as they looked, they lived. But there were probably others who were so bitten by the serpents that their eyes were swollen and dim—they could only see out of the corners and the death-damp seemed to blind even that little bit of sight which they had—but, oh, if they could only get just a glimpse, so as just to see the glittering brass, though they could not make out the shape of the serpent, yet they lived! They were bid to look and if they looked, and could not see, yet the promise was not to the seeing, but to the looking! And so, as they looked, they were healed! Thus look to Jesus and you shall live.  
I trust that many seekers here have come as far as this. If so, I may now conduct them to the next stage of my sermon.  
II. I want, in the second place, to ASSURE THE SEEKING SOUL THAT THE LORD IS GOOD TO HIM—“The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”  
“Ah,” says one, “my heart is almost ready to break! I have been seeking so long, I feel so sad, I am so discouraged.” But, “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.” Let me show you this Truth of God very rapidly.

First, it is good of Him to have set you seeking at all. He might have left you in your sins as He has left so many millions of your fellow men. He might have left you to be content with this vain, wicked world. At this moment you might have been leaning across the counter of the gin palace instead of listening to the Word of the Lord. Yes, instead of going home to pray, you might have been getting to the harlot’s haunt and, tomorrow, instead of coming to the Prayer Meeting, you might have been found where the multitude amuse themselves with vice. Thank God that you are a seeker, for there is something good in that fact! On a dark night you may be grateful for one star shining in the sky, or even for a single match—it is very little, you think, but thank God for that little! “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him,” in setting him seeking at all!

But God is also good to the seeker in giving him some gleams of comfort. Did you say that you had been seeking the Lord for months? Well, how is it that you have kept on seeking? I think it must be because you have, sometimes, had a few rays of light. I cannot give you any better evidence than my own. I was long in seeking Christ and for that I blame myself, not Christ. But there were times, before I found Him, when I almost met with Him. I did not see Him, but I seemed to see the trees move as He passed along! I did not see Him, but I heard His footsteps and, sometimes I went home and said to myself, “Oh, yes, I shall find Him! I shall not cry to Him in vain.” I even thought, sometimes, that I had laid hold of Him and that I had trusted Him—and though I went back, again, into despondency, yet I was not without hope of ultimately finding Him.

You know what it is, sometimes, when you are very hungry and you cannot get a meal, if you can get just a bite or two of something, it keeps you up till the mealtime comes. Well, it was like that when I was hungering and thirsting for Christ. Many a crumb this poor dog picked up from under the Master’s table and so I was encouraged to keep on seeking till I found my Savior. Is it not so with you, dear Friend? Yes, the Lord is good to them that seek Him by just keeping their courage up and preventing them from sinking utterly into despair! Is He not good in keeping back the temptation which might have destroyed you? The foul insinuations of Satan trouble you, but they might be worse than they are! You have been driven almost to despair, but not quite. You have grated against the rock, but you are not shipwrecked yet. “He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind.” Thank God for that! “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

I think that He is also good in not letting us rest short of Himself. You would have liked to have had comfort long ago, would you not? Yes, but comfort is not the main thing that you require—you need safety. Often the surgeon, when he has a bad case, will not let the wound heal. “No, not yet,” he says. “if that wound heals too soon, there will be more mischief coming from it.” So he lets in his lancet again and cuts out a bit of proud flesh. And our Lord will not let us close up the wound that sin has made lest it is but a sorry healing that will end in a worse wound than before! I pray God that no one who is really seeking Christ may ever be able to rest till he gets to Him. There is good resting at the foot of the Cross, but you want to rest before you get there! I thank God for not letting you rest until you get to Christ. And I hope you will say—

*“I will not be comforted*

*Till Jesus comforts me.”*  
Make that your resolve and may the Spirit of God keep you up to it! If so, you, too, will also prove that “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

But He is much better to them that seek Him than you have ever imagined, for He has given such rich promises to seekers. Oh, the blessed invitations of Christ! “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” This blessed Book is full of such promises as these—just the kind of promises that seeking souls need! And they all prove that the Lord is, indeed, good to them that seek Him.

He is also good to seekers because He has made the way of salvation so plain. Brothers and Sisters, there are certain gentlemen, nowadays, who want us to have what they call an advanced theology, an eclectic religion which will suit those who are supposed to be “cultured!” O God, save me from ever hearing such a thing as that! I want to be the means of saving to the poor and needy, the ignorant and the fallen—and God wishes to save such people—and, therefore, He puts the Gospel very plainly, “Believe and live. Trust the great Sacrifice, rely on Jesus Crucified and you are saved, and saved forever.” A man with an intellect not much above that of an idiot may understand this Gospel and enjoy it! While a man with the greatest mental powers cannot understand it any better—no, he cannot understand it at all unless the Spirit of God shall reveal it to him! I thank God that it is not a difficult way of salvation that He has laid before us, but that it is simple, or as men say, “as plain as a pikestaff.” God bring us all to accept this gracious plan of salvation!

Then, once more, is it not very good of the Lord in being found of seekers in due time? There is no true seeker who shall die in his sins. If you are sincerely seeking, you shall find—this is promised in our Lord’s own words that we read just now—“For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” If I could take you through the whole dread region of Hell. If we could pause at every cell where the finally impenitent are shut up without hope. And if it were possible to interrogate every lost spirit, there would not be found, there, a single one that sincerely sought the Lord through Jesus Christ! No one shall be able to stand up at the Last Great Day and say, “I came to Jesus, but He cast me out. I trusted Him, but He did not keep His promise.” No, my dear Hearer, if ever you shall be lost, it will be because you never came to Christ, because you never trusted Him, because you would not have Him as your Savior! But if you come to Christ—poor, ragged, defiled, loathsome, guilty up to the hilt—if you come to Christ, remember that He said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And that Word of God still stands true! If you seek the Lord with all your heart, you shall surely find Him, for He “is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

I try to speak to you very plainly, as if I were talking to you by your own fireside. I do not feel at any great distance from you in standing here to speak to all of you round about me, yet I half wish that I could get a hold of your hands, you unconverted ones, and say to you, “Believe that my Lord is good to them that seek Him! Believe it and seek Him for yourselves!” He is a good Lord. We sang, a few minutes ago—

*“Oh, hope of every contrite heart!  
Oh, joy of all the meek!  
To those who fall, how kind You are!  
How good to those who seek!”*

Those are not mere words—they are the very Truth of God! He is, indeed, good to those who seek Him.

III. But, lest I weary any seeker where I want to win him, I shall close by FURTHER CHEERING HIM ON IN HIS SEEKING.  
Friend, be of good comfort, Christ is seeking you. It is written, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” If I were at this time seeking a person in London, I might have a long and difficult task—it would be like the proverbial “hunting for a needle in a haystack.” But suppose I knew that the person I was seeking was also seeking me? I think then I should say that there was a double probability of our meeting! If I am seeking him, and he is seeking me, and especially if he who seeks me is a man of high intelligence and wide knowledge, we shall meet one of these mornings or evenings, depend upon it! So, if you are seeking Christ, that is hopeful. But if Christ is seeking you and He knows all about you—all the ins and outs of you poor life—He and you will come together soon, I am persuaded of it! You are drawing nearer to each other every hour and it will not be long before your arms are about His neck and His arms about yours! You will be rejoicing in Him and He will be rejoicing over you!  
I want to give you another word of good cheer, my seeking Friend. It may not be long before you find the Savior. It may, indeed, be so little a while that, before the clock strikes again, you will have found Him! Why not? “Oh,” you say, “I wish it might be so! Oh, that I might find the Lord in that short time!” Well, look at me! I had been seeking Christ some four or five years under a heavy burden of sin. I remember well that Sabbath morning in the month of January, 1850, for there was a very severe snowstorm. I was going to the Congregational Chapel at Colchester that morning, but it snowed so heavily that I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel, merely because of the heaviness of that snowstorm.  
I was cold at heart, almost despairing. I thought that I would never find the Savior, but between half-past ten o’clock, when I entered that place, and half-past twelve o’clock, when I was back at home, again, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life! Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you!” And I was eager to tell them all about it. I was like Bunyan when he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed field all about his conversion! Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior! Well now, this October Sabbath night, you, dear Heart, have been seeking the Lord for ever so long. You will not need to seek Him any more if you will but look to Him—that is all you have to do! Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him and, as you look to Him, the great transaction will be done—your burden will be gone, the joy of salvation will be given to you from Heaven by God’s own right hand—and you shall have a new song in your mouth, your feet shall be set upon the Rock and your goings shall be established!  
And mark you this—when the blessing comes, it will be worth waiting for! When the pardon of your sin comes, you will say, “I do not regret my cries and tears, my weary waiting and anxious seeking. He has come! He has come! HE has come, my Lord and my God!” Why, if I had to wait at the posts of His door from youth to old age, yet if I found Him at last, it would well repay all my waiting! The joy and peace through believing, which come from Christ, are a wonderful off-set against the tears and sorrows that we have endured while we have been seeking Him.  
This is my closing thought—you have no need to go about seeking Christ any longer. You have no need to wait even five minutes before you find Him, for it is written, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Do you know what it is to believe on Him, to trust Him? Do so now! “It would be a great venture,” says one. Then venture on Him! “Would He save me?” Try Him! You have heard, I dare say, of the African who came over to England. Before he came, the missionary told him that, sometimes, it was so cold in England that the water grew hard and men could walk on it. Now, the man had heard a great many things that were not true which he had believed, but this, he said, he would never believe! It was “one great big lie, for nobody ever could walk on water.” When he woke up, one December morning, and the stream was frozen over, he still said that he would not believe it. Even when his friend went on the ice and stood there, and said, “Now you can see that what I told you was true. This is water, yet it is hard, and it bears me up.” The African would not believe it, till his friend said to him, “Come along,” and he gave him a pull and dragged him on the ice, and then he said, “Yes, it is true, for it bears me up.”  
I would like to give some of you a bit of a pull like that! I am resting on Christ, on Christ alone, and He bears me up! Come along and try Him for yourselves! May the Lord lead you to do so! There never yet was a heart that truly trusted in Christ that was deceived by Him! Remember that verse which we sang at the beginning of the service, and—  
*“Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude!  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good!”*  
Then shall you know for certain that “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.” God bless and save you, everyone, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MATTHEW 7:7-29.**

Verse 7. Ask, and it shall be given you. He that will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

7. Seek, and you shall find. How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

7. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Is that all—knock? Is the gate of Heaven not opened to you? Have you ever knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care, for the time may come when you will knock and the door will not be opened to you, for, “when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door,” then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God’s gracious word of command and promise—let me read it to you again—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

8. For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask and not receive. You may seek and not find—you may knock and not have the door opened to you. But when you deal with God, there are no failures or refusals! Every true asker receives; every true seeker finds; and every true knocker has the door opened to him! Will you not try it and prove for yourself that it is so?

9-11. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him? You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in Heaven! He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you— He will give you bread, not a stone—fish, not a serpent! No, more, He will give you the Bread of Life, and the Water of Life, that you may live forever!

12. Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets. This is rightly called, “the golden rule.” Christ says of it that it is, “the Law and the Prophets.” It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life. If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this Law of Christ were the law of England and the law of all nations! God send us the Spirit by whom, alone, we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

13. Enter you in at the strait gate. The narrow gate.  
13, 14. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it. Do not try to go with the majority—truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads and say, “I am for that which has the most on its side,” but prefer that which is least liked among men! Choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood—that which gives you least license because—“strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.” You will not hit upon it, then, in a “happy-go-lucky” sort of style. Heaven’s gate is not found open by accident—there was never anybody yet who was saved by accident! No, “few there are that find it,” is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?  
15. Because of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. There are always plenty of them around! There is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin—and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.  
16-20. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you shall know them. You may judge men as well as trees that way—and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true. But that which makes for holiness is true, for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of lies, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.  
21. Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father, which is in Heaven. Practice is the true test, not words. Not he that says, “Lord, Lord,” but, “he that does the will of God.” Not he that merely has good words on his tongue, but he that has the will of God laid up in his heart and worked out in his life—that is the man who “shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”  
22, 23. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity. If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong! We may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers. We may fancy that we have had dreams and visions. We may set ourselves up to be some great ones, but if we have not done the will of God, we shall, at the last, hear Christ say to us, “Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.”  
24, 25. Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. He was a good man and a practical man, yet he was also a tried man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, the floods coming and the winds blowing! The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials! It will, in some measure, even necessitate them. But, blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative—“It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.  
26, 27. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. He was a great hearer, but he was a bad doer—yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in Him and so, when the time of trouble came—and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor—we read of his house, “It fell: and great was the fall of it,” because it could never be built up again! It fell hopelessly! It fell forever! Therefore, “Great was the fall of it.”  
28, 29. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. There was a force and power about what Jesus said. He spoke from the heart. He spoke with the accent of conviction, whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance—and there was, therefore, no power about it. God give to all of us the Grace to know the power of the Words of Christ! Amen.

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THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS  
NO. 1291

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Lamentations 3:27.

YOKE-BEARING is not pleasant, but it is good. It is not every pleasant thing that is good, nor every good thing that is pleasant. Sometimes the goodness may be just in proportion to the unpleasantness. Now, it is childish to be always craving for sweets—those, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, should prefer the wholesome to the palatable. It ought to reconcile us to that which is unsavory when we are informed that it is good! A little child is not easily reconciled that way, because, as yet, he cannot think and judge. But the man of God ought to find it very easy to quiet every murmur and complaint as soon as he perceives that, though unpleasant, the thing is good.

Since, my dear Friends, we are not very good judges, ourselves, of that which is good for us anymore than our children are, and since we expect our little ones to leave the choice of their diet with us, will it not be wise of us to leave everything with our heavenly Father? We can judge what is pleasant, but we cannot discern that which is good for us. But He can judge and, therefore, it will be always well for us to leave all our affairs in His hands and say, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Since we are quite certain upon Scriptural authority that whatever the Lord sends to His people will work out for their benefit, we ought to be perfectly resigned to the Lord’s will.

No, much more—we ought to be thankful for all His appointments even when they displease the flesh—being quite certain that His will is the best that can be and that if we could see the end from the beginning it is exactly what we should choose if we were as wise and good as our heavenly Father is. Our shoulders bow themselves with gladness to the burden which Jesus declares to be profitable to us! This assurance from His lips makes His yoke easy to bear. Our text tells us of something which, though not very comfortable, is good—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth!”

The illustration is drawn from cattle. The bullocks have to bear the yoke. They go in pairs and the yoke is borne upon their shoulders. The yoke is somewhat burdensome. If the bullock is not broken when it is young, it will never make a good plowing ox. It will be fretted and troubled with the labor it will have to do. It will be very hard work to drive it and the farmer will accomplish but little plowing. It is good for the bullock to be brought into subjection while it is young—and so it is with all sorts of animals—the horse must be broken while he is a colt. And if a certain period of that horse’s life is allowed to pass over without its being under the

trainer’s hand, it will never make a thoroughly useful horse.

If you want to train a dog you must take him while he is young and teach him his work. That is the metaphor. It is just so with men. It is good for us that we are broken while we are yet young and learn to bear the yoke in our youth. If you take the text naturally as uttering a truth of ordinary life, it is still worth considering. Even apart from the Grace of God and apart from religion, it is a great blessing for a man to bear the yoke in his youth! That is to say, first, it is good for us when we are young to learn obedience. It is half the making of a man to be placed under rule and taught to bear restraint.

When young people grow older they will have to be very much a law unto themselves. There may be no father living to warn them lovingly and no mother to gently guide them. Young people will be older people and govern themselves—and no one is fit to do that till he has learned to be obedient. The proverb is, “boys will be boys,” but I do not think so—they will be men if we let them have time. And unless they learn self-restraint and habits of obedience while they are boys, they are not likely to make good men. He who cannot obey is not fit to rule—he who never learned to submit will make a tyrant when he obtains power.

It is good that every child should be broken in, delivered from his foolish self-will and made to feel that he has superiors, masters and governors. Then, when it shall come his turn to be a leader and a master, he will have the more kindly empathy to those who are under him. Be you sure of this, that if he does not learn the drill of obedience he will never be a good soldier in the battle of life.

It is good for young people to bear the yoke, too, in the sense of acquiring, in their early days, knowledge. If we do not learn when we are young, when shall we learn? Some who have begun to study late in life, have yet achieved a good deal, but it has been with much difficulty. If you do not use the machinery of the mind in youth, it gets rusty. But if it is used from the very first and kept continually in action and well oiled, it will go on easily throughout the whole of life. Our early days are favorable to the acquirement of knowledge and every lad that is an apprentice should make the best of his apprenticeship—he will never make much of a journeyman if he does not.

Every man that is starting in life, while he is yet young, should do all that he possibly can to acquire full equipment, for if he does not, he will know the absence of it sooner or later. If a man starts upon life’s voyage and has left his anchor at home, or forgotten his provisions, he will find out his deficiencies when he gets to sea. And when the storm begins to howl through the cordage he will wish that he had listened to the dictates of prudence and had been better prepared for life’s perilous voyage.

It is good for young people, too—we are now talking about the natural meaning of the passage—good for them that they should encounter difficulties and troubles when they begin life. The silver spoon in the mouth with which some people are born is very apt to choke them. There are hundreds of people who have never been able to speak out because of that dreadful silver spoon! It is not every man that is the richer in the long run, even in mere gold and silver, for having commenced with capital. I believe you will generally find that the rich men who have been, “selfmade,” as they call it, came to London with a half-crown in their pockets.

I have noticed that thirty pence is about the amount they leave home with and that half-crown, neither less nor more, becomes the nest egg of a fortune. Young men who begin with thousands of pounds often end with nothing at all. It is good for a man that he should have a rough battle when life begins—that he should not be lapped in dainty ease and find everything arranged according to his will—he will never develop his muscles, he will never make a man—unless there is hard work for him to do. Those long hours, that stern thinking, those weary bones and all that, of which young people, nowadays, are very apt to complain about—though they do not work half as hard as their fathers, nor above a tenth as hard as their grandfathers—all these things, within reason and measure, help to make men, and I only hope that the easier times, which are now happily in fashion, may not breed a softer and a less manly nature among our young men.

It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke of labor, trial and difficulty in his youth. And if we could lift the yoke from every weary shoulder it would not be wise to do so. Many a man who has succeeded in life is very thankful to God that he had, in his early years, to bear a little poverty and to work hard and toil, for he never would have come to be what he is if it had not been for the strengthening and educating influence of trial.

It is not, however, my business to preach about these matters at any length. I am not a moral lecturer, but a minister of the Gospel. I have fulfilled a duty when I have given the first meaning to the text and now I shall use it for nobler ends.

I. First of all, IT IS GOOD TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG. It is good for a man to bear Christ’s yoke in his youth. I shall not ask you to pardon me if I speak here as one who has tried and proved it. Surely I may do so without egotism, for it is not my own honor, but God’s, that I shall speak of! What the Lord has worked in me—of that I will speak.

At 15 years of age I was brought to know the Lord and to confess Him and I can, therefore, speak as one who bore the yoke in his youth. And, young people, if I have never to address you again, I should like to say to you it has been good for me. Ah, how good, I cannot tell you, but so good that I earnestly wish that every one of you would bear my Master’s yoke in his youth! I could not wish you a greater blessing! For, see, first, the man whose heart is conquered by Divine Grace early is made happy soon. That is a blessed prayer in the Psalm, “O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”

Very few people, if they understood it, would wish to postpone happiness. Young hearts generally ask to be happy now. To have sin forgiven is to be unloaded now of that which is the prime cause of sorrow. To receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith is to be clothed with peace now. To be reconciled to God is to have a spring of consolation within your soul now. To know yourself to be God’s child is to have the greatest joy out of

Heaven and to have it now. Who would wish to postpone it? Young Christians may die, but it is of small consequence if they do, for being early in Christ, they will be early in Heaven! Who would not wish to be safe as soon as possible? Who desires to tarry in the land of peril, where a point of time, a moment’s space, may shut you up in Hell?

To be early secured from the wrath to come—early endued with a sense of security in Jesus Christ—why, surely it does not need many words to prove that this is good! Besides, while early piety brings early happiness, let it never be forgotten that it saves from a thousand snares. There are things which a man knows, who has lived long in sin, which he wishes he could forget! God’s Grace rinses your mouth after you have been eating the forbidden fruit, but the flavor is very apt to linger and to return. Songs which are libels upon God and upon decency, once heard, will attack you in the middle of a prayer and words which, if you could forget them, you might be willing to lose your memory for that purpose, will invade your most hallowed seasons.

It is a great mercy that if a man is 70 or 80 years of age, yet if he shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved! Eleventh hour mercies are very sweet. But what a double privilege it is to be set to work in the vineyard while yet the dew is on the leaves and so to be kept from the idleness and the wickedness of the market place in which others loiter so long! It is good for a man to bear Christ’s yoke in his youth because it saves him from having those shoulders galled with the devil’s yoke. It preserves him from the fetters of that pitiful slavery into which so many are brought by habits long acquired and deeply seated. Sins long indulged grow to the shoulders—and to remove them is like tearing away one’s flesh. Be thankful, young people, that the Savior is ready to receive you while you are yet young and that He gives you the promise, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.”

Happy are they who entertain the Redeemer in the morning and so shut out the evil spirit all day long! There is this goodness about it, again, that it gives you longer time in which to serve God. If I were taken into the service of one whom I loved, I should like to do him a long day’s work. If I knew that I could only work for him one day, I should strive to begin as soon as the gray light of dawn permitted me to see and I would continue at work far into the evening, cheerfully active, so long as a glimmer remained. If you are converted late in life you can only give to our Lord Jesus the shades of evening.

Blessed be His name, He will accept eventide service, but still, how much better to be able to serve the Lord from your youth up, to give Him those bright days while the birds are singing in the soul, when the sun is unclouded and the shadows are not falling! And then to give Him the long evening, when at eventide He makes it light and causes the infirmities of age to display His power and His fidelity. I think I know of no grander sight than that of a gray-haired man who has served the Lord Jesus from his youth up! There is this goodness about it yet further, that it enables one to be well established in Divine things. “They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

A tree transplanted takes a certain time to root, but when it becomes well established it produces abundant fruit. There must be time for striking root in Divine things. Everything in the kingdom of Grace is not to be learned in 10 minutes. I bless God that a man who has believed in Jesus only one second is a saved man—but he is not an instructed man—he is not an established man. He is not trained for battle nor tutored for labor. These things take time. When we are converted, we go to Christ’s School. We sit at His feet and learn of Him.

Now, who is the best scholar? All other things being equal, I should expect to find the best scholars in school to be those who come early. Eleven o’clock scholars do not learn much. Evening scholars, with a good master and great diligence, may pick up something, but scarcely so much as those who have been at the school all day! Oh, how blessed it is to begin to know Christ very early because then you can go on comprehending with all the saints the heights and depths of that which surpasses knowledge! No fear that you will ever exhaust this knowledge. It is so infinitely great and blessed that if we lived 7,000 years in the world, there would still be more to know of Christ and we should still have to say, “Oh, the depths.”

We need not be afraid, therefore, if we are converted when we are 10, or 15, or 20 years of age, we shall live to wear out the freshness of religion. Ah, no, we shall love it more and understand it better and, by God’s Grace, practice it more fully as the years roll over us! Therefore it is good to begin soon. And then, let me say, it gives such confidence in later life to have given your heart to Jesus young. I am glad to see some boys and girls here tonight. Now, my dear Children, God may spare you to become old men and old women and when your hair is gray and you are getting feeble and you know that you will soon die, it will be very delightful to be able to say, “O Lord, I have known You from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.”

There will be much force in the plea, for if we have a faithful servant, we do not cast him off when he grows old. “Ah,” you say, “he cannot do much, now. The old man is getting very feeble. He cannot see or hear as he used to do and he is slow in his movements. But then, you see, the good old fellow has been in our family ever since he was a boy and you do not think we are going to turn him out now?” No, the Lord will not cast off His old servants. He will not say to them “I have had the best of you. I have had your young days and I have had your middle life. But now you may go begging and take care of yourself.” No, that is how the Amalekite or the Ishmaelite might talk, but the God of Israel never forsakes His people! He says, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made you; and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.”

O, you who have given yourselves to Jesus through His rich and Sovereign Grace while you are young, I know you feel it a sweet plea to urge with God—“Now, Lord, forsake me not.” So, then, young people, if you

would lay by a precious treasure of consolation when those that look out of the windows are darkened. If you would have strength for the time of weakness. If you would have comfort for the day when the mourners go about the streets. If, above all, you would be supported when you are going Home, yield yourselves to Jesus now! Oh, that this very night you may bow your shoulders to the easy yoke of the meek and lowly Savior! So shall you find rest unto your souls.

II. I shall now give another meaning of the text. May the Holy Spirit bless it. Secondly, IT IS GOOD FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY BEAR THE YOKE OF JESUS. What do we mean by that? A good number of you have been lately converted, and to you I speak most earnestly. It will be for your good as long as you live, to render to Jesus complete obedience at the very first. Some Christians, seem to me, to start to Canaan all in a muddle. They do not begin their pilgrimage in the right pilgrim fashion. Every young Christian, when he is converted, should take time to consider, and should say to himself, “What am I to do? What is the duty of a Christian?”

He should also devoutly say to the Lord Jesus, “Lord, show me what You would have me to do,” and wait upon the Holy Spirit for guidance. Two young lads were not long ago converted to God—one of them attended here, the other at another place of worship. They talked to each other about what was the right way of confessing Jesus Christ. They did not quite know, but they meant to find out. They borrowed the keys of a neighboring Independent Chapel and went inside and spent some hours, day after day, reading together the New Testament and turning to every passage which refers to Baptism. The result was that they, both of them, came and were baptized in this place.

I wish that all Christians, in commencing, would look at that ordinance and at every other point in dispute and see what is God’s mind about it. Search the Scriptures and see for yourselves. Do not say, “I have always been with the Episcopalians and, therefore, I ought to do as they do.” Or, “I have always been with the Baptists,” or “with the Wesleyans.” My dear Friends, these people cannot make rules for us! Here is our guide—this Bible! If I want to go by the railway, I use Bradshaw, and do not trust to hearsay. And if I want to go to Heaven I must follow the Bible.

There is another book which people will ask you to attend to. Well, we will say nothing against that book, only it is not the book. The book is this volume, the blessed Bible! You should begin by feeling, “My Lord has saved me. I am His servant and I mean, at once, to take His yoke upon me. I will, as far as ever I can, do what He would have me do. There are some sins into which I shall most likely fall. Watch as I may, I shall sometimes make a slip, but here are some things which I can be right about and I will take care that I am right about them.”

Now, if you young people begin conscientiously studying the Word of God and desiring, in everything, to put your feet down where Christ put His feet, I am sure it will be good for you. You will grow up to be healthy Christians and men and women of no ordinary stature. But if you do not begin with searching the Word and take your religion second-hand from other people and do what you see other people do, without searching, why, you will lack that noble independence of mind and courage of spirit and, at the same time, that complete submission to Christ which make up the main elements of a noble-minded Christian!

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, in the next place, namely, by attaining clear instruction in Divine Truth. We ought to go to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of Him, not merely about ordinances and actions, but about what to think and what to believe. Oh, how I wish that every one of us had begun, with regard to our doctrinal sentiments, by presenting our minds to Christ like a sheet of clean paper for His Holy Spirit to write the Truth of God on! Alas, we begin with many a line upon us written by the pen of prejudice! Dear Friend, if you are converted to God, you are now to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn everything from Him— not to take your views to Him! Those are common expressions, “my views,” and, “my opinions,” and, “I am of such a persuasion.” Beloved, be persuaded by Christ, for that is the only persuasion worth following.

Take your views from Him—no other views of eternal and heavenly things are worth having. “Oh,” says one, “but then they might not happen to be your views.” Just so and I do not ask you to take my views! On the other hand I charge you before God never to believe anything because I say it, but to listen only to my Master and yield your faith only to the Infallible Word of God. We urge this upon you, because, even if you believe the Truth of God because we say it, you have not believed it in the right way. Truth is to be received because it is true and because Jesus Christ’s authority proves it to you to be true, not because any poor mortal who happens to preach is supposed to possess authority to decide such questions. We have no authority to assert anything to be the Truth of God upon our own ipse dixit. We are simply the trumpets at the lips of Christ when we speak with power. And sometimes, alas, we blow our own trumpets instead of leaving Jesus Christ to blow through us—and then we are worse than useless. I charge you bear the yoke in your youth by studying hard to know what is the way, the truth, and the life from the lips of Jesus Christ, Himself, being taught of the Spirit of God! It is good for you to do this.

It is also good for young converts to bear the yoke by beginning to serve Jesus Christ early. I like to see mothers, when they brings their little ones to the House of God, put a penny into its hand and teach it early to contribute to the cause of Christ. And when people are converted, there is nothing like their having something to do very soon. Not that they are to attempt to do the major things which belong to the more advanced and instructed, for, concerning some of these, we should apply the rule, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he falls into the condemnation of the devil.”

But there is work for every Believer to do in Christ’s vineyard! There is work for children, there is work for young men, work for young women and it is good to begin early. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was so pleased with the widow’s mite, is very pleased with a child’s love to Him. We big people are very apt to think, “What can a little girl do for Jesus?” Oh, but

if that little girl does not do something for Jesus, now that she is saved, she will very likely grow up to be an idle Christian and not serve God in later years as she should.

I like to see the little trees which they put into our gardens, you know, the little pyramids and other dwarf trees. I like to see them, even from the first, bear just a little fruit. I think, sometimes, that pears, when there are only one or two on the tree, are far finer in flavor than those on the big tree which too often have lost in quality what they have gained in quantity. That which is done for Jesus Christ by young Christians, by weak Christians, by timid Christians, often has a very delicate flavor about it, precious to the taste of Jesus. It is good to begin serving Him in our youth.

“Ah,” says one, “I shall begin when I can preach.” Will you? You had better begin reciting a letter to that young friend with whom you went to school. You had better begin by dropping a tract in an area, or by trying to speak to some young person of your own age. Pride will prompt you to wish to be great, but love to Jesus will teach you that the small things are acceptable with Him. It is good for young men—good for young women— that as soon as they are converted to God they should bear the yoke of service.

It is also good, when we begin to serve God, that we should bear the yoke in another sense, namely, by finding difficulties. If it were in my power to make the way of serving Christ very easy to every young Christian here, I would not do it. If it were possible to make all Sunday school work pleasant, I would not do it. If it were possible to make standing up in the open air to preach a very easy thing, I would not make it so! It is good for you that you bear the yoke. It is good that your service should involve self-denial and try your patience. It is good for you that the girls should not be very orderly and that the boys should not be very teachable when you get them in the class.

It is good for you that the crowd should not stand still and listen very meekly to you and that infidels should put ugly questions to you when you are preaching in the street. It is good, I know, for the young minister to encounter curious Church members and even to meet with an adversary who means to overthrow him! It is a good thing, for a true worker, for the devil to labor to put him down because if God has put him up, he cannot be put down, but the attempt to overthrow him will do him good, develop his spiritual muscles and bring out the powers of his mind!

A very easy path would not be profitable to us. Consider David, after Samuel had put the oil on his head and anointed him to be the future king of Judah—it would have been a very bad thing for him to have waited in inglorious ease and slumbered away the interval. But take David and send him into the wilderness to keep the sheep. Bring him to Saul’s court and let Saul throw a javelin at him—send him to fight with Goliath! Banish him, afterwards, to the tracks of the wild goats and compel him to live in the dens and caves and make him fight for his life—and by this process you will educate a hero, fit to rule Israel!

He comes to the throne no longer a youth and ruddy, but a man of war from his youth up, and he is, therefore, ready to smite the Philistines or the children of Ammon as the champion of the Lord of Hosts! It is good, then, to bear the yoke in the sense of undertaking service for Jesus and finding difficulty in it. And it is good, yet further, to meet with persecution in your youth. If it were possible to take every young Christian and put him into a pious family and not let him go into the world at all, but always keep him in his mother’s lap—if it were possible to take every working man and guarantee that he should only work in a shop where they sing Psalms from morning to night, where nobody ever swears, where nobody ever utters a word of chaff against him—why, I say, if it were possible to do this, I do not know that it would be wise to do it!

To keep people out of temptation is exceedingly proper and none of us have any right to put a temptation in another’s way. But it is good for us to be tempted, sometimes, otherwise we should not know the real condition of our hearts and might be rotting with inward pride while blooming with outward morality. Temptation lets us know how weak we are and drives us to our knees. It tests our faith and tries our love—and lets us see whether our Graces are genuine or not. When religion puts on her silver slippers and walks out with her golden earrings, everybody is quite content to go with her. But the honest, hearty Christian will follow Jesus Christ’s truth when she goes barefoot through the mire and through the slough—and when her garments are bespattered by unholy hands.

Herein is the trial of the true and the unmasking of the deceitful. It would not be good for us to be kept from persecution, slander and trial—it is good for a man that he bear this yoke in his youth. A Christian is a hardy plant. Many years ago a pine tree was brought to England. The gentleman who brought it, put it in his hothouse, but it did not develop in a healthy manner. It was a spindly thing and, therefore, the gardener, feeling that he could not make anything of it, took it out and threw it upon the dunghill. There it grew into a splendid tree, for it had found a temperature suitable to its nature.

The tree was meant to grow near the snow. It loves cold winds and rough weather—and they had been sweating it to death in a hothouse. So it is with true Christianity. It seldom flourishes so well in the midst of ease and luxury as it does in great tribulation. Christians are often all the stronger and better because they happen to be cast where they have no Christian companions or kindly encouragements. As liberty usually favors the hardy mountaineers whose rugged hills have made them brave and hardy, so does abounding Grace, as a rule, visit those who endure the great fight and through much tribulation inherit the kingdom.

Once more, I believe it is good for young Christians to experience much soul-trouble. My early days of thoughtfulness were days of bitterness. Before I found a Savior, I was plowed with the great subsoil plow of terrible convictions. Month after month I sought, but found no hope. I learned the plague of my heart, the desperate evil of my nature and at this moment I have reason to thank God for that long wintry season. I am sure it was good for my soul. As a general rule there is a period of darkness somewhere or other in the Christian life—if you do not have it, at first, it is

probable you will not endure it then—but if you do not have it at first it is just as likely you will pass through the cloud at some other time.

It is well to have it over with. It is good for a man, that he bears the yoke in his youth. Some friends seem to have found a patent way of going to Heaven. If their way is the right one, I am sure I am very much delighted, but I am rather dubious, for I meet with those who have tried the high-level railroad and are greatly discouraged because the train does not run so smoothly as they expected. They have been living a whole fortnight—well, not quite without sin—but very near it. They have triumphed and conquered altogether, and gone up in a balloon for a fortnight. Of course they have to come down again—and some come with an awful fall!

The best of them come, and say, “Dear Pastor, I am afraid I am not a child of God. I feel so wretched and yet I feel so happy and holy. I have said, “Yes, you see you went up and so you had to come down. If you had kept down you would not have had to come down.” That going up in a balloon to the stars frightens me about some young people. I wish they would continue humbly to feel that they are nothing and nobody and that Christ is everything. It is much better, on the whole, that a man should be timid and trembling than that he should, early in life, become very confident. “Blessed is the man that fears always” is a Scriptural text—not the slavish fear, nor yet a fear that doubts God, but still a fear.

There is a difference between doubting God and doubting yourself. You may have as much as you like of the last till you even get to self-despair, but there is no reason whatever why you should doubt the Lord! “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” to be made to feel the weight of sin and the chastening hand of God—and to be left to cry out in the dark and say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat.” These ordeals are of essential service to the newborn Believer and prepare him, alike, for the joys and the sorrows of his spiritual career.

III. I am going to finish with this last head. Practically, Brothers and Sisters, WE ARE, ALL OF US, IN OUR YOUTH. I see some gray heads and bald heads here and, yet they belong to persons in their minority. My dear Brother, though you are 70 and more, yet you have not come of age in the heavenly kingdom, for if you were of age you would have your estates. None of us will come of age till we enter Heaven. We are still under tutors and governors because we are, even now, as little children. We have not come to that period in which we are fit for all the joys of Heaven, for if we were, we should be taken Home to our Father’s house to enjoy our inheritance at once. We are still in our youth.

Well, it is good for us, at this present time, that we should bear the yoke and continue to bear it. It is good, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that we, who have gone some distance on the road to Heaven, should still have something to bear, because it enables us to still honor Christ! If we do not suffer with Him, how can we have fellowship with Him? If we have no crosses to carry, how can we commune with our Lord, the chief CrossBearer? Let us be glad that we are not spared tribulation, that we are not screened from affliction, but are permitted to glorify God by patience, by resignation and by unstaggering faith.

Do not ask the Lord that you may have no trouble, but rather remember you have only a little while in which you can be patient—only a little while in which you can be a cross-bearer and, therefore, it behooves you to use each moment well. A few more revolving suns and you will be where there is no more cross to carry, no sorrow to bear and, therefore, where there is no room for patience and no opportunity of being acquiescent in the Divine will. Be content to bear the yoke now, for it is but a little while and this honor will be no longer yours. It is good for us all to bear the yoke, too, because thus old Adam is kept in check. A wonderfully vivacious thing is that old Adam. He has been reported dead a good many times, but to my certain knowledge he is still very brisk!

When we are in trouble, proud old Adam often seems to be quiet and does not so well succeed in keeping us from prayer and, consequently, in time of trouble, we often enjoy our very sweetest seasons of devotion. By the Lord’s goodness we escape the trial, but, alas, old Adam soon lifts up his proud head again! He says, “Ah, you are a favorite of Heaven. Your mountain stands firm. Your affliction has been sanctified to you and you have grown in Grace very wonderfully. The fact is, you are a very fine fellow.”

Yes, that is old Adam’s way, and whenever he sees an opportunity, he will return to his old game of flattery. Whenever you are tempted to bargain, say to yourself, “I know you, old Adam. I know you and will not yield to your crafty devices.” What happens when we become self-satisfied? Why, the yoke returns upon our shoulders heavier! We fall into another trouble and then old Adam is up in the stirrups, again, and begins to grumble and rebel. The flesh begins proudly to despair, whereas a little while before it was boasting! Trials, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, are a great help to overcome corruptions. It is a very hard matter for a man to be rich and prospering in this world, to be at ease and have a long stretch of health—to have everything exactly as he likes—and yet to be a Christian!

When the road is very smooth, many fall, but when the way is rough there is good grip for the feet and we are not so likely to stumble. When trials come, they whip us home to our heavenly Father! Sheep do not stray so much when the black dog is after them—his barks make them run to the shepherd! Affliction is the black dog of the Good Shepherd to fetch us back to Him, otherwise we should wander to our ruin! We are not better than David and we may honestly confess as he did, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” Therefore it is good for us, spiritually, young people, even though old as to the flesh, that we should bear the yoke while we are still in our youth.

Besides, dear Friends, it makes you so helpful to others to have known affliction. I do not see how we can sympathize if we are never tried, ourselves. I know a beloved Brother who is, perhaps, 50 years of age, who never had a day’s sickness, and he told me he scarcely knew what physical pain was except when a heavy person trod on his toes! Well, now, he is a good Brother—but when he tries to sympathize with another it is like

an elephant picking up a pin, or Hercules with a cane—he does do it, by God's Grace, but it is a thing to be wondered at. If you tell him that you feel very low in spirits, he looks at you and tries to say very kind things, but he does not understand your despondency.

Now, it would be a great pity for a Christian minister to be lacking in the power to sympathize, would it not? Oh, thank God for troubles, because they make the heart tender and they teach the lips the art of consolation! You can be a Boanerges without trouble, but you never can be a Barnabas! You may be a son of thunder, but you will never be a son of consolation. As we wish to serve others, let us thank God that He qualifies us to do so by making us bear the yoke in our youth.

Once more, is it not good to bear the yoke while we are here, because it will make Heaven all the sweeter? Oh, how sweet Heaven will be to that bedridden woman who has lain, these 20 years, upon her weary couch and scarcely had a night’s unbroken rest! What rest Heaven will be to her! I know a good man within two miles of this place who has laid 18 years without moving. I do not know a happier man than he is! It is a treat to see him, but still, what a change it will be—from that bed from which he cannot rise—to stand on the sea of glass and forever wave the palm branch and draw forth music from the celestial harp! What a transformation!

How great the change for a poor Christian woman dying in a workhouse, to be carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom! What a change for the martyr standing at the stake, burning slowly to death, and then rising to behold the Glory of his Lord! What a change for you, dear old Friend, with all those aches and pains about you, which make you feel uneasy even while you are sitting here! Ah, Graybeard, you will be young soon! There will be no wrinkles on your brow! You will not require those spectacles! You will not need that staff to lean upon—you will be as strong as the youngest here!

As you stand before the Throne of God, you will scarcely know yourself to be the same old woman you used to be, or the same sickly man you were a little while ago. You will be stripped of the house of clay and your young soul will leap up from the old body and be present with the Lord! And then the grave will be a refining pot in which the dross of the flesh will be consumed and, by-and-by, your body will rise, no longer old and haggard and worn, but full of beauty, like your Master’s glorious body!

This should give joy to you at all times—it must be good for you to bear the yoke, seeing Heaven will, by that means, be made more fully Heaven to you when once you reach its everlasting rest—

**“The way may be rough but it cannot be long So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.” PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations 5.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—750, 748. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2468 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SOLITUDE, SILENCE, SUBMISSION  
NO. 2468

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 7, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1886.

**“He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.” Lamentations 3:28, 29.**

THUS the Prophet describes the conduct of a person in deep anguish of heart. When he does not know what to do, his soul, as if by instinct, humbles itself. He gets into some secret place, he utters no speech, he gives himself over to moaning and to tears, and then he bows himself lower and yet lower before the Divine Majesty, as if he felt that the only hope for him in the extremity of his sorrow was to make complete submission to God and to lie in the very dust before Him.

It seems to me that such conduct as this, which is characteristic of every truly gracious man in his hour of trouble, should also be the mark of all who are seeking God’s Grace—those who are not yet saved, but who are conscious of their need of salvation. I must, surely, be speaking right into the heart of some who are feeling the crushing weight and heavy burden of their guilt. If you cannot do anything else, dear Friends, do what these two verses say, in order that, afterwards, you may be able to take that grand Gospel step of faith in Jesus Christ which will certainly bring you into peace and joy!

Those of you who have the Revised Version will notice a correction which has been made long ago by all competent scholars—“Let him sit alone and keep silent, because He has laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.” It does not matter which way you read the passage, because the conduct of one gracious man is virtually a precept to another, yet it is satisfactory to find that if we are under the burden of sin, we are here commanded to do as the Prophet did in his time of need.

My objective, just now, is to explain this line of conduct, in the hope that some who are in trouble will at once heartily follow it.  
I. First, then, observe that in the time of great trouble, HOLY SOLITUDE is commended to us—“Let him sit alone.”  
I earnestly advise you who are under concern of soul to seek to get alone and to be quiet and thoughtful in your solitude—not merely to be alone, but to sit by yourself like a person in the posture of thought. When a soul is under a deep sense of sin, the more it can be alone, the better. That sense of sin will be increased by the loneliness and when it becomes intolerable, it is highly probable that in that loneliness the way of its removal will be discovered. In this age we all live too much in company— and in a great city like this, we are busy from morning to night, and we do not get the opportunities for quiet reflection which our forefathers were known to take. I am afraid, therefore, that our religion is likely to become very superficial and flimsy for the lack of solitary, earnest thought. Men, nowadays, usually go in flocks—someone leads the way and the rest follow him like sheep that rush through a gap in the hedge! It would be better for us if we deliberated more, if we used our own judgment, if we drew near to God in our own personality and were resolved that whatever others might do, we would seek to be personally guided by the Lord Himself.  
I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may well study your case as in the sight of God. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a mirror, but there is another mirror which gives true reflections, into which few men look. To study one’s own self in the light of God’s Word and carefully to go over one’s condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins—and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures—would be a very healthy exercise. But how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved Friends, if it is a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls!  
If a true shepherd will not neglect his flocks and his herds, should not a wise man care about his thoughts, his feelings and his actions? Must it not be a wretched condition not to know whether one is saved or not? I sometimes hear people express surprise if they are asked whether they are saved—yet in what ignorance of your own soul’s state must you be if you have never put that question to yourself, or if, when it is put, you feel inclined to give no answer to it! I press this matter home upon you and if you would be saved, you must first know that you are lost! If you would seek to be healed, you must first learn that you are sick! It is not possible that you will repent unless you are aware of your sin. It is not likely that you will look to Christ unless you first know what it is for which you are to look to Him!  
Therefore, I pray you, set apart some time every day, or at least some time as often as you can get it, in which the business of your mind shall be to take your longitude and latitude, that you may know exactly where you are. You may be drifting towards the rocks and you may be wrecked before you know your danger. I implore you, do not let your ship go at full steam through a fog, but slacken speed a bit and heave the lead to see whether you are in deep waters or shallow. I am not asking you to do more than any kind and wise man would advise you to do. Do I even ask you more than your own conscience tells you is right? Sit alone a while, that you may carefully consider your case.  
Get alone, again, dear Friend—especially dear young Friend—that you may diligently search the Scriptures. I am often astounded at the ignorance there still is of what is written in God’s Word! Many persons who have even been in Sunday schools for years seem to be totally unaware of the most plain Truths of the Gospel of God’s Grace! How can we know what is revealed unless we read and study it for ourselves? Alas, the dust upon many men’s Bibles will condemn them! God has been pleased, in this Book, to give us the revelation of the way of salvation and we ought to rush to the Book with eager anxiety to know what God has said in it! But instead of doing so, though we can get a Bible for sixpence and, perhaps, have a copy in every room in our house, how little do we read it! If you truly desire to be saved, get alone for the earnest and hearty study of the Word of God!  
How often you may meet with persons who profess to be infidels, yet if you press them closely enough, you will find that they have never even read the New Testament through! There are many more who are in doubt and anxiety, yet they have never gone to see what are the promises of God and what the Lord is ready to do for them that seek Him. I beseech you, as sensible and reasonable beings, do not let God speak to you and refuse to hear! You need to be saved from sin! In this Book God has revealed the way of salvation, therefore do not shut up the Book, fasten the clasps and leave it neglected. Oh, Book of books, the map of the way to Glory! That man invokes a terrible curse upon his own head who refuses to study you! He does, in effect, shut the gate of Heaven against himself and bar the road to everlasting bliss! If you would be saved, dear Friend, sit alone, consider your case and then study God’s thoughts concerning it.  
Get alone, further, that you may commune with your God. After we have once learned the way, we can commune with God anywhere— amidst the roar and turmoil of the crowded city, or on the top of the mast of a ship—but, to begin with, it is best to be alone with the Lord. My dear Hearer, have you ever spoken to God in all your life? Have you ever realized that there is such a King in the room with you? There is such a King! It is He who made you and who has preserved you up to this good hour! You are, surely, not prepared to deny His existence? And if you are not, I beseech you, do not ignore that existence and live as if there were no God! Oh, speak with Him at once! Perhaps five minutes’ earnest speech with Him may be the turning point of your life. “I will arise and go to my father,” was the turning point with the prodigal—and it may be the same with you.  
“Oh, but I feel so guilty!” Then get alone and say that to the Lord! “But I do not feel as I ought.” Then get alone and tell that to God. “Oh, but I—I am such an unbelieving being!” Get alone and tell out all the truth to the Lord—do not entertain a thought or a feeling which you dare not tell Him. Do not imagine that you can hide anything from Him, for He reads your inmost heart. Then take that heart and lay it bare before Him and say with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” As one of God’s creatures, I could not bear to think that I had seen the glory of the midnight stars, or warmed myself in the brightness of the noonday sun and yet had never spoken to Him who made them all and myself as well! One of our sweetest joys on earth is to speak with Him in prayer and praise, to call Him, Friend, and to be on terms of sweet familiarity with the Most High. I do pray you, then, get alone for these three purposes, first, to consider your case. Next, to study the Scriptures concerning your case And then that you may speak with God in prayer.  
Get alone, also, for one more reason, and that is that you may avoid distraction. I think that, on the Lord’s Day, when people go home, after service, they sometimes make a mistake in talking with those who do not feel as they feel. If the arrows of God have entered your heart, go home alone. If there has been anything in the sermon which has been for your comfort as a Christian, go home alone. If there was anything in the sermon which has been for your warning as a sinner, go home alone. How often may even godly and gracious people talk upon some theme that may rob their fellow-Believers of all the good they have received in God’s House and, as for unconverted persons, I am sure that if they ever feel impressed under the Word, it will be their utmost wisdom to take care of that first impression—and not let it be driven away by foolish or frivolous conversation.  
Some of us are old enough to remember the day before there were matches of the kind we now use. And early on a frosty morning some of us have tried to strike a light with flint and steel, and the old-fashioned tinderbox. How long we struck, and struck, and watched, and waited and, at last, there was a little spark in the tinder! And then we would hold the box up and blow on it very softly, that we might keep that little spark alight till we had kindled the fire that we needed. That tenderness over the first spark is what I invite everyone to practice in spiritual matters! If you would be saved—if there is anything like feeling in your heart, if there is any good desire in your soul, do not begin to talk as soon as you get out of the Tabernacle—that would be like placing the lid on the tinder and putting the spark out! But get alone, blow on that spark, for perhaps it may come to a flame and you may find salvation! I advise all persons under sorrow of soul, somehow or other to break right away from their companions! When the day’s work is done, let them, each one, say to themselves, “I am not going out with that frivolous person, nor shall I sit in the house with those who will be talking of trifling matters. I have a soul that needs salvation and I must have my soul saved now. I cannot afford to be in this giddy company.”  
“Let him sit alone.” That is good advice which the Prophet gives in the text—and I desire to press it upon every awakened person who desires to find the Savior!  
II. The text goes on to say, in the next place, that we should practice SUBMISSIVE SILENCE—“Let him sit alone and keep silent.”  
In what respects should seeking souls keep silent? I answer, first, if the burden of sin is pressing upon you, be sure to abstain from all idle talk, for if the idle talk of others, as I have reminded you, can distract your thoughts, how much more would your own! It ill becomes a man, who is on the brink of Hell, to be laughing and jesting! When God is angry with you, can you make mirth? I can understand how you can be merry when once you have come back to the great Father’s House and the fatted calf is killed and your Father rejoices over you. But while you are still covered with your sins and are not yet sure of God’s forgiveness, sit silent! It is the best thing you can do—quietness becomes you. Lay your finger on your lips till you have something better to speak of than you have as yet. Keep silent, then, from all idle talk.  
Keep silent, also, in another respect. Do not attempt to make any excuse for your sin. Oh, how ready sinners are with their excuses! A man says, “But, Sir, I have a besetting sin.” Do you not think that a great many people make a mistake about besetting sins? There was a man who used to get drunk and he said that it was his besetting sin. But his brother said, “No, Sam, it is your upsetting sin!” And so it was. If I were to go, tonight, across Clapham Common and half-a-dozen men were to surround me and rob me of my wallet, then I should be beset. But if I were to know that there were thieves there, and yet I walked across the common on purpose to meet with them, you could not say that they had beset me—you would say that I was a fool to walk into their hands! The besetting sin is that which a man fights against and wars against with all his soul, yet is overcome by it. Do not lay any stress upon that, as though your being beset by sin was any excuse to you, especially if you go into the ways of sin.  
You go and sit with those who drink and then wonder that you get drunk? You go and associate with those who swear or sing lewd songs and then you wonder that, the next time you try to pray, a nasty verse of a bad song comes up? It is your own fault if you go and willfully mingle with sinners! How can you be a child of God? No, when you know that anything is a sin, stay away from the temptation! He that does not want to get wet should not go out into the rain. Instead of your excuse making your case any better, it makes it worse! Therefore, keep silent before your God.  
And next, keep silent from all complaining of God. No man is truly saved while he sets himself up as the judge of God, yet this is the practice of many men. If you give them the Word of God, they begin to pull it to pieces! They ask, “Is God so severe that He will mark our faults? Does He take notice, even, of our evil thoughts? Can it really be true that for every idle word that a man shall speak, he will have to give an account in the Day of Judgment?” And then, after judging God to be too strict and harsh in His dealings with poor fallible flesh and blood, they go on to snatch from His hand the balance and the rod and sit upon their little throne—and dare to question the decrees of the great Judge of All! “It would be wrong,” they say, “to cast men into Hell and to punish with eternal wrath the sins

f a short life!” And then they begin to traverse all the teaching of Scripture and to quibble with this and object to that! O Sirs, if you would be saved, you must give up this wickedness! This kind of conduct will damn you as surely as you live!  
When prisoners are tried by an earthly judge and are condemned to die, if they are permitted to speak, they can have no hope of obtaining mercy by criticizing the judge and questioning the law! Of course they are not guilty, poor innocents! “It is the harsh law,” they say, “that is to blame.” But the law must maintain its majesty against such quibblers and it cannot stoop to mercy, or sheath its sword while a man is in that humor! So, Sinner, sit alone and keep silent. Presume not to judge your God! Behold, He comes with clouds! The trumpet will soon proclaim His appearing and they who were so free to judge their Maker will cry in another tone when that great day has, at last, come! With the earth reeling beneath their feet and the heavens, themselves, on fire, they will beg the rocks to fall on them and the hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne—and from the wrath of the Lamb! Go, you guilty one! Sit still and hold your tongue—and bring your rebellious heart to submission! Shall the flax contend with the fire, or the stubble fight with the flame? What can you do in warring with your Maker?  
Sit alone and keep silent, next, from all claims of merit. I know that the tendency of the human heart is to say, “I am no worse than other people. I am a good Chapel-going, Church-going, Psalm-singing person! I give to the poor, I say my prayers and attend to all that sort of thing.” You will never obtain mercy while you have a word of that kind to plead! Until you are like a vessel turned upside down and drained of every drop of human merit, there is no hope of salvation for you! You must sit alone and keep silent about those good works of yours, for they are all a lie and you know it. You have never done a good work in your life—you have either spoiled it by your selfish motives before it, or by some carelessness in it, or by some vainglorious pride after it. At the best, you are nothing but a boasting Pharisee, and though you may wash the outside of your cup and platter, yet your heart is full of wickedness and your soul is steeped in sin. O man, talk no more so exceeding proudly, but sit still and hold your tongue about merit and what you think you deserve before the holy God! There is no way of mercy for any of us until we shut our mouths and utter not a single boastful word, but stand guiltily silent before the Lord.  
I think it is well, too, when a poor sin-burdened soul is silent before God and unable to make any bold speeches. I recollect that when I was first seeking the Lord, I heard some good people talking about their confidence in God. I had to hold my tongue, for I could not say a word about that matter. I heard a young friend say that he had found Christ, but I had to hold my tongue, for I knew that I had not found Him. And even after I had found Him, there were times when I dared not say so. I felt in my spirit the question, “Am I self-deceived, or am I not? And if I have spoken pretty boldly since that time, even now, occasionally, I feel that same silence creeping over me. It would have been well if Peter had been silent when he said to his Lord, “Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.” I like a man who knows not only how to speak, but how to sit still—but that sitting still part is hard work to many.  
There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory. He talked away at a great rate and Demosthenes said, “I must charge you double fees.” “Why?” he asked. “Why,” said the master, “I have first to teach you to hold your tongue and afterwards to instruct you how to speak.” The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues. They open not their mouth when He has laid trouble upon them. And even in the company of good people they are sometimes dumb with silence and hold their tongue even from good. It is not an ill thing that they should act thus, for often the will of the Lord is not done with words and, sometimes, that silence which is frost of the mouth is thaw of the soul. And the heart flows best before God when even praise sits silent on our tongues. O Beloved, in your hour of darkness because of your sin, sit still and hold your tongue, for it is oftentimes the way of peace to the soul!  
III. Now I shall ask your special and patient attention for just a few minutes to the third point, which is, PROFOUND HUMILIATION—“Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope.” Upon this matter I would earnestly address those who are not yet saved, but who desire to be.  
Dear Friends, it often happens that men do not obtain peace with God because they have not come low enough. The gate of Heaven, though it is so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, is, nevertheless, so low that pride can never pass through it. You must stoop if you would enter Heaven! “Let him put his mouth in the dust.” I believe that this precept is needed by very many and that, when they obey it, they will get peace, but never till then. “Let him put his mouth in the dust.” Oriental monarchs require very lowly reverence from their subjects—it is not in keeping with our manners and customs—but the similitude holds good in our relation to the Lord God. When we come before Him, we must prostrate ourselves till we bow our mouths in the dust. What can this expression mean? “Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope.”  
It means, first, that there must be true, humble, lowly confession of sin. You say that you have been praying, yet you have not found peace? Have you confessed your sins? This is absolutely necessary! Confess your sins to me, you ask? No, thank you. I do not want to hear your confession. It would do me much harm and it could do you no good to tell them to me. It is to God alone that this confession should be made. Some men have never really made a confession of their sin to God at all—they have done it in such general and insincere terms that it did not amount to a confession. Go enter your chamber, shut the door and get alone. And there, with words or without words, as you find it best, acknowledge before God your omissions and commissions—what you have done and what you have not done. Pour out the whole story before God and cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not cloak or dissemble before the Almighty! Let all your sins appear. Take a lowly place— not simply be a sinner in name—but confess that you are a sinner in fact and deed. I believe that some of you are in darkness much longer than you need to be because you do not stoop to a humble confession of your sin. Let the lances into this ugly gathering of yours that brings you so much inflammation of mind and pain of spirit! Let your confession flow like water before God! Pour out your heart before Him! Acknowledge your sins, take the place of a sinner, for this is a great way towards finding salvation—“If so there may be hope.”  
Further than that, dear Friends, when it is said that we are to put our mouths in the dust, it means that we are to give up the habit of putting ourselves above other people and finding fault with others. How often is the value of our penitence destroyed because we have looked at Mistress Somebody and said, “Well, I am guilty, but still—well, I am not such a hypocrite as Mrs. So-and-So.” What have you to do with her? “Oh,” says another, “I know I have been a bad man, but then I—I—I have never been as bad as old So-and-So.” What have you to do with him? Here you are, pretending to be humble, yet you are as proud as Lucifer! I know you— you are like that man who went up to the Temple and pretended that he was going to pray. And then he said, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are” and so forth—“nor even as this publican”—turning his eyes in disdain towards the true penitent!  
There is many a man who says, “I am a sinner, but then I am a total abstainer and wear the blue ribbon—that is a good thing, is it not?” Yes, it is, but not if you trust in it for salvation! “Oh, but,” says another, “I know that I have not lived as I ought, but I have always paid 20s. in the pound.” So ought every honest man, but what is there to be proud about in that? Are you going to get to Heaven by paying 20s. in the pound to a man and not a penny in the pound to God? Yet that is often the way of men! Or else, perhaps, we are accusing others while we pretend that we are, ourselves, humble. We must get rid of all such bad habits if we want the Lord to have mercy upon us! I believe a sincere penitent thinks himself to be the worst man there is and never judges other people, for he says in his heart, “That man may be more openly guilty than I am, but very likely he does not know as much as I do, or the circumstances of his case are an excuse for him.” A woman, convinced of sin, says, “It is true, that woman has fallen and her life is full of foulness, but, perhaps, if I had been tempted as she was and had been deceived as she was, I would have been even worse than she is.” Oh, that we might all give up that habit of judging other people and put our mouths in the dust in selfabasement before God!  
I think that putting our mouths in the dust also means that we realize our own nothingness in the Presence of God. We have nothing to say, nothing to claim, nothing to boast of—if the Lord should never look upon us in mercy, yet we could not complain. If He were to banish us from His Presence forever, yet we could not open our mouths to accuse Him, but must say, “You are just when You judge. You are clear when You condemn.” That, dear Friends, is putting your mouth in the dust—feeling that, in God’s sight, you are only like the dust. If you have sought the Lord and have not found him, I exhort you to sink yourself lower! Believe that you have no strength, that you have no righteousness, that you are truly lost and ruined and undone, that you are nothing but a mass of loathsomeness before the thrice-holy God and bow before Him with this conviction in your heart, “if so there may be hope.”  
I am not going to preach upon the last part of the text because the time has almost gone and, also, for another reason—I have not to say to you, “If so there may be hope.” There is hope for any man, or woman, or child here—I like to say, “child,” as well as, “man, or woman,” because I believe that children are often the best part of my congregation! Last Monday week, we had five children before the Church, one after the other, whose testimony for Christ was quite as clear as that of any of the elders among us! What an important part of the congregation the boys and girls make up! I believe that there are almost as many saved among the little ones, now, in this congregation as there are of grown-up people, perhaps even more. Well now, if any of you who are guilty—whether old or young—come before the Lord, confess your sin and trust in Christ for mercy—you shall have mercy! I do not know who you are and I do not care who you are—but whoever shall come and confess his sin in all lowliness of heart, and in faith, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—he shall have mercy!  
Christ sits on His Throne of Grace and stretches out the silver scepter. Bow before Him and He will forgive your sin! The fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness—if you are sinful and unclean, come to the fountain that Christ has opened and which the devil cannot close—and wash and be clean this very hour! God in infinite mercy is ready to forgive! His heart yearns over the wanderers. He stretches out His hands and entreats you to come back and He is grieved until you return! If there is in your heart any sorrow for having sinned against your God—if there is any anxiety to come back to Him, come back! If you do but turn your face towards Him, while you are yet a great way off, He sees! He will have compassion on you! He will run to you! He will embrace you! Fall into His arms right now! Believe in His Son! Trust yourself with Jesus, for He has never yet failed any who trusted Him. Make Him the Trustee of your soul, for He is a Trustee who can be trusted! Deposit in His hands your spirit, for He is able to keep that which you commit to Him against that day.  
We are getting into summer and I feel very anxious that none of my hearers should have to say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.” Then, before the harvest comes, now that the summer is just beginning, may the Lord incline your hearts to come and put your trust in Jesus! Many of you are from the country. You have come to see London. Of all the sights possible to you, the best will be, first, to see yourselves, and then to see your Savior! There is no exhibition like the exhibition of the love of God in Jesus Christ to guilty sinners! May this be the best day you have ever lived because it shall be the first day you have ever truly lived with the life of God in your soul! I pray the Lord to bless my words to each of you without exception! Surely, there is not anybody here who would wish to be left out! God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**LAMENTATIONS 3:1-33; 55-58.**

We are about to read a chapter which is full of sorrow. While you are listening to it, some of you may be saying, “We are not in that condition.” Well then, be thankful that you are not! And while you hear of the sorrows of others, bless God for the joys you, yourself, experience. At the same time, remember that there is a way of sorrow which leads, at last, to rest and piece. There is truth in the words of the poet Cowper—

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

*Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*If you have never known the sorrows of the weeping Prophet, or anything like them, I am not sure that you should congratulate yourselves, for there is a brokenness of heart that is worth more than the whole world! There is a crushed and bruised spirit in which the Lord delights and which is a token for good to the one who possesses it.

Verses 1, 2 . I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Some of us recollect when we used to go into our room, shut the door and read such a chapter as this and say, “Here is a description of my true condition.” We were once broken in pieces, torn asunder through a terrible sense of sin. Our thoughts were like a case of knives perpetually pricking us and, at such a time, these were our words as well as the words of Jeremiah, “He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.”

3, 4. Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones. Conviction of sin seems to dry up the very sap of our life till we become withered with age. Worse than the agony of a broken bone is the pain of a broken heart. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, believe me, it is no child’s play. In the case of some of us, it was sore wounding.

5. He has built against me—“As if He deliberately built walls to stop up my way and erected castles from which to attack my soul, ‘He has built against me.’”—

5. And compassed me with gall and travail. “He has shut me up in a circle of bitterness.”  
6, 7. He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy. Like a prisoner in his dungeon who has to wear manacles and fetters.  
8. Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. That is the worst trial of all, for there is comfort in prayer. But when even that seems denied you, into what a terrible state of sorrow is your heart brought!  
9-11. He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked. He was to me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. You who remember that experience, bless God that you have passed through it, that you have gone over that rough road into the place of peace and rest in Christ! You who have never known this path, it will be well for you when you do, difficult as you may find it.  
12. He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow. “Every sermon I hear seems a shot at me, every text of Scripture seems an arrow aimed at me.”  
13. He has caused the arrow of His quiver to enter into my loins. “They are not merely shot at me, but they have actually hit me; they have wounded me; they have pierced me in vital parts.”  
14-17. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. “It seems so long ago since I was prosperous that I forget what it was like! I have been so troubled that I do not remember what it was to be at ease.”  
18-21. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. Notice that in all his sorrow, this man still had hope! His soul was humbled and, therefore, he had hope. I think that in the New Zealand language, the word for hope is, “swimming thought”—the thought that swims when everything else is drowned! Oh, what a mercy it is that hope can live on when all things else appear to die!  
22. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. Hear that, troubled heart! You are not yet destroyed, you are still in the land of the living—as we say—“on praying ground and pleading terms with God.” “It is of Jehovah’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”  
23, 24. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. “With all my troubles, losses and griefs, I still have a God! Therefore will I hope in Him.”  
25. The LORD is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. Even though it is out of the depths of the utmost distress that you seek God, you shall find Him to be good to you. He is hard to none, unkind to none. Only go and test Him and try Him—and you shall find that it is even as I say.  
26, 27. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth. And it is not bad for him if he keeps on bearing it in his old age! Our shoulders always need the yoke. We are such uncertain creatures that we cannot bear too much freedom, even from sorrow!

28-31. He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. What music there is in that line! He may put you away for a while and seem to leave you, but, “the Lord will not cast off forever.” God may seem to put us away from Him, but it is written, “He hates putting away “There is no divorce between Christ and the soul that is once espoused to Him! Their separation shall not be perpetual, for nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32, 33. But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Now notice, in the 55th verse, what came to the Prophet after all this sorrow—

55, 56. I called upon Your name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. You have heard my voice: hide not Your ear at my breathing, at my cry. Sometimes our prayers get to be so very weak that they are only a breathing. Yet we must never forget that “Prayer is the breath of God in men, returning from where it came.” And “Praying breath is never spent in vain.”

57, 58. You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul. What a comfort it is that Christ in Heaven is our great Advocate and that He has pleaded the causes of our soul before the Throne of God!

58. You have redeemed my life. He who is our Advocate is also our Redeemer and, therefore, we are doubly safe! Glory be to His name! HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 584, 556.  
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NO. 3083

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1908. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “Hide not Your ear at my breathing.”  
Lamentations 3:56.

YOUNG beginners in Grace are very apt to compare themselves with advanced disciples and so to become discouraged. And tried saints fall into the same habit. They see those of God’s people who are upon the mountain, enjoying the light of their Redeemer’s Countenance and, comparing their own condition with the joy of the saints, they write bitter things against themselves and conclude that surely, they are not the people of God! This course is as foolish as though the lambs should suspect themselves not to be of the flock because they are not sheep, or as though a sick man should doubt his existence because he is not able to walk or run as a man in good health. But since this evil habit is very common, it is our duty to seek after the dispirited and cast-down ones and comfort them. That is our errand in this short discourse. We hear the Master’s words, “Comfort you, comfort you My people,” and we will endeavor to obey them with His Spirit’s help.

Upon the matter of prayer, many are dispirited because they cannot yet pray as advanced Believers do, or because, during some peculiar crisis of their spiritual history, their prayers do not appear to them to be so fervent and acceptable as is the case with other Christians. Perhaps God may have a message to some troubled ones in the present address and may the Holy Spirit apply it with power to them!

“Hide not Your ear at my breathing.” This is an amazing description of prayer, is it not? Frequently, prayer is said to have a voice—it is so in this verse—“You have heard my voice.” Prayer has a melodious voice in the ear of our Heavenly Father. Frequently prayer is expressed by a cry. It is so in this verse—“Hide not Your ear at my cry.” A cry is the natural, plaintive utterance of sorrow and has as much power to move the heart of God as a babe’s cry to touch a mother’s tenderness. But there are times when we cannot speak with the voice, nor even cry. And then a prayer may be expressed by a moan, or a groan, or a tear—“the heaving of a sigh, the falling of a tear.” But possibly we may not even get as far as that and may have to say, like one of old, “Like a crane or a swallow, so do I chatter.” Our prayer, as heard by others, may be a kind of irrational utterance. We may feel as if we moaned like wounded beasts rather than prayed like intelligent men. And we may even fall below that, for in the text we have a kind of prayer which is less than a moan or a sigh. It is called a breathing—“Hide not Your ear at my breathing.” The man is too far gone for a glance of the eye, or the moaning of the heart—he scarcely breathes, but that faint breath is prayer! Though unuttered and unexpressed by any sounds which could reach a human ear, yet God hears the breathing of His servant’s soul and hides not His ear from it.

We shall teach three or four lessons from the present use of the expression, “breathing.”  
I. WHEN WE CANNOT PRAY AS WE WOULD, IT IS GOOD TO PRAY AS WE CAN.  
Bodily weakness should never be urged by us as a reason for ceasing to pray. In fact, no living child of God will ever think of such a thing. If I cannot bend the knees of my body because I am so weak, my prayers from my bed shall be on their knees—my heart shall be on its knees and pray as acceptably as before. Instead of relaxing prayer because the body suffers, true hearts, at such times, usually double their petitions. Like Hezekiah, they turn their face to the wall that they may see no earthly object and then they look at the invisible things and talk with the Most High. Yes, and often in a sweeter and more familiar manner than they did in the days of their health and strength. If we are so faint that we can only lie still and breathe, let every breath be a prayer!  
Nor should a true Christian relax his prayer through mental difficulties. I mean those perturbations which distract the mind and prevent the concentration of our thoughts. Such ills will happen to us. Some of us are often much depressed and are frequently so tossed to and fro in mind that if prayer were an operation which required the faculties to be all at their best, as in the working of abstruse mathematical problems, we could not, at such times, be able to pray at all. But, Brothers and Sisters, when the mind is very heavy, then is not the time to give up praying, but rather to redouble our supplications! Our blessed Lord and Master was driven by distress of mind into the most sad condition—He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death”—yet He did not, for that reason say, “I cannot pray” but, on the contrary, He sought the well-known shades of the olive grove and there unburdened His heavy heart and poured out His soul like water before the Lord! Never let us consider ourselves to be too ill or too distracted to pray. A Christian ought never to be in such a state of mind that he feels bound to say, “I do not feel that I could pray” or, if he does, let him pray till he feels he can pray. Not to pray because you do not feel fit to pray is like saying, “I will not take medicine because I am too ill.” Pray for prayer! Pray yourself, by the Spirit’s assistance, into a praying frame! It is good to strike when the iron is hot, but some make cold iron hot by striking. We have sometimes eaten till we have gained an appetite, so let us pray till we pray. God will help you in the pursuit of duty, not in the neglect of it.  
The same is the case with regard to spiritual sicknesses. Sometimes it is not merely the body or the mind which is affected, but our inner nature is dull, stupid, lethargic, so that when it is time for prayer, we do not feel the spirit of prayer. Moreover, perhaps our faith is flagging and how shall we pray when faith is so weak? Possibly we are suspicious as to whether we are the people of God at all and we are molested by the recollection of our shortcomings. Now the tempter will whisper, “Do not pray just now—your heart is not in a fit condition for it.” My dear Brothers and Sisters, you will not become fit for prayer by keeping away from the Mercy Seat! But to lie groaning or breathing at its foot is the best preparation for pleading before the Lord. We are not to aim at a selfworked preparation of our hearts that we may come to God aright, but “the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord.” If I feel myself disinclined to pray, then is the time when I need to pray more than ever! Possibly when the soul leaps and exults in communion with God, it might more safely refrain from prayer than at those seasons when it drags heavily in devotion. Alas, my Lord, does my soul go wandering away from You? Then come back, my heart! I will drag you back by force of Divine Grace! I will not cease to cry till the Spirit of God has made you return to your allegiance. What? My Christian Brother, because you feel idle, is that a reason why you should stay your hand and not serve your God? No, but away with your idleness and resolutely bend your soul to service! So, under a sense of prayerlessness, be more intent on prayer. Repent that you cannot repent, groan that you cannot groan and pray until you do pray—in so doing God will help you.  
But, it may be objected, that sometimes we are placed in great difficulty as to circumstances so that we may be excused from prayer. Brothers and Sisters, there are no circumstances in which we should cease to pray in some form or other. “But I have so many cares.” Who among us has not? If we are never to pray till all our cares are over, surely then we shall either never pray at all, or pray when we have no more need for it! What did Abram do when he offered sacrifice to God? When the Patriarch had slaughtered the appointed creatures and laid them on the altar, certain vultures and kites came hovering around, ready to pounce upon the consecrated flesh. What did the Patriarch do? “When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them

away.” [See Sermons #420, Volume 7—ABRAM AND THE RAVENOUS BIRDS and #1993, Volume 33—DRIVING AWAY THE VULTURES FROM THE SACRIFICE—Read/download the entire sermons,  
free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So must we ask for Grace to drive our cares away from our devotions.

That was a wise direction which the Prophet gave to the poor woman when the Lord was about to multiply her oil. “Go, take the cruse,” he said, “pour out the oil, and fill the borrowed vessels.” But what else did he say? “Shut the door behind you.” If the door had been open, some of her gossiping neighbors would have looked in and said, “What are you doing? Do you really hope to fill all those jars out of that little oil cruse? Why, woman, you must be mad!” I am afraid she would not have been able to perform that act of faith if the objectors had not been shut out. It is a grand thing when the soul can bolt the doors against distractions and keep out intruders—for then it is that prayer and faith will perform their miracle and our soul shall be filled with the blessing of the Lord! Oh, for Grace to overcome circumstances and at least to breathe out prayer if we cannot reach to a more powerful form of it!

Perhaps, however, you declare that your circumstances are more difficult than I can imagine, for you are surrounded by those who mock you and, besides, Satan, himself, molests you. Ah, then dear Brother or Sister, under such circumstances, instead of restraining prayer, be ten times more diligent! Your position is pre-eminently perilous—you cannot afford to live away from the Throne of Grace—do not, therefore, attempt it. As to threatened persecution, pray in defiance of it. Remember how Daniel opened his window and prayed to his God as he had done before? Let the God of Daniel be your God in the chamber of prayer and He will be your God in the lions’ den! As for the devil, be sure that nothing will drive him away like prayer. That couplet is correct which declares that—

*“Satan trembles when he sees*

*The weakest saint upon his knees!”*  
Whatever your position, if you cannot speak, cry. If you cannot cry, groan. If you cannot groan, let there be “groans which cannot be uttered.” And if you cannot even rise to that point, let your prayer be at least a breathing—a vital, sincere desire—the outpouring of your inner life in the simplest and weakest form, and God will accept it. In a word, when you cannot pray as you would, take care to pray as you can!

II. But now, a second word of instruction. It is clear from the text, from many other passages of Scripture and from general observation that THE BEST OF MEN HAVE USUALLY FOUND THE GREATEST FAULT WITH THEIR OWN PRAYERS.

This arises from the fact that they present living prayers in real earnest and feel far more than they can express. A mere formalist can always pray so as to please himself. What has he to do but to open his book and read the prescribed words, or bow his knee and repeat such phrases as suggest themselves to his memory or his fancy? Like the Tartarian Praying Machine, give but the wind and the wheel, and the business is fully arranged! So much knee-bending and talking and the prayer is done! The formalist’s prayers are always good, or, rather, always bad, alike. But the living child of God never offers a prayer which pleases himself—his standard is above his attainments. He wonders that God listens to him and though he knows he will be heard for Christ’s sake, yet he accounts it a wonderful instance of condescending mercy that such poor prayers as his should ever reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth!

If it is asked in what respect holy men find fault with their prayers, we reply, that they complain of the narrowness of their desires. O God, You have bid me open my mouth wide and you will fill it, but I do not open my mouth! You are ready to bestow great things upon me, but I am not ready to receive great things! I am straitened, but it is not in You—I am straitened in my own desires! Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we read of Hugh Latimer on his knees perpetually crying out, “O God, give back the Gospel to England,” and sometimes praying so long that he could not rise, being an aged man—and they had to lift him up from the prison floor—and he would still keep on crying, “O God, give back the Gospel to poor England,” we may well wonder that some of us do not pray in the same way! The times are as bad as Latimer’s and we have as great a need to pray as he had, “O God, drive away this Popery once again, and give back the Gospel to England.” Then, think of John Knox. Why, that man’s prayers were like great armies for power and he would wrestle all night with God that he would kindle the light of the Gospel in Scotland. He asserted that he had gained his desire and I believe he had, and that the Light of God which burns so brightly in Scotland is much to be attributed to that man’s supplications. We do not pray like these men. We have no heart to ask for great things. A revival is waiting, the cloud is hovering over England, but we do not know how to bring it down! Oh, that God may find some true spirits who shall be as conductors to bring down the Divine Fire! We need it much, but our poor breathings—they do not come to much more—have no force, nor expansiveness, no greatheartedness, no prevalence in them!

Then, how far we fail in the matter of faith! We do not pray as if we believed. Believing prayer is a grasping and a wrestling, but ours is a mere puffing and blowing, a little breathing—not much more. God is true and we pray to Him as if He were false. He means what He says, and we treat His Word as if it were spoken in jest. The master-fault of our prayer is lack of faith.

How often do we lack earnestness! Such men as Luther had their will of Heaven because they would have it! God’s Spirit made them resolute in intercession and they would not come away from the Mercy Seat till their suit was granted. But we are cold, and consequently feeble, and our poor, poor prayers in the Prayer Meeting, in the closet and at the family altar languish and almost die!

How much, alas, is there of impurity of motive to mar our prayers! We ask for revival, but we want our own Church to get the blessing that we may have the credit of it. We pray God to bless our work and it is because we wish to hear men say what good workers we are. The prayer is good in itself, but our smutty fingers spoil it. Oh, that we could offer supplication as it should be offered! Blessed be God, there is One who can wash our prayers for us but, truly, our very tears need to be wept over and our prayers need praying over again. The best thing we ever do needs to be washed in the Fountain filled with blood, or God can only look upon it as a sin.

Another fault good men see in their supplications is that they stand at such a distance from God in praying, they do not draw near enough to Him. Are not some of you oppressed with a sense of the distance there is between you and God? You know there is a God and you believe He will answer you, but it is not always that you come right up to Him, even to His feet and, as it were, lay hold upon Him and say, “O my Father, listen to the voice of Your chosen and let the cry of the blood of Your Son come up before You!” Oh, for prayers which enter within the veil and approach the Mercy Seat! Oh, for petitioners who are familiar with the cherubim and the brightness which shines between their wings! May God help us to pray better! But this I feel sure of—you who plead most prevalently are just those who will think the least of your own prayers and be most grateful to God that He deigns to listen to you—and most anxious that He would help you to pray after a nobler sort.

III. A third lesson is this—THE POWER OF PRAYER IS NOT TO BE MEASURED BY ITS OUTWARD EXPRESSION.  
A breathing is a prayer from which God does not hide His ear. It is undoubtedly a great Truth of God, and full of much comfort, too, that our prayers are not powerful in proportion to their expression, for, if so, the Pharisee would have succeeded since he evidently had greater gifts than the Publican had. I have no doubt, if there had been a regular Prayer Meeting, and the Pharisee and the Publican had attended, we would have called on the Pharisee to pray. I do not think the people of God would have enjoyed his prayer, nor have felt any kinship of spirit with him and yet, very naturally, on account of his gifts, he would have taken upon himself to engage in public devotion or, if that Pharisee would not have done so, I have heard of other Pharisees who would. No doubt the man’s spirit was bad, but then his expression was good—he could put his oration so neatly and pour it out so accurately. Let all men know that God does not care for that! The sigh of the Publican reached His ear and won the blessing but the boastful phrases of the Pharisee were an abomination to Him!  
If our prayers were forcible according to their expression, then rhetoric would be more valuable than Grace and a scholastic education would be better than sanctification—but it is not so. Some of us may be able to express ourselves very fluently from the force of natural gifts, but it should always be to us an anxious question whether our prayer is a prayer which God will receive, for we ought to know and must know by this time, that we often pray best when we stammer and stutter—and we pray worst when words come rolling like a torrent, one after another! God is not moved by words—they are but a noise to Him. He is only moved by the deep thought and the heaving emotion which dwell in the innermost spirit. It were a sorry business for you, who are poor, if God only heard us according to the beauty of our utterances, for it may be that your education was so neglected that there is no hope of your ever being able to speak grammatically. And, besides, it may be, from your limited information, that you could not use the phrases which sound so well. But the Lord hears the poor, the ignorant and the needy! He loves to hear their cry. What cares He for the grammar of the prayer? It is the soul of it that He wants! And if you cannot string three words of the Queen’s English together correctly, yet if your soul can breathe itself out before the Most High anyhow—if it is but warm, hearty, sincere, earnest petitioning—there is power in your prayer and none the less power in it because of its broken words, nor would it be an advantage to you, so far as the Lord is concerned, if those words were not broken, but were well composed! Ought not this to comfort us, then?  
Even if we are gifted with facility of expression, we sometimes find that our power of utterance fails us. Under very heavy grief, a man cannot speak as he is known to do. Circumstances can make the most eloquent tongue grow slow of speech. It matters not—your prayer is as good as it was before. You call upon God in public and you sit down and think that your confused prayer was of no service to the Church. You know not in what scales God weighs your prayer—not by quantity, but by quality— not by the outward dress of verbiage, but by the inner soul and the intense earnestness that was in it does He compute its value! Do you not sometimes rise from your knees in your little room and say, “I do not think I have prayed, I could not feel at home in prayer”? Nine times out of every ten, those prayers are most prevalent with God which we think are the least acceptable. But when we glory in our prayer, God will have nothing to do with it! If you see any beauty in your own supplication— God will not—for you have evidently been looking at your prayer and not at Him! But when your soul sees so much of His Glory that she cries, “How shall I speak unto You—I who am but dust and ashes?” When she sees so much of His goodness that she is hampered in expression by the depth of her own humiliation, oh, then it is that your prayer is best! There may be more prayer in a groan than in an entire liturgy. There may be more acceptable devotion in a tear that dampens the floor of yonder pew than in all the hymns we have sung, or in all the supplications which we have uttered! It is not the outward, it is the inward! It is not the lips, it is the heart which the Lord regards! If you can only breathe, your prayer is still accepted by the Most High!  
I desire that this Truth may come home to any one of you who says, “I cannot pray.” It is not true. If it were necessary that in order to pray, you should talk for a quarter of an hour together, or that you should say pretty things, why then I would admit that you could not pray! But if it is only to say from your heart, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” yes, and if prayer is not saying anything at all, but desiring, longing, hoping for mercy, for pardon, for salvation, no man may say, “I cannot,” unless he is honest enough to add, “I cannot because I will not. I love my sins too well and have no faith in Christ. I do not desire to be saved.” If you will to pray, O my Hearer, you can pray! He who gives the will joins the ability to it!  
And oh, let me say, do not sleep this night until you have tried and proved the power of prayer! If you feel a burden on your heart, tell the Lord! Cover your face and speak with Him. Even that you need not do, for I suppose that Hannah did not cover her face when Eli saw her lips move and supposed that she was drunk. No, your lips need not even move! Your soul can now say, “Save me, my God! Convict me of sin, lead me to the Cross! Save me tonight! Let me not end another day as Your enemy! Let me not go into the cares of another week unforgiven, with Your wrath hanging over me like a thunder-cloud! Save me, save me, O my God!” Such prayers, though utterly wordless, shall not be powerless, but shall be heard in Heaven!  
IV. We will close with a fourth practical lemon—FEEBLE PRAYERS ARE HEARD IN HEAVEN.  
Why is it that feeble prayers are understood of God and heard in Heaven? There are three reasons.

First, the feeblest prayer, if it is sincere, is written by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and God will always acknowledge the handwriting of the Holy Spirit. Frequently, certain kind friends from Scotland send me for the Orphanage some portions of what one of them called, the other day, “filthy lucre”—namely, dirty £1 notes. Now these £1 notes certainly look as if they were of small value. Still, they bear the proper signature and they pass well enough—and I am very grateful for them. Many a prayer that is written on the heart by the Holy Spirit seems written with faint ink and, moreover, it appears to be blotted and defiled by our imperfection. But the Holy Spirit can always read His own handwriting. He knows His own notes and when He has issued a prayer, He will not disown it. Therefore, the breathing which the Holy Spirit works in us will be acceptable with God.

Moreover, God, our ever-blessed Father, has a quick ear to hear the breathing of any of His children. When a mother has a sick child, it is marvelous how quick her ears become while attending it. Good woman, we wonder she does not fall asleep. If you hired a nurse, it is ten to one she would. But the dear child, in the middle of the night, does not need to cry for water, or even speak—there is a little quick breathing—who will hear it? No one would except the mother! But her ears are quick, for they are in her child’s heart. So, if there is a heart in the world that longs for God, God’s ear is already in that poor sinner’s heart! He will hear it. There is not a good desire on earth but the Lord has heard it. I recollect when, at one time, I was a little afraid to preach the Gospel to sinners as sinners, and yet I wanted to do so, so I used to say, “If you have but a millionth part of a desire, come to Christ.” I dare say more than that now, but, at the same time, I will say that at once—if you have a millionth part of a desire, if you have only a little breathing—if you desire to be reconciled, if you desire to be pardoned, if you would be forgiven, if there is only half a good thought formed in your soul, do not check it, do not stifle it and do not think that God will reject it!

And, then, there is another reason, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to take the most imperfect prayer and perfect it for us. If our prayers had to go up to Heaven as they are, they would never succeed. But they find a Friend on the way and, therefore, they prosper. A poor person has a petition to be sent in to some government agency. If he had to write it himself, it would puzzle all the officers in DowningStreet to make out what he meant. But he is wise enough to find a friend who can write, or he comes round to his minister and says, “Sir, will you make this petition right for me? Will you put it into good English, so that it can be presented? And then the petition goes in a very different form. Even thus, the Lord Jesus Christ takes our poor prayers, fashions them over again and presents the petition with the addition of His own signature—and the Lord sends us answers of peace.

The feeblest prayer in the world is heard when it has Christ’s seal to it. I mean He puts His precious blood upon it. And wherever God sees the blood of Jesus, He must and will accept the desire which it endorses. Go to Jesus, Sinner, even if you cannot pray, and let the breathing of your soul be, “Be merciful to me, wash me, cleanse me, save me,” and it shall be done, for God will not hear your prayer so much as hear His Son’s blood, “which speaks better things than that of Abel.” A louder voice than yours shall prevail for you! And your feeble breathings shall come up to God covered over with the Omnipotent pleadings of the Great High Priest who never asks in vain!

I have been aiming thus to comfort those distressed ones who say they cannot pray, but before I close, I must add how inexcusable are those who, knowing all this, continue prayerless, Godless and Christless! If there were no mercy to be had, you could not be blamed for not having it. If there were no Savior for sinners, a sinner might be excused for remaining in his sin. But there is a Fountain and it is open—why, then, do you not wash in it? Mercy is to be had “without money and without price”—it is to be had by asking for it. Sometimes poor men are shut up in the condemned cell, sentenced to be hanged. But suppose they could have a free pardon by asking for it and they did not do so—who would pity them? God will give His blessing to everyone who is moved to seek for it sincerely at His hands on this one and only condition—that the soul will trust in Jesus! And even that is not a condition, for He gives repentance and faith and enables sinners to believe in His dear Son! Behold Christ crucified, the saddest and yet the gladdest sight the sun ever beheld! Behold the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding out His life! A surpassing marvel of woe and love! A look at Him will save you! Though you are on the borders of the grave and on the brink of Hell, by one look at Jesus crucified your guilt shall be cancelled, your debts forever discharged before the Throne of God and yourselves led into joy and peace. Oh, that you would give that look!

Breathe the prayer, “Lord, give me the faith of Your elect and save me with a great salvation!” Though it is only breathing, yet, as the old Puritan says, when God feels the breath of His child upon His face, He smiles. And He will feel your breath and smile on you, and bless you. May He do so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**LAMENTATIONS 3:1-36.**

The first part of this chapter is one of the saddest in the whole Book of God, yet I expect it has ministered as much consolation as some of the brightest pages of Holy Writ because there are children of God who are the subjects of great suffering and sorrow—and when they turn to such a passage as this, they see that one of the Lord’s own Prophets had gone that way before them. And when they see the footprints of another of God’s people in the dark and gloomy valley that they are traversing, they are encouraged. Besides, the chapter does not end as it begins. There is daylight for the poor sufferer after all, so we shall read the sad utterances of the Prophet in the hope that if we have ever known experiences similar to his, we may learn where to find comfort even as he did.

Verses 1, 2. I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light. This seems to be the hardest part of our lot—that God should lead us into darkness—“He has led me and brought me into darkness.” Yet dear Brothers and Sisters, that is, on the other hand, the sweetest thing about our trial, because if the darkness is in the place where God has led us, it is best for us to be in the dark! A child of God in the dark should derive much comfort from the thought, “My father brought me here and He loves me so much that He would not bring me where I would be in danger. He must have had some good end and objective in view in what He has done.” Surely, there is something comforting to the tried child of God in that thought.

3-5. Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones. He has besieged me, and compassed me with gall and woe. “I am like a besieged city that has strong forts built all round it to shut it in on all sides.”

6, 7. He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chains heavy. Ah, dear Friends, it is easy for some people to read such a passage as this, but there are others who have read it with aching brows and eyes red with weeping! And often, I doubt not, as they have read the Prophet’s descriptions of just such sorrows as they are themselves feeling, they have said, “Then after all, we are not alone in our griefs, and we may yet be delivered even as Jeremiah was”

8. Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. What a sorrow is this—to feel that even prayer itself is unavailing! Yet this suppliant was no graceless sinner—he was a dear child of God, one of the noblest of the Lord’s ancient Prophets, one of the most faithful of His ministers! You must not think, because sometimes your prayers seem to be unheard or unheeded, and you are allowed to continue in sorrow, that therefore the Lord does not love you. “Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” And that word, “scourges,” is a very strong one, meaning much more than just an ordinary whipping.

9. He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone. “The Lord has shut me right up, as if He had built a wall around me on every side.”  
9-13. He has made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to enter into my reins. The King’s arrows had wounded him to the very quick. Perhaps some of you may know what it is to go to the Bible and yet to find no comfort in it, for the precious promises have seemed to be too good to be true to you, and you seem to have hunted out every dark and threatening passage at once—and you have said, “Ah, that belongs to me!” You have written bitter things against yourself and have thought that surely you were the target at which God was shooting His sharpest

arrows. [See Sermon #3039, Volume 53—THE KING’S SHARP ARROWS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14-17. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel, He has covered me with ashes. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I have forgotten prosperity. “It seems so long since I have had any prosperity that I have forgotten it. I have become so accustomed to trouble and sorrow that it seems as if I had never known what joy was.” The original is even more sad, “I forget good.”

18-21. And I said, Your strength and my hope is perished from the LORD; remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. And as long as your afflictions, poor troubled Souls, have really humbled you, you may have hope! Recall to mind the fact that God’s chastising blows have brought you down to His feet in humble submission and ended all your boasting—and therein

you may have hope. [See Sermon #654, Volume 11—MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

22. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. See where Jeremiah gets his comfort! He seems to say, “Bad as my case is, it might have been worse, for I might have been consumed, and I should have been consumed if the Lord’s compassions had failed.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, and we, too, might have been in Hell at this very moment! Amidst the hottest flames of that hopeless place we might have been enduring the wrath of God, but we are not there and, blessed be His name for that! “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” He still has compassion upon us! If He had not, He would have given us up altogether! But there is love in His heart, even while there is a frown upon His brow—and while His hand is smiting us, His heart is still loving us.

23. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. If every day brings its trouble, every day also brings its mercy. Up to this day, at all events, we have not perished. The Lord has chastened us, but He has not crushed us. We have been cast down, but we have not been destroyed. “Great is Your faithfulness.” No man can say that so truly as the one who has known what it is to prove that great faithfulness in great affliction. But when there has been a great trial, the believing soul has cast itself upon the ever-faithful God and so has been able to set its seal to this Truth of God, “Great is your faithfulness.”

24. The LORD is my portion, says my soul. What? With His mouth full of gravel stones, and made drunk with wormwood, overwhelmed with sorrow, yet he says, “the Lord is my portion”? Oh, yes, Beloved, whatever else we have lost, we have not lost our God! The thieves have robbed us of our little spare cash, but they could not get at the gold that we have in the bank, they could not break into the great treasure house of everlasting love. John Bunyan says, “LittleFaith lost his spending money, but the thieves could not find his jewels.” Nor can they find ours! They are all safe. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”

24. Therefore will I hope in Him. If I cannot cast the anchor of hope anywhere else, I may “hope in Him.” And what better hope do I need than that?

25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. Do not be in a hurry. Do not expect to be delivered out of your trouble the first time you begin to cry unto God. Oh, no—“the Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.” [See

Sermon #2436, Volume 41—“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. God’s time is always the best time. To deliver you just now might be to deprive you of the benefit of the trouble. You must bear it till it produces “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” When the doctor puts on a blister, we are not to take it off the next minute. No, patience must have her perfect work, that we “may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

27, 28. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. [See  
Sermon #1291, Volume 22—THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He sits alone and keeps  
silence because He has laid it upon him. When it makes a man get alone to contemplate and meditate, affliction is already doing him good. 29. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. [See Sermon  
#2468, Volume 42—SOLITUDE, SILENCE, SUBMISSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is the way to find it—not lifting your mouth up to defy the Lord, or to murmur at Him, nor yet opening your mouth in boastfulness, but putting your mouth in the dust—that is the way to find hope! A humble, penitent, resigned, silent, submissive spirit will soon find hope.

30, 31. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Oh, get a grip of that blessed Truth of God! I pray you, O you sons of trouble, lay hold of it and never let it go! The Lord may, to all appearance, cast off for a little while, but He will not cast off forever!

32-34. But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth. That is not God’s way of acting. Tyrants may do so, but the tender, compassionate God—our gracious, loving Father—will never do that. If you lie in the dust before Him, He will not tread on you.

35, 36. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approves not. Again I say, that is not God’s way of acting.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1812 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A WONDER EXPLAINED BY GREATER WONDERS  
NO. 1812

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“You drew near in the day that I called  
upon You: You said, Fear not.”  
Lamentations 3:57.**

How different are our experiences from our fears! This man of God had said, “When I cry and shout He shuts out my prayer.” He had said again, “You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.” He had added to that, “Surely against me is He turned.” But now he corrects his misapprehensions. Neither was prayer shut out, nor had God turned against him, for he joyfully confesses, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not.” As much as to say— “Not only did You hear me, but You did come to me! Not only did You hear me speak, but You did speak, Yourself, and I heard You say—‘Fear not.’ Not only were You not turned against me as an enemy, but You did prove Yourself my Friend by being my loving and tender Comforter.”

Brothers and Sisters, if our experiences have, so far, exceeded our expectations and belied our doubts, let us take care that we record them! Do not let us suffer our lamentations to be written in a book and our thanksgivings to be spoken to the wind. Write not your complaints in marble and your praises upon the sand! Let the record of mercy received be carefully made, accurately measured, distinctly worded, correctly dated and so preserved that in years to come you may turn for your encouragement to it. Jeremiah tells us that on such a day the Lord drew near to him. David remembered God from the Hermons and the hill Mizar—time and place are elements of interest in the memory of the Lord’s great goodness.

Note the particulars, dwell on the details—abundantly utter the memory of the Divine loving kindness! Maybe your children and your children’s children may read the story of your experience for their learning—and nothing can be more fitting than that the fathers should thus lay up for their children. Even though that record should contradict yourself and bring the blush of shame to your cheek to think you should have so calumniated your God, yet write it clearly and let it stand to the Lord’s praise and glory—and your own comfort in some future hour of need. Write it, write it in capital letters, “I said I am cut off, but I found it was not so. You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not.”  
Jeremiah seems to record this fact with a considerable amount of surprise. He marvels that God should have drawn near to him, for his condition was a very pitiful one. He was so low that life seemed ebbing out and he groaned, “He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old.” In my own estimation I give one of the chief places among mortal men to the Prophet Jeremiah. He was sent of God to do a most painful duty which could not bring any honor to him, nor win for him the love of those to whom he ministered. He was sent to prophesy among a willful and disobedient people who would reject his admonitions. Like Cassandra, he spoke true tidings and sad tidings, but he was not believed. He pleaded with erring Israel—oh, how he pleaded! No Prophet is more pathetic than he. I sometimes read the book right through and it is a good thing to do that, with the books of Scripture, so as to get the run of them—if you will do this with Jeremiah, you will be borne away with the torrents of grief which swept over the Prophet’s soul.

Yet how constant and steadfast he was in love to the very people who provoked and persecuted him. How he cries to God and pleads with Him on their behalf, as affectionately as if they had been the most grateful of children and he had been the most rejoicing of parents! He was a grand man, that Jeremiah. He was as a mountain torrent, familiar at once with great heights and profound abysses, deriving force from his deep descents of woe. When he penned the words of our text, his sorrow had come to a climax. They had put him into an underground cistern—I was about to say into a dry well, only it was not dry. He sank in the mire up to the armpits! Reservoirs which, at one season of the year were filled with water, were frequently used at other seasons as dungeons—and poor prisoners were let down, far beyond all reach of light or fresh air, into such horrible pits which were often knee-deep in miry clay.

Maybe the time of water floods would come on and the captive would hear the rushing of the waters down the sides of his prison and feel it flowing over the floor into some lower reservoir—so it would seem to have been with the Prophet, for he writes, “Waters flowed over my head.” The Prophet’s case was deplorable! He was cut off from all sound of human voices and, let him cry as he might, there was none to have any pity upon him. He was alone, forgotten, forsaken, refused by the many and abhorred by the few who were in power. Doubtless his spirit sank and we cannot wonder at it. A strong-minded, passionate patriot who would have saved his country, saw himself put aside, even, from the opportunity to rebuke and to exhort in the crisis of national calamity! When he felt most necessary to his people, he was put away.

Then it was that the Lord drew near to him. When he was most reproached and most persecuted of men, he had the sweetest sense of the nearness of the Lord whom he served! Beloved, I think we have read enough of the history of God’s dealings with His people to understand that this is His way—that if He ever is absent from His people, it is not in their time of direst need—and if ever He reveals Himself to them as He does not unto the world, it is when they are forsaken of all outward consolation and, for His sake, are made to bear tribulation. The tortured martyr, the banished Puritan, the hunted Covenanter, could each say, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not.” The fainting sufferer, the weary worker, the dying Believer has each, in like manner, joyed in the nearness of the Lord! Is it not written, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you. Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God”?

Whatever wonder there was in the heart of Jeremiah that God should draw near to him, you and I must have felt even greater wonder whenever God has drawn near to us! We have cried out, like David, “What is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You visit him?” It is to us a standing miracle that the great and glorious and thrice holy God should ever come and reveal Himself in a way of love to us insignificant, dishonored, guilty sons of men!

This morning my subject is, first, an explanation of this wonder, that God should draw near to us. And then, secondly, a further enlargement of that wonder. I hope many of us can say, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You.” May the Holy Spirit refresh us while we call this experience to mind.

I. Let us set forth some sort of AN EXPLANATION OF THIS WONDER. God does draw near to men. He that fills all things communes with those who are less than nothing and vanity! The Eternal converses with the creatures of a day! He who is inconceivable in the majesty of His Nature, nevertheless permits us, who are but dust and ashes, to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend! Why is this? I shall not abate the wonder if I somewhat explain it by mentioning other facts equally wonderful— great things and unsearchable, drawn from the vast deeps of the Divine working.

The first thought I would suggest to you is that men have always been in the thoughts of God. As we are taught by the Word of God, God has always had a very singular regard to man. Of the eternal Wisdom we read, “My delights were with the sons of men.” Long before man was created, it was in the eternal purpose that such a singular and specially favored being should be formed—and all things concerning Covenant purposes and designs were written in that book into which angels may not look. I believe that from of old, the creation and the sanctification of elect manhood was the apex of the great pyramid of the Divine Purpose, the focus of the Divine Glory, that for which all other things were made. There never was a time in which God, in the thoughts of His heart, was not familiar with man! Of old there was a Covenant of Peace on man’s behalf and love everlasting dictated every line. “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!”

When the time came for man’s actual creation, those thoughts began to take a visible effect. You must have noticed what a different tone there is in the language of Moses when he reaches the creation of man. The world, the lights of Heaven, the trees, the beasts, the birds, the fish start into life at the almighty bidding—but when it comes to man, a council is convened and the three Persons appear, saying, “Let Us make man.” Here is a clearer revelation of the Godhead and of the inter-communion in the Divine Unity. It is added, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” There is something of the image and likeness of God in all that He makes, for the work always bears some trace of the Worker. But, “Our image, after Our likeness”—is not for the lion or the eagle, nor for the stars or the sun, but only for man!

I read not concerning seraphim, nor any of the angelic hierarchy, that they bear the image and the likeness of God, but so it is written of man— “Let Us make man in Our image.” There was always about man some high intent of God not then apparent and, indeed, never seen till He appeared who is at once God and Man. In the creation of man, the Lord always had an eye to that Man of men, the Lord Jesus, up to whom all things lead. In the formation of man, God widened His communion with His creatures— He began, for the first time, to hold communion with a being who is only in part spiritual and, as to a part of his nature is linked with materialism. God communed with Adam and thereby placed him in an honor, in which, alas, he continued not. It was a wonderful thing, that creation of man—I shall have to tell you a little more about it before I have done—but in the very fact that man was made in so special a manner, there was a drawing near of God to man.

Afterwards all the Providences of God worked for the creation and conservation of a chosen seed—the fetching out and the maintaining of a people separated from the world—a peculiar people, richly favored, towards whom all the thoughts of God were thoughts of love. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut. 32:8). Whether it was Shem, or Ham, or Japheth—these and their descendants were sent here and there where they might best subserve the interests of the Kingdom of God. At this moment the whole conformation of humanity on the face of the globe bears a direct relation to the ultimate Church of God. Thrones and crowns must all be subordinate to the main purpose of God concerning His elect—it has been so and it shall be so—even to the end!

Depend upon it, the ultimate result of everything in politics has to do with the eternal purpose of God in reference to His Church! Whether there are wars, or rumors of wars, or famines, or pestilences—whatever armies shall come or go, or dynasties shall rise or fall—all works to the one end. The wheels within wheels, all full of eyes, revolve not without purpose, but they move always in a straight line towards this end—the accomplishment of the design of God in reference to His own elect! I do not, therefore, wonder that God should draw near to His people when I see Him always doing so and, when I perceive that they are most upon His mind and nearest to His heart!

But secondly, remember that God has drawn nearer to us than we have as yet hinted at, in becoming tenderly near in nature. There was a day, in the fullness of time, when the Son of God took our nature upon Himself. Marvel of marvels! He that made all things became a babe at Bethlehem, bore all the weakness and infirmity of infancy, passed through all the growth of boyhood, arrived at a toilsome manhood and then finished His life-course! Jesus did not wear a nature like ours, but He bore our actual nature—our flesh and blood! Sin is not of the essence of manhood and Jesus had no sin—but all that is really manhood belongs to the Son of Man who is, also, “over all, God blessed forever.” He became verily and assuredly Man of the substance of His mother—and this day, the next of kin to every Believer is the Lord Jesus Christ!

We say of Him sweetly what Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz, “The Man is near of kin unto us.” Jesus is our next kinsman! If I were in trouble in a foreign land, it would be pleasant to hear the voice of an Englishman, but it would be even more encouraging to spy out a neighbor, a fellow citizen of the same town. But most of all it would be cheering to perceive that a dear friend, a brother, a husband was to the front on our behalf. Such a near and dear Friend is Jesus to each one of those the Father has given Him! Look, here is your Brother, O Believer, a Brother of such tender sensibilities and of such quick sympathies, that in every pang that tears the heart, He takes His share! Do you wonder, therefore, that when you call upon Him, He draws near to you? It were not like He to hide Himself from His own flesh! It were not like the Son of David to wear a heart of stone towards His poor afflicted brethren! His Nature is love, itself! He will, He must, come to you that are in sorrow—and sorrow with you and thus cheer your hearts—for not in vain does He wear your nature and not in vain, in that Nature, has He suffered and died for you.

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus was especially near to His people in the days of His life on earth. He was no mere observer of men, passing through our midst as an English traveler might pass through China or Tartary, seeing everything, but sharing nothing. It is very beautiful to my mind to reflect upon the nearness of Christ as Man to men, for there are certain men who, by temper, spirit and behavior, are a long way off from the rest of mankind. Look at your princes and your autocrats—they are scarcely to be seen with a telescope! They do not appear to be persons of like feelings with ourselves. Look at your exquisites, your men of pride, your men of pretended culture who bear their heads above the clouds.

But Jesus was the most manlike of all men. I could propound to you, today, the theory that Jesus was an Englishman—and prove it from many points of His Character if I did not know that He was of the seed of Abraham. Jesus of Nazareth is a Jew, but there is no Jewish peculiarity about Him. He is a Man in the broadest, truest sense. It matters not to you or me what nationality He actually came from, for the most cosmopolitan of men was the Christ of God! I know several excellent men whom I love and revere, but I despair of imitating them—the color of their virtue has a tint in it peculiar to themselves. I am not made of such stuff as would ever work up into their fashion, admirable though it is. But I never thought thus concerning the Lord Jesus! I always feel that, by His Grace, I can become like He. He is infinitely superior to those admirable friends of whom I have spoken and yet He is more imitable! The hill is higher, but in His case there are ways and steps which invite—in the other cases there are crags which warn us off. I have known good men with whom I shall never be thoroughly at home until we meet in Heaven—at least we shall agree best on earth when they go their way and I go mine! One never feels so with regard to the all-glorious Lord Jesus. There our cry is, “Nearer, my Lord, to You. Nearer to You.” He draws us to Himself and the nearer we come, the more fully we appreciate Him. If Jesus came thus near to men in His life on earth, do you wonder that He draws near to them now?

Carefully notice that this was a nearness to sinful men. For, being here on earth, He did not select for His companions persons of high religious repute, men who practiced austerities, or severed themselves from common life. He went down among the fishermen of Galilee. He associated with poor people, uncultured and simple-minded. Yes, He dwelt among the sinful people—“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” He ate and drank with them till men said, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them!” He was at ease at the social board where sat disreputable persons. He ate what they ate, drank what they drank and kept up no distinction such as the religious teachers of His day judged to be decorous and necessary.

You and I are sinners, too, and our Redeemer’s nearness to the sinners of Judea meant nearness to us. Oh, it is wonderful, that blessed nearness of Christ to men and women! There were no moats and walls separating Him from men, but all comers were received! They advanced right up to His heart, unchallenged, and they spoke into His soul as though they were familiar friends! Do you think it amazing that today Jesus should draw near unto His own people when they are in their time of sorrow? I do not. Remembering the sweet familiarities of the Nazarene, it seems natural that He should manifest Himself to His own redeemed. With holy adoring gratitude would I say, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You”— a favor to be exceedingly valued, but not altogether unexpected from such an One as the Friend of sinners!

Further, dear Friends, Jesus Christ came still nearer to us in His death. How wonderfully near Jesus came to sinful men when He was delivered up to His enemies to suffer death! To die at all was, for Him, the closest fellowship with man, for death—say what you like about it—must always remain a penalty for sin. And as such our Lord endured it. He did not pass through death as a necessity of Nature, for it was no necessity of Nature to Him. He died of set purpose for the bearing of our sin and the putting away of it by the endurance of the death penalty. Just think of it! Would you have supposed that Christ would come so near to us that He would be found in the felon’s dock? Yet there He stood! Do you seek Him? Would you speak with Him? Will you go to the palace of the King, asking for Him? If you do, you must enter the Judgment Hall, for there He stands—bound, accused and tried!

They charge Him with sedition and blasphemy. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” There had been an entry made in the imperial registry of His name as a child, born at Bethlehem, and now a second registration must be made of Him! And He is entered in Pilate’s book as a malefactor— one of three who, on the same day, were given up to be hanged upon crosses for their crimes. He was numbered with the transgressors in so effectual a way that He suffered with them. Not only was the registration made, but the decree of Pontius Pilate was carried out—Jesus died in the common place of execution between two thieves! They put Him in the middle because it was the place of pre-eminence—He was judged to be the chief criminal. In the end of His life, He draws so near us that He dies among transgressors—“He made His grave with the wicked.”

When they took down the carcasses of the thieves, they removed His body, also, and His remains were given up to His friends as the remains of one who had paid the last penalty of the law. It was not merely in appearance and name that all this was so, for though no sin ever touched the blessed Person of Christ so as to defile it—and He remains forever One of whom the Apostle says, “In Him is no sin.” Yet there was a passing over of sin to Him and, by way of imputation, He was justly numbered with transgressors—and justly put to death with them. “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” “He bore the sin of many.” He was made “sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” This is coming wonderfully near to us! Sin is, of all things, the greatest divider between a holy God and an unholy creature—and if Jesus comes as our Beloved, leaping over the mountains of transgression and skipping over the hills of sin—what is to divide Him from His poor, suffering, but sanctified and justified people? I wonder not that it is written, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You.”

He is now in Heaven! Turn your thoughts up to Him there. In Heaven He is still perpetually near us. Beloved, He has carried our nature into Heaven! The body of the Lord Jesus in Glory is the same as that which was laid in the tomb! He sits on the Throne of the Highest in that humanity which He received of Mary. The nail prints were visible while He was here after His Resurrection and they are still manifest. “He looks like a Lamb that has been slain.” His wounds forever remind the saints of His finished sacrifice. And what is He in Heaven? He is there as our Representative. He is member of Heaven’s high Parliament for the sons of men and He holds His seat as such. He is head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all! What is He doing in Heaven? He is not only representing us, but He is preparing a place for us—making a niche in Heaven for you, a place in Heaven for me—and all the while He is continually offering intercession for His people. “He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors,” therefore, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

Oh, You blessed risen Christ, I am not astonished that You come even to my bedside and make the watches of the night bright to me with the Glory of Your Presence, since even the sublimities of Heaven and all the sonnets of the seraphim cannot take Your mind off, for a single moment, Your own chosen people! Remember how our Lord said of old—“For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns”? Always bearing our names upon His breastplate, always beholding us as engraved upon His hands, He is constantly so near to us that He cannot be nearer!

I have thus shown you, I think, why Jesus so readily draws near to us at the voice of our cry. But there is one more matter of which I would speak and that is so deep and mysterious that I would especially seek the guidance of the Spirit of God before I speak upon it. Far be it from me to set forth mere imaginations! I would only speak as the Scripture warrants me. Jesus may well come near to His people, for there is a mystical union which ensures it. A Divine doctrine, this, of which Paul says, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church”—and this in relation to the marriage union. As sometimes in the worship of the heathen they cried, “Far hence, you profane,” for only the initiated might draw near to that special mystery, so I feel inclined, when I am speaking upon this, to warn off all wanton ears and careless minds.

There is a union between Christ and His Church which can only be shadowed out by the union between a husband and his bride. I scarcely dare speak of it in words, it is so holy and Divine. It has been said and thought—and I think correctly—that though Adam and Eve fell by the same sin, yet they came to it by different ways. Paul tells us in his Epistle to Timothy that, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.” She fell by being tempted and misled. But why did Adam eat? Was it not probably from excessive love of the creature, a love of his wife beyond his God—as great a sin as the other and, perhaps, more deliberate? Milton, we believe, was no dreamer when he pictured Adam as meeting Eve after she had eaten the forbidden fruit, and saying to her—

*“I with you have fixed my lot,  
Certain to undergo like doom:  
If death consorts with you,  
Death is to me as life  
So forcible within my heart I feel  
The bond of Nature draw me to my own  
My own in you, for what you are is mine.  
Our state cannot be severed; we are one,  
One flesh. To lose you were to lose myself.”*

It was a desperate thing for Adam to do, to disobey his Maker and defy His wrath—but he felt he was so one with her that he would share her destiny. Will you now think of Him who is called the Second Adam? He could not sin, nor in any shape or form become partaker with iniquity. But when that Church of His, which was His bride, that God had given Him to be His forever, had fallen, He resolved to maintain the bond which bound Him to her and to suffer all the penalties which would inevitably follow—

*“Yes, said the Lord, with her I’ll go,  
Through all the depths of pain and woe.  
And on the Cross will even dare  
Her bitter cup of death to share.”*

And so, never polluted, never, Himself, a sinner, yet out of infinite love—that love bottomed upon an eternal, mystical union between Himself and His elect—the great Head of the Church came and deliberately took our nature and all the consequences of our sin, that He might be one with us forever. He went down to the depths with us, that He might bring us up into the heights with Himself—that there His enthroned bride should be forever with Him—a queen more glorious than eternity had ever seen! The Church was taken out of the side of Christ and, in her case, it may be fitly said, “The woman is of the man. The man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.” Christ and His Church are no longer two, but one by a strange, mysterious union which He thus describes—“I in them and they in Me.”

Who shall separate what God has joined together? Now do you wonder that Jesus draws near unto His people? I should marvel if He did not, for would any of us wish to be away when our dear spouse is suffering? When her heart is heavy, is not ours heavy, too? In a true, conjugal love, such as I trust many of you feel, there is a degree not merely of similarity and of communion, but even of identity between the two that have become one. Now, we that are joined unto the Lord are one spirit, one by eternal union and He must, therefore, draw near to us in a way of sympathy and fellowship.

II. I have tried to set forth this mystery as best I can. Now I ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to THE WONDER ITSELF. What I have said makes it less surprising and yet fills us with greater surprise. In one respect it makes it not wonderful, but in others it makes it more wonderful than ever, that God, Himself, in Christ, should draw near to us! In desiring you to notice the wonder itself, I would remind you, first, that by no means is this wonder at all contrary to expectation, when expectation is founded upon an enlightened understanding. It is natural, it is necessary, that Christ should come near to a people whom He loves so well. Love is attractive. It may be that absence makes the heart grow fonder, but a fond heart hates absence as it hates the fiend—and so the heart of Christ desires not the absence of the Beloved and will not have it, either—for the blood of Christ gives access to Christ and the heart of Christ, out of which that blood comes, is never content until there is constant, intimate, unbroken fellowship between the redeemed and the Redeemer. Do you not hear Him say, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am”? I say it is a great wonder that God should dwell with men, but it is not a wonder contrary to expectation.

But, dear Friends, if you have ever enjoyed this communion, let me help you to describe it, that you may wonder at it. What is the manner in which God draws near to His people in their time of trouble? At times He draws near to us by a secret strengthening of us to bear up when we are under pressure. We may have no marked joys, nor special transports—but quiet, calm, subdued joy rules the spirit. To my mind, the best of states is the deep calm which comes of the peace of God which passes all understanding. I care not so much for brilliant and gaudy-colored joys—neutral tints of quiet joy suit my soul’s eyes far better. I will not ask to see the sun above me, but I will be content to feel that, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Do you not remember that when the burden came, you feared it, but did not feel it, for the shoulder had grown stronger? When the need came which you dreaded so terribly, it turned out to be no need at all—for He who refused the meal also removed the hunger—He who denied the garment took away the cold. The secret sustenance of the soul by God is very precious. It is not observed of men, but therein the saints are made to magnify their God. That unseen casting on of oil upon the fire, behind the wall, is what we need—and it is a very charming way of the Lord’s drawing near to us in the time of trouble.

Furthermore, the good Lord often vouchsafes to His people in their time of great pain and weakness and weariness a doubly vivid sense of His love. It is not merely that they believe in that love as they find it recorded, though that is a very delightful matter, but they feel this love in the delight of it. They know beyond all doubt and they feel beyond all question— “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” The alabaster box which they were accustomed to hold firmly in the hand of faith is now broken, by love, and poured out by enjoyment, so that the smell which was before latent, now perfumes all the soul! It is wonderful what you can bear in suffering and what you can go through in labor when, “a secret something sweetens all”—that secret something the love of God!

It is dark, it is very dark. “No,” says that inner spirit that dwells behind the eyes, “I see clearly the Lord’s wisdom and love even in this dispensation.” It is cold and chill. “No,” says the soul, “I am warmed and comforted by the love of Jesus, the fire of love burns within me, I am even consumed therewith.” Do you know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in your soul by the Holy Spirit? If so, then you know what it is for God to draw near in the day when you call upon Him. At such times the Lord grants us a sensible assurance of His sympathy with us. We feel that every stroke of the rod comes distinctly from a Father’s hand who does not willingly afflict. We look up into His face and feel that like as a father pities his children, so does He pity us. We enter into the sorrow of our Father’s heart while He is causing us grief—with greater grief to Himself. We come to feel what it is to be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Himself.

Extraordinary expression, is it not, where one said, “The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord your God.” We are joined unto the Lord and know it by feeling His heart beat with our heart! It is a high degree of Grace to be so in sympathy with God, in His afflicting us, that we would not have Him cease for our crying. Let Him continue to do His will even though He crossed our wills! Let our vine be pruned, yes, as sharp as may be, till it bleeds again, if the Vinedresser sees that thus the clusters will be multiplied. Whenever you get there, you will have wellnear reached the end of your chastisement—it has already produced the desired fruit!

The Lord draws near to His people’s souls, sometimes, by a very speedy and remarkable deliverance out of the trouble under which they groan. He can draw near to you when you are plunged in poverty and He can suddenly lift you to competence. When everything goes against you, He can, in a moment, raise up a friend. When it appears that no chance nor change can set you free, He can, Himself, be your Deliverer. Did He not bring up Joseph out of the prison and set him on the throne of Pharaoh? He can do the same with you if He wills, before your sun has gone down! Nothing is impossible with God. The deliverances which He has promised to His people, not only in ancient times, but in modern times, are such as to make us feel we dare not doubt, much less despair. “Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

I am not quite done. I want you to notice the text again—will you, please? If you will look at it, you will notice that in the record there seems to be some surprise concerning the memorable graciousness of God. “You drew near in the day that I called upon You.” Then, I suppose, there were other days in which he had not called upon God, or at least had not done so so memorably. But in the first day when I called upon You, You drew near to me. Does not that give us a hint, as if he said, “I had neglected my God. I had failed to apply to Him. My faith had been asleep but, as soon as I awoke, the Lord drew near to me”? Come, then, you that have treated the Lord badly—do not stand back through guilty shame! Though you believe not, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself. All your sins and all your wanderings have not alienated His great heart from you! Return repentingly and begin again—begin from this day and you shall find that He will at once bless you!

There seems to me to also be a Nota Bene here, a kind of hand in the margin to point out the promptness of God. “You drew near in the day that I called upon You”—the very day he called, God came! No sooner the prayer, than the answer! Oh, the blessed quickness of God! When David cried to Him, he says, “He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” No pace is too swift for God to come to the deliverance of His people! He is slow to anger, but He is swift in mercy. Try it, you downcast and broken-hearted ones! Try it, today, and then come and tell us if it is not so. “You drew near in the day that I called upon You.” I shall expect to see some of you coming forward to join the Church, saying, “It was so, Sir. I no sooner began to pray than the Lord appeared to me! He brought me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and He has put a new song into my mouth and established my goings!”

One thing more— observe the extreme tenderness of all this. “You drew near in the day that I called upon You, and said, Fear not.” You remember that text, “He gives liberally and upbraids not”? Here is an illustration of it! Why, I should have thought that when God came near to Jeremiah, He would have said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” It would have been a very gentle rebuke, but I should have expected as much as that. And if the Lord had come to Jeremiah and said, “You neglected to call upon Me and, therefore, you fell into this trouble,” who would have wondered? But no! The Lord’s whole thoughts were about His dear child and so He said nothing to him to wound him, but everything to comfort him! Tenderly He cried, “Fear not!”

You mothers leave your children, for a little, to play together when you are at work in the house, and presently you hear a crash and a cry. One of the children has met with a heavy fall. He was climbing where he ought not to have gone and he has had a serious tumble. One child cries, “Mother, Johnny is killed!” Well, you know if you enquired into the matter you would find that Johnny deserved blame, but you do not enquire. You rush to pick him up. You notice that bruise on his forehead and you are fearful for his legs and arms. You are ready to faint as you notice that he is bleeding. Do you scold him? Ah, no! You fall to kissing the poor child— his fault is ignored—you only think of his pain! Your only concern is about himself.

And so with our gracious God! He comes to His poor, suffering, downcast people and what He says to them is not—“You should not have done so-and-so. This is very wrong of you. I must terribly correct you.” No, but He says, “Fear not, I have forgiven you and I will deliver you.” Remember the father in the parable when the prodigal came back? Did he lecture him upon his immoralities? Did he say a word about his ingratitude and folly? He did not notice his pimpled face and point to his blotches as the result of his excess in wine with his riotous companions. He did not point to his rags and tell him that these came from his profligate expenditure. No, he said not a word of upbraiding, but only, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hands and shoes on his feet.”

That is just what the heavenly Father will do and say if we call upon Him! Therefore let us call upon Him in truth from this moment, before we leave the pew, and may the Lord cause us, before long, to say, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You, and You said unto me, Fear not.” God bless you dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations 3:1-33.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—27, 34 (PART I), 627.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #579 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GOD PLEADING FOR SAINTS AND SAINTS PLEADING FOR GOD  
NO. 579

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”  
Lamentations 3:58.**

THE Prophet speaks experimentally as of a matter which he had proved for himself. There is no true understanding of the Truths of God except by a personal experience of them. We have heard of men sitting in their drawing rooms and writing volumes on voyages and travels—but such books always bear the marks of fiction upon their title page—they can never vie in interest and freshness with the adventures of men who have actually traversed lands unknown. The botanist who shall never have seen a flower must necessarily be a mere pretender to the science. And the soldier who has never shouldered a gun is nothing but a raw recruit.

And so the man who knows the Truth of God only in the letter of it, by what he has heard with his ears, but does not know it by what, “he has tasted and his hands have handled and his eyes have looked upon of the Word of Life,” knows, indeed, nothing to any purpose and it were well for him to confess his ignorance. Our Prophet puts it not, “Lord, You have pleaded the causes of another man’s soul,” but, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul.” At the opening of this discourse I invite you to ask yourselves whether you have an interest in this pleading. Has the Lord pleaded the causes of your soul?

Such a suggestion may be of great service to you. That eminent Puritan preacher, Mr. Thomas Dolittle, was once teaching the catechism to the children of the congregation, as was the custom of the Puritans on Sunday. He came to the question, “What is effectual calling?” The answer was given, as it stands in our admirable catechism, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, He does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.”

The good man stopped and said to the lads around him, “Let us use the personal pronoun in the singular—are there any among you who can say that all this is yours?” To his great joy there stood up one who with many tears and many sobs, said, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing me of my sin and misery, enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ and renewing my will, He has persuaded and enabled me to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to me in the Gospel.”

Now this is the true way to understand any doctrine as set forth in the Word of God—by being able to feel that in your own personal case God has worked upon your soul—has brought you into reconciliation with

Himself and enabled you to rejoice in His gracious promises! You are greatly blessed if, like the Prophet, you can speak experimentally. You must not fail to observe how positively he speaks. He does not say, “I hope, I trust, I sometimes think that God has pleaded the causes of my soul.” He speaks of it as a matter of fact not to be disputed. “You have pleaded the causes of my soul.”

Let us, Brethren, by the aid of the gracious Comforter, shake off those doubts and fears which so much mar our peace and comfort! Be this our prayer today that we may have done with the harsh croaking voice of surmise and suspicion and may be able to speak with the clear, melodious voice of full assurance, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” I like to hear a Christian, when he tells his own experience, speak of these things as one who knows what he is talking about—not as though it were all guesswork with him—but as one who with infallible certainty, the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, knows that he is speaking the Truth of God.

“You have pleaded the causes of my soul.” Here I must bid you observe how gratefully the Prophet speaks, ascribing all the glory to God alone. You perceive there is not a word concerning himself or his own pleadings. He does not ascribe his deliverance in any measure to any man, much less to his own merit. But it is “You”—“You, O Lord, have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.” A grateful spirit should ever be cultivated by the Christian. And especially after deliverances we should prepare a song for our God. O Believers, wake up your hearts and tune your tongues to compete with angels before the Throne! Earth should be a temple filled with the songs of grateful saints and every day should be a censer smoking with the sweet incense of thanksgiving! How joyful Jeremiah seems to be while he records the Lord’s mercy! How triumphantly he lifts up the strain!

He has been in the low dungeon and is even now no other than the Weeping Prophet, poor Jeremiah. And yet in the very book which is called, “Lamentations”—clear as the voice of Miriam when she dashed her fingers against the timbrel and shrill as the note of Deborah when she met Barak with shouts of victory—we hear the voice of Jeremy going up to Heaven— “You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life”! O children of God, seek after a vital experience of the Lord’s loving kindness and when you have it, speak positively of it! Sing gratefully! Shout triumphantly! And let none of your enemies stop your glorying this side of Heaven, for on the other side of the river the free Grace of God shall be your glory forever and ever—and you shall sing eternally, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

We shall occupy the time allotted to the sermon this morning, first, by considering Divine pleading as the Christian’s joy. And then by talking about the Christian’s pleading the causes of his God as his duty and delight. God pleads my cause—this is my joy. I must plead God’s cause— this is at once my privilege and my reasonable service.

I. First, then, let us come with heartfelt joy to the consideration of DIVINE PLEADING.  
1. The Lord pleads our cause in the Court of Providence. Jeremiah was confined in the low dungeon. He was cast into a wet, damp hole—a pit. And here he would have been left to rot for no one spoke a word for him except Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian eunuch, in the service of the king. He went to Zedekiah and pleaded on behalf of poor Jeremiah. The king gave Ebedmelech leave to fetch Jeremiah out of the pit. Now, you observe, Jeremiah was never ungrateful to Ebedmelech. Ebedmelech had a blessing in return for what he did, yet Jeremiah ascribes his deliverance not to the eunuch, but to God—“You have pleaded the causes of my soul.”  
The Christian may expect that in the course of Providence, when he meets with trouble, God will raise up for him at different times and in unexpected quarters persons who will take an interest in him and be the means of working out his deliverance. God sits at the helm of Providence and when the vessel is almost on the rock, He can pilot it into the deep waters again! And when His servants have been obliged by the tempest to reef their sails, He knows how, as the Master of the seas, to change the winds to a gale so favorable that with all sails spread they can fly before the gale to the desired haven.  
Sometimes God pleads the cause of His people by silencing their enemies. What a remarkable instance you have of this in the case of Jacob! His sons had most cruelly and basely killed the Shechemites. Having betrayed them by false promises they then slew them in cold blood. Jacob said, “You have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me. And I shall be destroyed, I and my house.” How strange was it that he suffered no molestation! Surely the Lord had cast a solemn awe upon the hearts of the Canaanites round about. His all-commanding voice was heard in their hearts, “Touch not My anointed and do my Prophet no harm.”  
Even though Jacob’s family was grossly in the wrong and his sons had committed a foul deed, yet nevertheless, the Lord pleaded the cause of His chosen servant and his enemies were as still as stones. It will often be so with the Lord’s peculiar ones. When your foot has slipped—when you have spoken unadvisedly with your lips—if you have deeply repented of the sin you may leave the matter before God, and He will either silence every dog’s tongue, or turn their barking to His glory.  
At other times our God has pleaded the cause of His people by raising up friends for them. Take the instance of Joseph. Reuben pleads for him when his Brethren intend to kill him. When in Egypt he is put into the dungeon through a false charge brought by the wife of Potiphar. He is not treated as a common criminal, for even in the dungeon God finds him friends. He behaves himself so discreetly that the master of the prison makes him one of the keepers of the ward! The Lord gave him favor in the eyes of men.  
Observe another case. Here comes a poor maiden from Moab with her mother-in-law. God will plead the cause of her soul. She goes, as many another maid had done, to the field to glean. Providence guides her to the estate of an unknown kinsman. Boaz looks upon her and before long she becomes the joy of his house and the mistress of his fields. Take a yet more remarkable case. Moses is put into the ark of bulrushes. What can the child say for itself? Among the crocodiles it lies exposed to imminent hazard. Pharaoh’s daughter comes. What was that mysterious influence which softened her heart when she looked upon that comely child as it wept in that little cradle which might soon have been its coffin?  
Why was it that she said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children...take it and nurse it for me”? Why, it could only have been because God has a way of touching human hearts and making them friendly to His own people! He pleads the cause of His servants. He does not violate the wills of their enemies, but He wisely turns those wills into the channel of friendship. It was very remarkable that David, when he so much needed a friend through Saul’s hostility to him, should have found one near to the throne—the heir-apparent to the kingdom. Strange that Jonathan, who naturally would have taken his father’s part and would have hated David as a supplanter, should, nevertheless, have his soul so knit to the heart of David that he gives up his crown cheerfully and makes a covenant with David!  
Dear Friends, you thus see that either by silencing enemies, or else by raising up friends, God can, in Providence, plead the cause of your soul! Or if men should seem to have even less than this to do with it, He knows how, by special Providences, to bring you out of the depth of your difficulties. You see this again in the case of Joseph. He was put in prison. The butler promised to speak for him, but forgot him. Well, what shall happen? The king must dream a dream. Pharaoh cannot sleep while Joseph is in the dungeon. Seven years of plenty must come and seven years of famine, in order that Joseph, falsely accused, might have his “righteousness brought forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.”  
Such cases will commonly occur. No Christian man, I think, can look back through many years of his life without observing some strange and singular workings of the Divine hand by which, in an unexpected manner, God has worked his deliverance. Come then, if this is so—let us be of good cheer this morning! We need not fret and worry ourselves about worldly things for our heavenly Father pleads our cause! Tried Soul, He knows what you need this morning! You have not told anybody your distress and you need not, for He “knows that you have need of these things.” He knows when it will be best for you to receive help. And if He keeps you a little time in poverty, He knows it is good for you to be left in the shade.  
He understands Providence better than you do and He can make the great world a broad work to bless the little world of your heart. There is not a single wheel by which the machinery of Providence is affected which is not turned by His hand. You know His love to be as infinite as His wisdom and His power to be as great as His love—then go where your Master went when He was in the storm—to the rear of the ship and fall asleep upon the pillow of the Providence of God! You have done your best. You have worked hard. You have strived to provide things honestly in the sight of all men—and yet things do not prosper with you as you wish they would. You are content to be poor—you are willing to be in just such a place as God would put you and yet your straits and your difficulties seem just now to be too many for you!  
Now is the time to exercise faith upon a living God! Your God is not worth having if He cannot help you when you want help. Surely your religion must be a lie if it cannot buoy you up under troubles which, after all, are not the heaviest which fall to the lot of men. Come, cast your burden on your God—He cares for you! Before many days are past you shall come up to this house, if not with these words upon your tongue, yet with this sentiment in your heart, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”  
2. Our text may be read with great comfort if we think upon the Court of Divine Law. You and I may picture ourselves this morning, without exaggeration or untruth, as being led into the Court of the Law. The Law at once arraigns us upon the charge of having positively broken the Commands of God. “He has broken every one of them,” says the Law, “either in deed, or word, or thought. There is not a single precept which this man has not most distinctly set at defiance.”  
The witnesses appear. The devil willingly bears witness and adds many falsehoods to the accusation. The Omniscience of God stands as a swift witness against us. And our own conscience is compelled to bear testimony that we have, indeed, sinned and that we have “gone astray from the womb, speaking lies.” What is now to be done? We are asked if we have anything to say. Why sentence should not be pronounced upon us. We are silent. Well may we hold down our heads, for what reason is there why we should not be punished for the sins which we have committed? There was a time when we would have pleaded, “Not guilty,” but we know better now. We know our guilt. It stares us in the face. We cannot plead the force of temptation, for we know that often we have tempted ourselves and have, without any incentive beyond our own hearts, run greedily after sin.  
The Law sits upon its throne of judgment and since we cannot plead, it makes proclamation, “Is there anyone in court who will act as advocate for this rebel whose silence and shame witness to his guilt? If there is none to show cause to the contrary, I will open the Great Book and read his sentence. I will put on the black cap and he shall be taken to doom.” Up stands the bleeding Savior, the great Advocate for sinners! What does Jesus plead? “O Justice,” says He, “I plead not that these men have not sinned—I do confess on their behalf that they have grievously erred. But I plead for them that their sin has been punished—punished in Me. All the curse of their sin was laid on Me.  
“I loved them from before the foundations of the world. And having loved them I took their sin upon Myself and therefore it is not on them. I suffered in their place and therefore, Justice, you cannot punish two for one offense—having struck Me for them—you cannot now strike them. I plead My blood—these wounds of Mine, once opened by the cruel nails— this side of Mine, once rent with the spear—I plead these—My groans, My tears, My agony, My death—for these I suffered on their account. Their sin was punished in Me. Let them go free!”  
Thus He pleads right gloriously. Who shall answer Him? What more is wanted? But the Law brings another charge. It says, “Granted that sin is condoned by the Atonement. Allowed that through Your sacrifice, most glorious Redeemer, Your people are free from sin, yet I demand on the behalf of God that the Law should be kept! These men were bound not merely to be negatively without sin, but they were bound positively to serve God with all their heart and soul and strength. And inasmuch as they have not done it, they cannot enter Heaven. How shall they be rewarded for service never performed—how shall they win the crown without having kept the command?”  
Here, too, we are silent, for what have we ever done? What righteousness have we? Are not our righteousnesses filthy rags, the very best of them? We dare not say, “Lord, my prayers entitle me to Heaven. My preaching, my doings, my almsgivings.” No, we know better than this! We feel that we are vile and full of sin and therefore put our finger on our lips and confess that we deserve to be shut out of Heaven. Again the Savior rises and He pleads, “I was appointed of God to be their Substitute and being such I kept the Law on their behalf! The whole of the Ten Commandments I have carried out to the fullest extent both in the letter and in the spirit. I have served God with all My soul and strength.  
“I have loved My neighbor as Myself. I have been obedient to death, even to the death of the Cross. Have I not magnified the Law and made it honorable?” The Law bows its awful head and confesses, “You have, O Jesus, rendered better obedience than these men could have rendered, for You are Divine. You have brought the righteousness of God instead of the righteousness of man. You have brought Your own perfection, glorified and exalted by the splendor of Your Nature and laid it down in the place of the perfection of man which he could not bring. You have, indeed, paid the debt. You have pleaded well and the culprit is free!”  
Beloved, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” My Soul, triumph in your God! This day rejoice with all your might, for Christ has prevalently pleaded your cause and you are acquitted—no, you are brought in as meritorious and accepted in the sight of God through the plea of the Beloved! Let us rejoice that in the court of Heaven’s justice we can say, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul.” O, can we all say it? Has Christ pleaded for you? Has your faith put your soul into Christ’s hands? If not, I pity you. And let every child of God pity and pray for you. But if Jesus pleads for you we will rejoice together and be glad this morning!  
3. In the third place, Jesus pleads the cause of my soul in the Court of Conscience which is a minor imitation of the great Court of Heaven. Let me talk to your hearts now, Brothers and Sisters, as the Lord helps me. Sometimes you have doubts and fears springing up and conscience assists them, for it says, “You know what a guilty worm you are! What? You a saved soul? It was but the other day that you were murmuring at God, and doubting His faithfulness!  
Look at your prayers—what cold things they are! See your daily life— what inconsistencies mingle with it! Mark your temper—how quick! How fierce! Look at yourself as to spiritual things—was there ever a more poverty-stricken soul than you are? Why, you are as black as the tents of Kedar and quite as filthy. Can you see any good thing in yourself? Why, are you not a very sink of corruption, a walking dunghill, a mass of abominations? And yet you say, ‘I am a child of God’? How can it be?” And now, when these thoughts arise, you and I find it sometimes rather hard to answer them. And if we go upon the common logic of human reason and begin to argue, “But I do find in myself some humblings of soul. I have some melting desires towards the Lord God. I find this and that and therefore I have some evidence,” it is ten to one that conscience and the devil together will beat us and we shall be ready to lie down in despair.  
But, oh, how sweet it is when our soul tells of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! Then—I hope that I am now talking what you all know and many of you know sweetly—then as you turn to Jesus Christ and see the precious Person of the perfect Savior pouring out streams of cleansing blood—there is a voice which speaks to you and pleads the cause of your soul! You feel, “Let conscience say what he may, this blood has answered him! Let the devil suggest what he will, this complete Atonement shall shut his mouth!” “I will,” says Rutherford, in one of his sweet letters, “I will hold to Christ under water and if I must drown I will not let go my hold of Him.”  
And so the Believer can say he has got such a grip of Jesus—such a hand-hold of the Savior—that though ten thousand times ten thousand fears should roll over his head, he sings*—*

*“I do believe, I will believe  
That Jesus died for me.”*

Sometimes after stern conflicts a sweet peace pervades your mind. I cannot describe it better than by the calm which succeeds the tempest and its heavy showers. The whole earth appears to put on a greener dress than before. The flowers pour out their fragrance. The birds sing and men rejoice in the clear shining after the rain. So is it with us. “The time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,” because Jesus Christ applies with Divine power His own merits and His own blood to our conscience and all is well!

I do not know whether you know what this means, but if any of you do not, you have lost a joy worth a thousand worlds! For out of Heaven I know of no peace like that which pervades the conscience when Jesus pleads within. Guilty we are in ourselves, but we are “complete in Him.” Foul and vile I am and yet I am perfect in Christ Jesus—lost, ruined and undone in the first Adam—but saved and redeemed—made to sit in heavenly places in the Second Adam. Ah, doubts and fears—where are they now—when Jesus pleads for my soul? Memory may come and tell me all the past. Fear may haunt me with black visions of the future—my powers may be perverted to the service of despair—yet if my soul can keep her hold upon the finished work of my Redeemer I shall yet come off more than conqueror, singing, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

4. We have thus been to three courts—the Court of Providence, the Court of Justice and the Court of Conscience. And now, pausing awhile, I would not have you forget how Jesus Christ pleads our cause in the Court of Heaven. To a true-hearted man who lives a life of prayer it is ever a rich consolation that his prayers do not go up to Heaven alone. Jesus, our great High Priest, never ceases to intercede for His saints!

A poor man once wished to have a favor of a great one. This great lord had a son—a very kind and condescending one, who spoke to the poor man and said—“If you will write a petition to my father, he is very gracious and he will be sure to grant it. And so that you may have no doubts about the success of your petition, give it to me and I will take it in my own hand up to my father’s house for you and make your case my own. I will say to him, ‘My father, hear this poor man’s petition, not for his own sake, but consider it as mine. Do me the personal favor and kindness of

hearing this man’s prayer, as though it were my prayer—for, indeed, I make it mine!’ ”

The poor man wrote out his petition, but when he had finished it, “Alas !”he said to himself, “this will never do to present before the great one. It is so full of errors! I have blotted it with my tears and where I have tried to scratch out a word which I had spelt wrongly, I have made it worse and have so badly worded the whole petition that I am afraid the great one will throw it in the fire, or never notice it.” “But,” said his friend, “I will write it out in a fair clear hand for you so that there shall be no blots and no blunders. And when I have done so, I will do as I have said—I will take it in my own hand, put my own name at the bottom of it with your name and will offer it as our joint petition. And I will put it upon this footing, ‘My father, do it for me. Not for him, but for me.’ ”

When the poor man saw his petition thus written out and knew it was in such hands, he went his way sure that the answer must come. And come it did. You know that story well. This is what Jesus Christ has done for you! He takes our poor unworthy prayers and amends them. He makes them perfect and sprinkles His own blood upon them and takes them up before His Father’s Throne, and says, “Father, for My sake hear this sinner. For My sake give him pardon. Accept him and preserve him.” And then the gracious Father, who can deny nothing to His beloved Son, gives His glad assent and the blessing comes to you! This is a great mercy, but I will tell you of something which is a greater mercy still. It is transcendently encouraging that when we pray, Jesus Christ prays! But what is better still, is, that when we do not pray Jesus Christ prays!

Oh, my soul was ravished a little while ago when thinking over that passage about Peter—“Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But”—what? “But go and pray for yourself”? Well, that were good advice, but it is not so put. Our Master does not say, “But I will keep you watchful and so you shall be preserved.” That were a great blessing, but it is, “But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” Oh, you do not know when Jesus Christ prays for you! We pass through unseen dangers and we little know what are the dangers through which we pass!

We are something like Christian, when Bunyan pictures him as going through the valley of the shadow of death. He could hear the howling on the right hand and on the left, but he did not know—for it was very dark— how very bad the way was. But when the sun rose and he looked back and saw the pits and the traps and the quagmires and the fiends and evil spirits—then he could not but lift up his hands in astonishment that he had been brought through them all! When you and I get on the hilltops of Heaven and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us, even the songs of Heaven will not be loud enough for the gratitude we shall feel towards Him who, before the Eternal Throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth!

O, how shall we thank Him that He never held His peace—that day and night He pointed to the wounds upon His hands and carried our names upon His breastplate? How we shall adore our great High Priest! With what transport shall we kiss those dear feet of His when we remember that He did never cease to intercede, but that even before Satan had began to tempt He had forestalled him and entered a plea in Heaven! You know He does not say, “Satan has sifted you and therefore I will pray,” but, “Satan has desired to have you.” He catches Satan even in his very desire—nips his desire in the bud—kills the cockatrice while it is yet in the shell.

He does not say, “But I have desired to pray for you.” No, it is, “I have prayed for you. I have done it already. I have gone to Court and entered a counterplea even before the charge is made. I have countermined even before the mine has been dug. “O Jesus, what a comfort it is that You have pleaded the causes of my soul when I have been asleep! When I might have gone sleeping on down to Hell You were awake pleading the causes of my soul!” Here, then, is a cause of great joy and great gratitude!

5. Once more, Jesus Christ will plead the cause of His people and our heavenly Father will do so, too, in the Last Great Day of judgment. It is not a very pleasant thing for a man honestly to serve God and then to find his character taken from him. And yet, Beloved, this has been the lot of all true men in every age. The world never does permit a man to rebuke her follies without replying with a volley of mud. It she cannot stop the man’s mouth, she blackens the man’s character.

If you will turn to the lives of any of the saints of God you will discover that they were the victims of slanders of the grossest kind. To this very day it is asserted by Romanists that Martin Luther was a drunkard. In his own day he was called the German beast—that for lust he had to marry Catharine! If you turn to the life of Whitfield—our great and mighty Whitfield—in more modern times what was his character? Why he was accused of every crime that even Sodom knew! And Perjury stood up and swore that all was true. As for Wesley—I have heard that on one occasion he said that he had been charged with every crime in the calendar except drunkenness. And when a woman stood up in the crowd and accused him of that, he then said, “Blessed God, I have now had all manner of evil spoken against me falsely for Christ’s name sake!”

You remember in the life of John Bunyan that episode concerning Agnes Beaumont? The good man suffered this young woman to ride behind him on his horse to a meeting at Gamlingay and for this his character was implicated in two charges before a magistrate which might have involved him in the crime of poisoning and laid the foundation for villainous reports of uncleanness! Yet John Bunyan was the purest and most heavenly-minded man who ever put his hand to paper. And he did put his hand to paper as no other man ever did who was not Inspired!

Now, this is not pleasant, but if you are a true Christian and you are called to occupy a prominent post in the service of God, be resigned to this fact—expect to lose your character. Expect not to have the good opinion of any but your God and those faithful ones, who like you, are willing to bear contempt. But what joy it is for all these holy men to know that at the last God will plead the cause of their souls! There will be a resurrection of persons as they really were, not as they seemed to be and were misrepresented. At the Last Great Day there will be a resurrection of reputations—reputations which had been laid into the dark grave which Calumny had dug—which had been covered with the sod of Contempt and over which there had been raised an epitaph of Infamy.

These reputations will all rise up! They have washed their robes and made them white. They are black no longer! The men who were pointed at and hooted and despised shall now go streaming up the shining way of fame and glory amidst the loud shouts of praise which the great Avenger shall receive from assembled worlds! They shall awake to Glory while others rise to shame and everlasting contempt! Oh, what must it be to be in the last day plucked and stripped of your plumes? What will be the fate of the Pharisee? Of the hypocrite who will find all his fine feathers torn away and himself left to hide his contemptible head in the caverns of the earth—but denied even that consolation—set out before the full blaze of day as an acknowledged liar before God and man?

But how different the condition of the poor man who lived and died in undeserved contempt! He who wakes up to find himself a bright and shining spirit and all his adversaries compelled to admit that God has pleaded the causes of his soul and has avenged him of his accusers! Thus, you see, our text is not a small one—the words are few but full of meaning. And I have but very poorly set forth what our soul, I trust, feels to be the truth—“You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

II. Now I want your solemn and earnest attention while for a few minutes I plead for what is our reasonable service, namely, THAT IF THE LORD HAS PLEADED THE CAUSES OF OUR SOUL, WE SHOULD PLEAD HIS CAUSE WHILE WE HAVE ANY BREATH TO PRAY OR A TONGUE WITH WHICH TO BEAR WITNESS FOR HIM.

Pleading the cause of Christ is the lifework of the Christian—it has to be done by some in the high places of the field. This age has given up all witness-bearing for Christ. We have grown so enamored of that gilded idol called charity that nowadays the Truth of God is fallen in the streets. It has come to be, by general consent, allowed by all men that religion is all very well in its way. That every man must keep his own religion and not meddle with other people’s—that a lie may be a truth, or a truth may be a lie and that whether a doctrine is a truth or a lie does not matter a button—that, in fact, we are all of us to be agreed upon this one point—that God’s Truth is not worthy our contending for.

That which is of man’s invention and that which is of God’s teaching are now put side by side in alliance and a compromise is effected in the name of brotherly love. I look upon Christendom at this present day as too much like a putrid swamp, a stagnant pool—the calm is deep, but deadly. O for some holy wind to stir the rotting mass! Modern charity would gag the mouth of every advocate of the Truth of God and send every faithful minister of God back to his bed to sleep his time out until the millennium shall dawn!

Brethren, I trust that an end shall come to this! And if bickering and strife and ill-will shall follow, though I shall lament these attendant evils, I shall rejoice that an earnest and healthy love of Truth and an earnest contention for it have been revived in the land. Rutherford, whose name must be dear to every Believer who knows his writings, says, “I thank God that I did never for a single moment put so much as a hoof, or a hair’s breadth of Christ’s Truth into compromise. That I did take Christ only and alone and did never leave room for the Roman harlot, but only for Christ—or Christ only!”

Here was a man shut up in Aberdeen, driven away from Anworth, weeping because, as he said, he envied the very sparrows which flew around the old Kirk where he was used to having such sweet visions of his Lord. And yet he said if the giving up of a jot of the Truth of God could have given him his liberty and enabled him to go back to minister to his faithful flock, he would not give it up! For to him Truth was dearer than liberty—no, dearer than even life itself! He says, “I am prepared for all consequences. And if even black-faced Death should knock at my door, I would bid him enter.” Our spiritual forefathers, on both sides the Tweed, were not men to be worried about the caprice of every oarsman.

They knew the Truth of God and they knew Christ and they did not divide between Christ and Truth and say, “Love Christ and then believe what you like.” No, they believed that Christ and Truth were identical. They believed Truth to be the Savior’s crown jewels and they would as soon think of loving a king and trampling on his crown as of pretending to love Christ and then trampling on His Truth!

What? Shall I pluck the clothes from my neighbor’s back and tell him that I love him? Will you pluck the Truth from Christ and throw it away as though it were but old rags and then say you love Christ? You cannot love Christ if you do not love Truth. And you cannot have Jesus unless you are willing to take up your cross daily and follow Him. For my part, God helping me, my soul is set on this—to court no more the good word of any man—to be no more a worshipper at the shrine of that false goddess, Charity! To have all the brotherly love I can, but to show it by an honest, outspoken declaration that the day is come when Rome is not to stand in England unchallenged.

Dressed in garments half Protestant and half Popish, the Church, as by law established, continues to make a mockery of honesty by using language in an unnatural sense! Juggling with men’s souls! Pampering Puseyites, indulging infidels, and yet claiming to be evangelical. An end must come to the infamy of teaching Popish doctrine in the Prayer Book and then preaching evangelical doctrine in the pulpit. The day is come when we must shake our garments of such a Church and when the best of her sons, though we have fraternized with them, must come out from her or we can have no more communion with them! The day of Babylon’s destruction comes! The cup is prepared and her sons and her daughters shall drink of it.

And only they shall be found clear in the day of account who shall come out and plead the cause of God’s pure Truth and God’s pure Truth alone. I think my Master deserves this of those of us who stand upon the high places of the field. And of you who are less known, but love your Master none the less, march with us shoulder to shoulder! Bear reproach with us! We have to bear it! Be as willing to be rejected as we are willing to be rejected! Be as willing to lose character and name and reputation and standing as we are! And if you cannot speak with a voice which can be heard as far—yet proclaim with a voice as clear and plain—that you love Truth and Christ and that for Truth and Christ you will give up everything—but that you cannot give up these!

Beloved, there is a way of bearing witness for Christ which you must adopt—that of witnessing by your consistency of conduct. Holiness is, after all, the mightiest weapon which a Christian can wield. Be you holy as

Christ is holy. Let no man spatter mire upon your garments. Walk so that you never put us to grief. As a Church be so pure and heavenly that you may be called the Nazarites of God who were purer than snow and whiter than milk. And then, though we have no wealth and boast not gorgeous architecture and the swell of pealing music, yet we shall have this for our music—your holiness, your purity, your separation from all uncleanness. And this for our architecture—that you are built up as a temple for the Lord!

Lastly, we can all plead for God in a private way. Oh, there is a great power in pleading for God with individuals. A man went to preach for seven summers on the village green and good was done. Joseph sometimes listened to the preacher, but only to ridicule him. There were many souls converted but he remained as hard as ever. A certain John who had felt the power of Truth, worked with him in the barn and one day, between the strokes of the flail, John spoke a word for Truth and for God. But Joseph laughed at him and hinted at hypocrisy and many other things.

Now John was very sensitive and his whole soul was filled with grief at Joseph’s banter and after he had spoken, feeling a flush of emotion, he turned to the corner of the barn and hid his face while a flood of tears came streaming from his eyes. He wiped them away with the corner of his sleeve and came back to his flail. Joseph had noticed the tears though John had tried to hide them. And what argument could not do and what preaching could not do, those tears, through God the Holy Spirit, did effectually, for Joseph thought to himself, “What? Does John care for my soul and weep for my soul? Then it is time I should care and weep for it, too.”

Beloved, witness thus for Christ! Be it mine to weep for the sins of the times and prophecy against them! Be it yours in your own private walk and conversation to rebuke private sin and by your loving earnestness to make Jesus Christ dear to many souls! Tell them that Jesus Christ came to save sinners! Tell them that He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him! Tell them that, “whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” and in this way you shall plead the cause of God, who has pleaded the causes of your soul.

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD FOR YOU  
NO. 480

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no more carry you away into captivity. He will visit your iniquity, O daughter of Edom. He will discover your sins.” Lamentations 4:22.**

EVERY Sunday we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel have a voice to universal manhood—the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway—and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under Heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters, that the Law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice.

While there are texts which are universal and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are, at the same time, a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished and whose sin is pardoned.

Or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom rests the curse of God and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind Prophet of old, “Come in, you wife of Jeroboam, for I am sent to you with heavy tidings.” But I have also to say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why stand you without?” According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will try to deliver in their order. We shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—Why the difference? And then we will press upon each character the force of the message, that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. OUR FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no more carry you away into captivity.”  
1. We find, at the outset, a joyous fact. Read it with glistening eyes,

you to whom it belongs—“The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion.” In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in His anger had put them from Him, felt His repenting kindle together and considered that they had suffered enough. “For she has received at the Lord’s hand,” said the Prophet, “double for all her sin.”

Brethren, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. Remember that sin must be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if He had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if He had no justice. To gain a just view of the Character of God you must perceive all His attributes as infinitely developed. Justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin must be punished.

This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—“The soul that sins it shall die.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them.” “Sin must be punished,” is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire. And, as the damned in Hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated, or foregone, or that justice has had a bribe given it to close its mouth.

The consolation is far more sure and effectual—say unto the daughter of Zion that, “the punishment of her iniquity is accomplished.” Christ has, for His people, borne all the punishment which they deserved. And now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—“The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished.” God is satisfied, and asks no more. Sin deserved God’s wrath. That wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. “Stand aside!” said Jesus— “Stand aside, My Spouse, My Church, and I will suffer in your place.”

Down dashed the drops of fire. The burning sleet swept terribly over His head and beat upon His poor defenseless Person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it is again called forth—it was annihilated—it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the Believer since Christ has died for him. In His dying, our Lord has satisfied the Divine vengeance to the fullest.

Then this, too, must satisfy our conscience. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but cries out for something more. Like the horseleech it says, “Give, give, give.” Until you can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let your conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied. The Law is not despised—it is honored. It is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that your punishment is accomplished, you may come with boldness unto Him, for no guilt does lie on you. You are accepted in the Beloved. Your guilt was laid on Him of old and you are now safe.”—

*In your Surety you are free,  
His dear hands were pierced for you;  
With His spotless vesture on,  
Holy as the Holy One.”*

Come boldly unto God and rejoice in Him. Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight—how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of Heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder, I see Him in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for Heaven. He sweats, “as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” It is not the sweat of His brow, only, but, “All His head, His hair, His garments, are bloody.” God is smiting Him and laying upon Him the punishments of our iniquities.

He rises with His heart exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. They hurry Him to Pilate’s judgment seat. The God of Heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed and falsely accused before the tribunal of His cowardly creatures. He is taken by soldiers to Gabbatha. They strip, they scourge Him. Clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from His back. They buffet Him and bruise Him with their blows. As if His robe of blood were not enough, they throw about His shoulders an old cloak, and make Him a mimic king. Little knew they that He was the King of kings. He gives His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair. He hides not His face from shame and spitting.

Oh, what shall be said of You, Son of Man? In what words shall we describe Your grief? All you that pass by, behold, and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto His sorrow that was done unto Him! Oh God, You have broken Him with a rod of iron. All Your waves and Your billows have gone over Him. He looks, and there is none to help. He turns His eyes around, and there is none to comfort Him. And look, through the streets of Jerusalem He is hastened to His death. They nail Him to the transverse wood. They dash it into the ground. They dislocate His bones. He is poured out like water. All His bones are out of joint. He is brought into the dust of death—agonies are piled on agonies.

As in the classic fable, the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion, that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to Heaven, misery is piled on misery—what if I say Hell on Hell? But Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last He reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” was the sum total of all human misery. The gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus He dies! Say unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. “It is finished!” Let the angels sing it. Sing it in the plains of glory. Tell it here on earth, and once again, say unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning. 2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our

discourse—Is the punishment of my iniquity accomplished? Let us see to whom this message is sent. Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes, and with your hearts? This promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history in it. In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—“From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed.” We should have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no, “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we  
were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away. Our merit is dissolved like the coating of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile. That which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes and all his glory is trailed in the mire. My Hearer, has all your self-righteousness been taken from you? For rest assured you are not this daughter of Zion unless your beauty has all departed, and all your boastful thoughts have been utterly slain.

Wonder of wonders! The eighth and ninth verses tell us, “Jerusalem has grievously sinned,” and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that, “her filthiness is in her skirts.” Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their unrighteousness becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight. Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true. The heart discovers itself to be all wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores, till it abhors itself before God. “O Lord, I am vile.” “We are all together as an unclean thing.” “We are laden with iniquity.” Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed.

Look on, again, to the seventeenth verse and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—“Zion spreads forth her hands and there is none to comfort her.” So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their Church and Chapel attendance. A formal, notional religion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the soles of their feet in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night, and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well. But now there is none to comfort them.

These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground. Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the Law. Till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we have been led to an experimental acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities, there is n peace.

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings. In the eighteenth verse she says— “The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandments.” The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God’s justice. Eternal punishment they quibble at. Hell is such a bugbear to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just, notwithstanding all their objections to it.

But when the heart is really touched by Divine Grace, then it has no more to say for itself but pleads guilty at the bar of God’s great assize. And if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, “You are righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned.” I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God. Come with the ropes about your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive.

Further still—in the first verse of the second chapter you find that her prayer was not yet heard—“How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger and cast down from Heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger!” Well do I remember the time in my own experience when I prayed in vain. When I bowed my knees and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a standard for all, but remember I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character.

If you have been for months, yes, even for years, crying for mercy and still have not found it, let not this cast you down, for to you is this message sent this morning. You are this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say unto you that “the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished.” Your prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it, and Jesus offered it. God absolves you, from Heaven your forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the Word of the Lord and rejoice in it! “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Further—as her prayer was not heard, so every place of refuge was broken down. In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—“The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: He has stretched out a line, He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying, therefore He made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.” Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as a heap behind which the Israelite warriors might defend themselves were to be broken down. So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner’s heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. “Peace, peace, where there is no peace,” is the sinner’s constant cry.

Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner’s confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down. Then the sinner yields

himself a captive and Free Grace leads him in triumph to the Cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear Hearer? If it is, then my sweet message is for you. “Go in peace, your sins which are many are all forgiven you!”

Further still—this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of deep humiliation. Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter—“The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence. They have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves in sackcloth; the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.” Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time. And, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them. And some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, “There is my picture. As face answers to face in a glass, so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition.”

Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you—to you is this gracious message sent—“The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished.” Furthermore—it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes here let loose against her and her grief exceeded all bounds and prevented all comparison——“What thing shall I take to witness for you? What thing shall I liken to you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I equal to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great like the sea: who can heal you?” So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring.

That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—“There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!” You give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all your enemies, your own heart, and all the devils in Hell should conspire against you, yet to you, even to you, thus says the Lord, the God of Hosts, “Comfort you, comfort you, my people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished.”

Not to keep you longer on this point, let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to constant prayer— “Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give yourself no rest. Let not the apple of your eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him,” and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide fast by the Mercy Seat and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act, as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany, I was about to call it—

*“Wealth and honor I disclaim,*

***Earthly comforted, Lord, are vain,  
These can never satisfy,  
Give me Christ, or else I die.”***

Every verse ends with that intense desire—“Give me Christ or else I die.” This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless. It falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—“Give me Christ or else I die.” “I can take no denial.” Again and again and again, the sound of its moaning goes up before the Lord God of Sabaoth. Its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times, merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks today. (Lord! Open their ears that they may hear)! “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished.”

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction—if the Law has ever had its perfect work in you—you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you. And when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—“It is of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not.” Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you! Lay hold on it by faith! Feed on it, live on it, and rejoice!

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is a precious promise. “I will no more carry you away into captivity.” You are in captivity now, but it is the last you shall ever have. You are sorrowing on account of sin and troubled even to despair. But you are now forgiven—not you shall be but you are. All the wrath was laid on Christ. There is none remaining upon you. You are forgiven and your captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let your mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with singing, for the Lord has done great things for you!

These convictions of yours shall never return again in their present terror—just cling to the Rock of Ages and no wave shall bear you back into the deeps. You shall go through the wilderness but once. You shall pass through the Jordan of a Savior’s blood, and then you shall enter into Canaan and rest, for, “we that have believed do enter into rest.” And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for you. All your Hell is past. Tophet burns not for you, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon you. All that you deserve of the wrath of God, Christ has endured, and there is not a drop remaining for you.

Come to the golden chalice into which God drained His wrath and look at the sparkling wine of love which fills it. Ah, how changed from what it once was! ‘Twas full and foul and black—each drop was Tophet—and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it. To the very dregs He drained it. Turning it upside down, He said, “It is finished!” And not a drop was left. Come, I say, to it, for it is not empty now. It is full again, but with what is it filled with? It is full to the brim and overflowing with love unsearchable, eternal, Divine. Come and drink—

*“Calvary’s summit let us trace,  
View the heights and depths of Grace.*

***Count the purple drops and say,  
Thus my sins were borne away.  
Now no more His wrath we dread,  
Vengeance smote our Surety’s head.  
Justice now demands no more,  
He has paid the dreadful score.  
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,  
Lost, as in the Savior’s blood,  
Zion, O, how blessed are you,  
Justified from all things now.”***

“I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord.” You may have troubles, but you will never have punishment. You may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath. You may go to the grave, but you shall never go to Hell. You shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned. The Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head. You may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. “He will no more carry you away into captivity.”

Your punishment is all paid for by Another. You are free today. Come forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, and brought out His people and delivered them with His own right hand! Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message. I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus says the Lord unto you—“I will visit your iniquity.” Unbeliever, you who have never felt your need of Christ and never fled to Him, to you He says, “I will visit your iniquity.” His justice tarries but it is sure. His axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried. Or if they are, they shall have a resurrection. Your thoughts, your words, your deeds—all shall return in terror on your head. You shall begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On your dying bed your frail tenement shall creak and you shall see the blazing of the furnace of fire through the rifts of your crumbling cottage.

When you shall lie dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of Heaven stand about your bed and summon you to judgment. Your cheeks shall blanch, however brazen your brow may now be. Then, strong Man, you shall be bowed down, and your loins shall be loosened—for when God deals with you, you shall feel His hand—even though you were girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then you die. Your death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Your soul descends into the pit among your kindred, and you begin to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied Him. Then shall your oaths be all fulfilled. Then shall your lusting and your reveling come to you in their true light.

Then shall you hear ringing in your conscience the echo of the Divine sentence, “You deserve” all this, for God gave you warning when He said, “I will surely visit you for your iniquity.” Then shall the trumpet ring— “Awake! Awake! You dead, and come to judgment!” From sea and land they start to live again. Your soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the Great White Throne is lifted up on high. The righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain. And, now, hark! Listen to a voice more dread than thunder—“Bind them up in bundles to burn them! The drunkard with the drunkard. The swearer with the swearer. The careless, the proud, the self-righteous—each with each—and cast them into the furnace of fire.”

It is done and where are you now, Sinner? Do you say of me this morning—“I knew that you would speak not good but evil unto me”? Another day you shall bless your stern reprover! Call me not your enemy. It is your sin that is your enemy. I make not Hell. I do but warn you of it with a brother’s love. You dig Hell yourself. You yourself fill it and the breath of your sins shall fan the fire. “The Lord of Hosts will visit your iniquity, O daughter of Edom.” Hear it. Hearken you to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns you. Beware, O careless Soul, beware of forgetting God lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to you.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was a mirthful one. In irony and sarcasm the Prophet says—“Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwell in the land of Uz. The cup shall pass through unto you; you shall be drunken and shall make yourself naked.”

There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God. There is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, “How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety? And what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah, daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for your fine linen. There are ashes for all your ornaments. Your earrings shall give place to everlasting teardrops and all your beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay!

Weep, all you that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day comes when He shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! “Thus says the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter. It is furbished that it may glitter: should he then make mirth?”

Edom, moreover dwelt very carelessly, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, “Who shall come here to disturb the eagle’s nest? The son of Esau dwells like an eagle in his nest, and he pounces down upon his prey before his victim is aware. Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo, he dares to look in the face of the sun, and he laughs at the spear of the hunter—who shall bring him down?”

Thus says the lord, “O daughter of Edom, I will visit your iniquity.” “Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there will I bring you down, says the Lord.” You proud men and women! You say, “Will God deal with us? Will He treat us as common sinners? Even if He should, we will not care! Fill high the

bowl and let us drink, even though it is at Belshazzar’s feast. We will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!” Thus you speak, but thus says the Lord, even as He said unto Moab—“I will bring down your high looks. I will trample you like straw is trod for the dunghill, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

More than this. It appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and merriment over the sorrows of others. Do you not hear even the wise men say—“Ah, these driveling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!” “Look,” says one, “I am a man of the world. I know nothing of these women’s fears and child-like trembling. Why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of Hell and of judgment—do you believe it? “No,” says this man “I know nothing of your care. I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!”

O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God lives, the day shall come when you shall be trod as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware, for when the Avenger comes forth, a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at and called an old hypocrite for talking of God’s destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark—and what do you think, now, of the Prophet—what do you think, now, of the preacher of righteousness? You are swept away. The waves have covered you. A few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills but the all-devouring waters reach them there. I hear their last shriek of awful anguish—there is not a single note of unbelief in it now.

As you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the Prophet was right and you were fools. To your deathbeds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt today, I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help you! God help you to repent! But heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is your curse. God will visit your iniquity upon you!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. “Whereas Edom says, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of Hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down. And they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever.” So there are some of you who say, “I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges. I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment, yet I pluck up heart again.” Ah, daughter of Edom, God will visit you for your iniquity, and your vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last. And so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, “I will discover your sins.” Let every sinner here be afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin. He will discover it. It may be it was last night—it was in a very secret place and you contrived so that none might track you. But the All-Seeing One will discover your sin. “How are the things of Esau searched out! How are his hidden things sought up!” I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are torn asunder, your masks are plucked away. The Revealer of Secrets comes forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the housetops.

The day comes when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” This is your portion, daughter of Edom! Your secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit you!

III. The time expires but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES? The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was Sovereign Grace. The daughter of Zion had no right to pardon. She had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her and had entered into Covenant with Abraham concerning her—that He would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in His sovereignty, because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice. He sent it because the daughter of Edom deserved it. Sinner, when God says He will punish sin, you may kick against it if you will, but your conscience tells you—you deserve to be punished. God will not smite you more than you deserve, but let Him only give you as much, and wrath will come upon you to the uttermost. Edom has waxed proud. She has been careless. She has despised God. She is unbelieving. She repents not. Therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary Inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it. It is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The servants of Zion’s household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him.

We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn. Ridicule is the only answer they deserve. Let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit—I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, “That is my case.” Very well, then, the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, “I will try and believe it,” but believe it. Do not say, “I hope it is true.” It is true.

Believe it and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in your spirit, “My punishment was borne by Christ. I shall never be carried into captivity any more. Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord. I am accepted, I am forgiven.” Praise Him every day, now that His anger has passed away forever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be. “Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works. Let your garments be always white. And let your head lack no ointment.” Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon, and not to me! I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God’s Word and it is true. Believe it. “Oh,” says one, “but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish.” Would to God you were! For do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the Law sent for? To dog men to Hell? No, but to be our teacher to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a teacher, who with a stick, went round to the parents’ houses and whipped the boys to school.

Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though He is a good and tender Master, that He employs the Law to go round to our houses to whip us to Himself, His peace, His great salvation. Ah, I would I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of today are meant to bring you from under the Law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, your doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that you would but believe this, and that your heart were broken, for then we might come to you again, and say, “Thus says the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities and like a thick cloud your sins.”

May God bless the words of this morning and unto His name be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

GOD’S PROVIDENCE  
NO. 3114

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1908. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Where they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.”  
Ezekiel 1:15-19.**

IN my preaching, I am constantly talking about Providence, so I thought it would be well to devote a whole sermon to explaining what I believe are God’s great wonder-working processes which we call, “Providence.” In looking for a suitable text, I found this one. These “wheels” signify Divine Providence and I trust, while explaining them, I may be so assisted by God’s Spirit that I may say many things to you concerning God’s Government which may lift up any who are despondent and lift up the souls of many who are distressed.

I. Going at once to my divisions, my first remark will be that PROVIDENCE IS HERE COMPARED TO A “WHEEL.”  
When the Prophet had “beheld the living creatures,” which I take it were angels, he opened his eyes again and he saw a wonderful illustration of Divine Providence—and this exhibition was in the figure of a wheel. You must know that this is not the only place where this comparison is to be found, for the Romans and Greeks were accustomed to compare the wondrous working of God in Providence to the revolutions of a wheel. The story goes that a certain king, being taken prisoner, was bound in chains and dragged along at the chariot wheels of his conqueror. As he went along, he kept looking at the wheel and shedding tears, and then looking at the wheel, again, and lifting up his eyes and smiling. The conqueror turned and said, “Why are you looking at that wheel?” He said, “I was thinking, such is the lot of man—just now I was here, now I am there—but soon I may be here again at the top of the wheel, and you may be grinding the dust.” This was well for a heathen. The Prophet had the very same idea—he was permitted by God to see that the wheel is a very beautiful figure of Divine Providence. Let me show you that it is so.  
I have just hinted at one reason why Providence is like a wheel— because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top and then it is at the bottom. Sometimes this part is exalted and soon it sinks down to the dust. Then it is lifted into the air and then again, by a single revolution, it is brought down again to the earth. So is it with our life. Sometimes we are in humble poverty and hardly know what we shall do for bread. Soon the wheel revolves and we are brought into the comfort of wealth—our feet stand in a spacious room, we are fed with corn and wine—we drink of a cup overflowing its brim. Again we are brought low through affliction and famine. A little while and another page is turned—and we are exalted to the heavens and can sing and rejoice in the Lord our God! I have no doubt many of you here have experienced a far more checkered life than I have and, therefore, you can feel that your life has been as a “wheel.” Ah, Man! You are strong, great and rich! You may now stand at the uppermost part of it, but it is a wheel and you may yet be brought low. And you poor who are depressed and downcast—who are weeping because you know not where you shall lay your heads—that wheel may revolve and you may be lifted up! Our own experience is never a stale thing. It is always changing, always turning round. The fly that sits now on the edge of the wheel may be crushed by its next revolution. The world may cry, “Hosanna,” to its minister, today, and the next day may say, “Crucify him, crucify him.” Such is the state of man. Providence is like a wheel!  
You know that in a wheel there is one portion that never turns round and that is the axle. So, in God’s Providence, there is an axle which never moves. Christian, here is a sweet thought for you! Your state is always changing—sometimes you are exalted and sometimes depressed—yet there is an unmoving point in your state. What is this axle? What is the pivot upon which all the machinery revolves? It is the axle of God’s everlasting love towards His covenant people. The exterior of the wheel is changing, but the center stands forever fixed. Other things may move, but God’s love never moves—it is the axle of the wheel! This is another reason why Providence should be compared to a wheel.  
Yet more. You observe when the wheel moves very rapidly, you can discern nothing but the exterior circle. So, if you look back to history and read the story of a thousand years, you set the wheel of Providence revolving rapidly and you lose sight of all the little things that are within the circle. You see only one great thing and that is that God is working out in the world His everlasting purposes. You sit down and take a book of history—say the History of England—and you will say of one event, “Now that seems to be out of place.” You say of another, “That seems to be out of time.” Another, “That seems to be adverse to the cause of liberty.” But look through a thousand years and those things which seemed as if they would crush liberty in her germ—those things which seemed as if they would destroy this, our commonwealth, in our very rising, have been those which have caused the sturdy oak of liberty to take deeper root! Take the whole together, instead of taking the events one by one—look at a thousand years and you will see nothing but one round ring of symmetry teaching you that God is wise and God is just. So let it be with you in your lives. Here you are fretting about troubles today. Think also of the past—put all your troubles together and they are not troubles at all! You will see that one counteracts the other. If you take your life—not today, alone, but look back on 40 years of it—you will be obliged, instead of lamenting and mourning, to bless God for His mercies towards you. Let the wheel go round and you will see nothing but a ring of everlasting wisdom revolving!  
I trust I have made the first part of my subject intelligible—that the Providence of God is here compared to a wheel.  
II. My second thought is that THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS, IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY, CONNECTED WITH ANGELS.  
Look at verse 15. “Now as I beheld the living creatures.” Then turn to the 19th verse. “And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.” These living creatures I believe to be angels. And the text teaches us that there is a connection between Providence and angelic agency. I do not know how to explain it. I cannot tell how it is, but I believe angels have a great deal to do with the affairs of this world. An angel cut off the hosts of Sennacherib and it is still my firm belief that angels are sent forth, somehow or other, to accomplish the everlasting purpose of God. The great wheel of Providence is still turned by an angel. When there is some trouble which seems to stop that wheel, some mighty cherub puts his shoulder to it and hurls it round—and makes the chariot of God’s Providence go on still. Angels have much more to do with us than we imagine. I do not know but that spirits sometimes come down and whisper thoughts into our ears. I have strange thoughts, sometimes, that seem to come from a land of dreams—and fiery visions that make my soul hot within me. Sometimes I have thoughts which I know come from God’s Spirit—some which are glorious and some that are not so good, but still holy thoughts—and I often attribute them to angels. I have sometimes a thought which cheers me in distress—and was not an angel sent to strengthen Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane? How do you think the angel strengthened Him? Why, by putting thoughts into Christ’s mind! He could not do it in any other way—he could not strengthen Him by a plaster, or by any physical means, but by injecting holy thoughts! So is it with us. There was a temptation which might have led you astray, but God said, “Gabriel, fly! There is one of My people in peril—go and put such a thought into his soul that when the danger comes, he will say, ‘Get you behind me, Satan, I will have nothing to do with sin.’”  
We have, each of us, a guardian angel to attend us. The meaning of the passage, “In Heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in Heaven,” surely is that every Christian has a guardian angel who flies about him and holds the shield of God over his brow, keeps his feet lest he should dash them against a stone, guards him, controls him, manages him, injects thoughts into his mind, restrains his evil desires and is the minister and servant of the Holy Spirit to keep him from sin and lead him to righteousness. Whether I am right or wrong, I leave you to judge, but perhaps I have more angelology in me than most people have. I know my imagination has sometimes been so powerful that when I have been alone at night, I could almost fancy that I saw an angel fly by me when I have been out preaching the Word. However, I take it that the text teaches us that angels have very much to do with God’s Providence, for it says, “And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.” Let us bless God that He has made angels ministering spirits to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation!  
III. My third remark shall be that PROVIDENCE IS UNIVERSAL.  
That you will see by the text. “Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.” The wheel had “four faces.” I think that means one face to the North, another to the South, another to the East and another to the West—there is a face to every quarter—teaching us that Providence is universal, looking to every quarter of the globe. Have you ever been in a house where there was an old picture hanging? I have sometimes stood in a picture gallery and there has been a painting of some old warrior—and he has looked straight at me. If I have gone to the other end of the room, he has still looked at me. Wherever you are in the room, a well-painted portrait will be looking at you. Such is the Providence of God—wherever you are, the eyes of God will be upon you— as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world! If there were only one, you may imagine how much God would look upon that one, but He looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being and nothing else in the whole world! His eyes are fixed upon us at every hour and at every moment. Wherever we may be, we shall have one face of the wheel turned upon us.  
You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland, I shall have the eyes of God there. Send me to Australia and let me toil at the gold diggings, there will He visit me. If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eyes of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing and His Presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amidst the howls of the tempest and the shrieking of the wind where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones—and I shall have the eyes of God upon me there! Let me sink and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves—let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea and the eyes of God shall be on every bone! And in the day of the Resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings! Yes, the eyes of God are everywhere—Providence is universal.  
There may be some persons here who have friends far away—let me comfort them. The eyes of God are looking on them. There may be some here who are about to part with loved ones who are going to distant countries. Wherever they are, they will be as much in the keeping of God as though they were here. If one part of the world is not as near to the sun’s light as another, yet they are all equally near the eyes of our God. Transport me where you please, wherever the cloudy pillar of Providence shall guide me—and I shall have God with me! That thought comforted the great traveler, Mungo Park, when he was in the desert of Sahara. He had been robbed and stripped of everything and was left naked. He suddenly saw a little piece of moss and, taking it up, he saw how beautiful it was. He said, “Then the hand of God is here, for here is one of His works! Though I call loudly, no man can hear me, for there is nothing but the prowling lion and the howling jackal—yet God is here.” That thought comforted him and wherever you may be, whatever may be your case, God will be with you! Whatever period of your life you may now be in, God is with you! His eyes are at the bridal and at the funeral, at the cradle and at the grave. In the battle, God’s eyes are looking through the smoke. In the rebellion, there are God’s hands managing the masses of men who have broken loose from their rulers. In the earthquake, there is Jehovah manifest. In the tempest, there are God’s hands tossing the boat, dashing it against the rocks, or saving it from the boisterous waves. In all seasons, at all times, in all dangers and in all climes, there are the hands of God!  
IV. My next remark is that PROVIDENCE IS UNIFORM.  
It is only one Providence and always one. “Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel was on the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness.” There were four wheels and four faces, yet one likeness. There was but one piece of machinery and thus we are taught that Providence is all one. Sometimes Providences seem to cross each other. One thing that God does seems to contradict another thing that He does—but it never really does so.  
It is a great Truth of God, though hard for us to grasp, that Providence is one. Just look at the case of Joseph. God has it in His mind that Joseph shall be governor over all the land of Egypt. How is that to be accomplished? The first thing to be done is that Joseph’s brothers must hate him. “Oh,” you say, “that is a step backward.” Next, Joseph’s brothers must put him in the pit. “That is another step backward,” you say. No, it is not. Wait a little while. Joseph’s brothers must sell him— that is another step backward, is it not? Oh, no! Providence is one and you must not look at its separate parts. He is sold—he becomes a favorite. So far, so good. That is a step onward! Soon he is put in a dungeon. Wait and see the end—all the different parts of the machinery are one. They appear to clash, but they never do. Put them all together. If Joseph had not been put in the pit, he never would have been the servant of Potiphar. If he had never been put in the prison, he would never have interpreted his fellow prisoners’ dreams. And if the king had never dreamed, he would not have been called to go to the palace. There were a thousand “chances,” as the world has it, working together to produce the exaltation of Joseph! Providence is one—it never clashes.  
“Oh,” says one, “I cannot understand that. Providence seems to be very adverse to me.” I think it is Mrs. Hannah More who says that she went into a place where they were manufacturing a carpet. See said, “There is no beauty there.” The man said, “It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw.” “Why, here is a piece hanging out and it is all in disorder.” “Do you know why, Ma’am? You are looking at the wrong side of the carpet.” So it is very often with us. You and I think Providence is adverse to us because we are looking at the wrong side! We look at the wrong side while we are here, but when we get to Heaven, we shall see the right side of God’s dealings—and when we do, we shall say, “O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all.” You have sometimes been puzzled to think why that friend was brought into the grave, or you have said, “Why was I made sick at such-and-such a time? Why did that trouble and that calamity fall upon me?” That is no business of yours—you are to believe that all things work together for one great purpose and that one thing never crosses another! But you must not expect to see it so just yet. Here, on earth, the machine appears broken to pieces and we can only see it in confusion. But in Heaven we shall see it all put together. Suppose I go into a place where some great engineer is manufacturing a machine and say to him, “Do you mean to tell me that this is a machine?” “Yes, and an exquisite

one it will be.” “It does not look like it. I could not put it together.” “Oh, no, Sir, you could not, but I can! Come and see it when I have put it together and you shall see that each part fits into its proper place, that each cog on the wheel will work on the cog of another wheel, and all the spokes will move together when I adjust them. Do not find fault with it and say, ‘One is too small, and another too large,’ because you know nothing at all about it.” So, dear Friends, you and I can never see more than parts of God’s ways. We only see here a wheel, and there a wheel—we must wait till we get to Heaven—then we shall see the right side of the carpet and then we shall see that it was one piece of machinery, with one end, one aim and one objective!  
V. My next thought is that, in this text PROVIDENCE IS COMPARED TO THE SEA.  
Look at the 16th verse. “The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl.” The word “beryl” is commonly used in Scripture to denote the ocean, because the beryl bears the greatest likeness to that deep green you sometimes see in the ocean and, at other times the blue appearance of the sea. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to the top of some high cliff and look down on the noisy ocean. It has been the theme of a thousand songs. It has borne myriads of fleets on its mighty breast yet there it is, still rolling on! If you begin to think about the ocean, though it is one of the minor parts of God’s works compared with the constellations in the heavens, and the globes which He has hung on high, you begin to be lost in the vastness of your conceptions concerning the greatness of God’s works. And so it is with Providence!  
It is like the ocean for another reason. The sea is never still—both day and night it is always moving. In the day, when the sun shines upon it, its waves march up in marshaled order as if about to capture the whole land and drown all the solid earth. Then again they march back as if each one is reluctant to yield up its prey. It is always moving—the moon shines upon it and the stars light it up—still it moves. Or darkness falls so that nothing can be seen—still it moves. By night and day the restless billows chant a boisterous hymn of glory, or murmur the solemn dirge of mariners wrecked far out in the depths. Such is Providence—by night and by day Providence is always going on. The farmer sleeps, but his wheat is growing. The mariner on the sea sleeps, but the wind and the waves are carrying on his boat. Providence, you never stop! Your mighty wheels never stay their everlasting circles! As the blue ocean has rolled on impetuously for ages, so shall Providence roll on until He who first set it in motion, shall bid it stop—and then its wheel shall cease, forever fixed by the eternal decree of the Almighty God!  
Again, you will see another reason why the sea is like Providence. Man cannot manage it. Who can rule or govern the sea? Men cannot. Xerxes made chains for the Hellespont and lashed the sea with whips because it washed away his boats, but what cared the sea about that? It laughed at him and if he had not been too great a coward to put himself on its bosom, it might have swallowed him. Canute put his chair on the beach and bade the waves retire. What cared they for him? They came and would have washed him and his chair away if he had not moved backward. The sea is not to be governed by man! A whole fleet sails over it and it is only like a feather blown by the wind across the surface of a brook! All we ever put on the sea is as nothing. It can never be restrained, nor chained, nor managed by man. Greedy man has carved the land, but the sea has no landmark. It is impetuous! It follows its own will. So does Providence. It will not be managed by man. Napoleon once heard it said that man proposes and God disposes. “Ah,” said Napoleon, “but I propose and dispose, too.” How do you think he proposed and disposed? He proposed to go and take Russia. He proposed to destroy that power—but how did he come back again? He came back solitary and alone, his mighty army perished and wasted, having well-near eaten and devoured one another through hunger! Man proposes and God disposes. Providence, like the sea, cannot be directed by man—it can only be controlled by God. Let man try to stand against God’s Providence and Providence will grind and crush him!  
VI. Again, GOD’S PROVIDENCE IS INTRICATE.  
That you will also find in the text—“The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.” I have just said that Providence is intricate. When Joseph brought his two sons up to Jacob’s deathbed and Jacob was about to bless them, Jacob guided his hands wittingly—and he put his right hand on the head of the younger son, and his left hand on the head of the elder one. Joseph said, “Not so, my Father, for this is the firstborn.” And Jacob said, “I know it, my son, I know it”—and he would not give the blessing in any other way but with his hands crossed—and God usually blesses His children by crossing His hands. We say, “Do not deal so with me,” but God says, “It must be even so, My child. There is a blessing on your head. Do not say, ‘Uncross Your hands,’ for that is the way to bless you most of all. I wish to put the greatest blessing upon you and, therefore, I have crossed My hands.” Providence is wonderfully intricate! You want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I can assure you! You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you? You must believe it! You want to see how it can bring good to the soul? You may be enabled to do so in a little time, but you cannot see it now—you must believe it! Honor God by trusting Him! God has many Gordian knots which wicked men may cut and which righteous men may try to unravel, but which God alone can untie! We see the wicked prosper. They flourish and great is their power, while the righteous are cast down. We say, “Why is this?” There are wheels within wheels. Do not fret yourselves because evil-doers are more prosperous than the godly. There may be a nation that seems to have right on its side—that nation may be crushed and another nation, which is tyrannical, may get the victory. Do not ask, “Why is this?” You shall know the reason when you get up yonder! Do not attempt to do what Gabriel never dares to do—to ask the reason why, for God will never give it.  
VII. Next, PROVIDENCE IS ALWAYS CORRECT.  
I shall not detain you long on this point. The Prophet saw the wheels and he well said, “they turned not when they went.” They always went straight—they never turned to the right or to the left. Such is God’s Providence. Man marks out plans. He says, “I shall build this tower.” He gets it half up and he finds he has not enough to finish it with—he has to pull it down, lay a smaller foundation, and build again. God never does so—He has a plan when He begins and He carries that plan out. He lays the foundation and He also lays the tombstone. There are some persons who talk about God changing His purpose—such people do not know what God is at all. How could God change!? God must either change from a better to a worse, or from a worse to a better. If He could change from a worse to a better, He is not perfect now. And if He could change from what He is to something worse, He would not be perfect then—and He would not be God! He cannot change. It is not possible that God should ever change or shift in any of His purposes. Can He change because He has not power? Why, Sirs, He could girdle this globe with mountains, or move the hills into the sea! Can He change because He has not patience enough? What? He who from His purpose never swerves? Shall He change because He has made a mistake? Shall the Most High Jehovah ever harbor an error in His Almighty Mind? “To err is human.” With the Divine Being, the whole plan goes on to completion and what He has ordained shall be! On the iron rock of Destiny it is written and it cannot be altered. God moves the wheel and the wheel goes on—and though a thousand armies stand in the way to stop it, it still goes on. “They turned not when they went.”  
I cannot make out what some of you do with your comfortless Gospel—believing that God loves you today and hates you tomorrow. That you are a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next. I could not believe a Gospel like that! If I were a heathen, I could believe it at once because I could manufacture a god of mud that I could alter with my fingers, and change to any fashion. But if I once believe in the God who “Was and Is, and is to come,” I know that He cannot change and I feel a constancy of faith and a firmness of hope which the cares and trials of this mortal life cannot destroy. He will not cast off His people whom He has chosen.  
VIII. Another thought is, that PROVIDENCE IS AMAZING.  
I shall not dwell on this point, but just remind you that the text says it is so. “As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four.” Even the man who knows that every wave that dashes against the ship is washing him nearer home—that every breath of wind that rises comes to his sail and fills it and sends it to the white cliffs of his native Albion—even the man who feels that everything is working for him—even he must say that Providence is amazing! Oh, that thought—it staggers thought! It is an idea that overwhelms me—that God is working in all that happens! The sins of man, the wickedness of our race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence—all these things are, in some mysterious way, working the will of God! I cannot explain this. I cannot tell you where human will and free agency unite with God’s Sovereignty and with His unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other since the time of Adam. Some have said, “Man does as he likes” and others have said, “God does as He pleases.” In one sense they are both true, but there is no man who has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We cannot tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by and yet I cannot go home except through a certain road. John Newton used to say that there were two streets by which he could go to St. Mary Woolnoth—but Providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbath I came down a certain street—I do not know why—and there was a young man who wished to speak to me. I say that was God’s Providence that I might meet that young man. Here was Providence, and yet there was my choice—how, I cannot tell. I cannot comprehend it. I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes—that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens—that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses—that the chirping of an aphid over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence, and the fall of sere leaves from the poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He who believes in God must believe this Truth of His. There is no standing point between this and atheism. There is no half way between an almighty God who works all things according to the good pleasure of His own will and no god at all. A god who cannot do as He pleases—a god whose will is frustrated—is not a God and cannot be a God! I could not believe in such a god as that.  
IX. My closing idea is that PROVIDENCE IS FULL OF WISDOM.  
You will see this by the last part of the 18th verse. “And their rims were full of eyes round about them four.” You will say, this morning, “Our minister is a fatalist.” Your minister is no such thing! Some will say, “Ah, he believes in fate.” He does not believe in fate at all! What is fate? Fate is this—Whatever is must be. But there is a difference between that and Providence. Providence says, Whatever God ordains must be. But the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some one great end. Fate does not say that. Fate simply says that the thing must be. Providence says that God moves the wheels along and there they are. If anything would go wrong, God puts it right and if there is anything that would move awry, He puts forth His hand and alters it. It comes to the same thing—but there is a difference as to the objective. There is all the difference between fate and Providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. Fate is a blind thing—it is the avalanche crushing the villages down below the mountain and destroying thousands of lives. Providence is not an avalanche, it is a rolling river, rippling at the first like a rill down the sides of the mountain, followed by minor streams, then it rolls in the broad ocean of everlasting love, working for the good of the human race. The Doctrine of Providence is not that what is, must be—but that, what is, works together for the good of our race and especially for the good of the chosen people of God. The wheels were full of eyes—they were not blind wheels!  
Let us close with the thought that there is the greatest wisdom in the workings of Providence. You were recently in great distress and you could not see why it was so with you. The next time you are in distress, you must say, “The wheels of Providence are full of eyes—I have but two eyes, but God’s wheels are full of eyes. God can see everything. I can only see one thing at a time. I see it looks good for me now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I know not what kind of flower that herb will yield. This affliction is a cassava root, full of poison and would soon destroy me, but God can put that in the oven so that all the poison shall evaporate and it shall become food for me to live upon. This trouble of mine seems to me to be destructive, but God can take all the destroying power out of it and so it shall be made into food for my soul.” Now, you tried one, groaning down in the valley, up with your heart! Away with your tears! Put your hand on your breast and make your heart stop its hard beating. Poor Soul, dash the cup of misery from your hand—you are not condemned— you are a pardoned Christian! Remember that God has said, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” Oh, how I would like to make your hearts like flint and steel against trouble! We cannot bear the winds of trouble—we are soon cast down and brokenhearted. When we are in prosperity, we are giants—we think we can do like Samson did—that we can take hold of the two pillars of trouble and distress and pull them down! But once tell us that the Philistines are upon us and we have no power.  
He who has faith is better than the stoic. The stoical philosopher bore trial because he believed it must be. The Christian bears it because he believes it is working for his good. The next time that trouble comes, or disease comes, or pestilence comes, smile at it and say—  
*“He that has made his refuge God  
Shall find a most secure abode,  
Shall walk all day beneath His shade  
And there at night shall rest his head.”*  
Let this be your shield to keep off the thrusts of distress and this be your high rock against all the winds of sorrow! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 103.**  
Verse 1. Bless the LORD, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless

His holy name. [See Sermons #1077, Volume 18—THE LORD BLESSING HIS SAINTS; #1078, Volume 18—THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD and #2121, Volume 36—THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Come, my Heart, be down in the dumps no longer! Take your harp from the willows, tune its strings and begin to pour forth its music to the praise of Divine Love!

2-4. Bless the LORD, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. This is a better crown than any emperor ever wore, unless he, also, was a child of God. Priceless and rare gems and jewels adorn this wondrous coronet—“who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.”

5-9. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide. [See Sermon #1171,

Volume 20—THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at  
http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Are you suffering His chiding just now? They are good for you, but they will not last forever. “He will not always chide.”

9, 10. Neither will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins. It is all of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed. “He has not dealt with us after our sins.”

10-12. Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our

transgressions from us. [See Sermon #1108, Volume 19—PLENARY ABSOLUTION— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Then surely

He will also remove our troubles from us! But if not, as He has removed our transgressions so far away that they can never be brought back again, we have real cause for joy whatever happens to us here.

13. Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that

fear Him. [See Sermons #941, Volume 16—THE TENDER PITY OF THE LORD; #1650, Volume 28— GOD’S FATHERLY PITY and #2639, Volume 45—OUR HEAVENLY FATHER’S PITY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The very best of them

are only objects of pity. Though they are the best, they need that He should look down upon them with Infinite Compassion.

14-19. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them. The LORD has prepared His Throne in the Heavens and His Kingdom rules over all. What a comfort this is for us! Over the great as well as over the little, over all parts of the earth, as well where war rages as where peace reigns, “His Kingdom rules over all.” Nothing happens without His permission! Even the little things of life are ordered by Him! The foreknown station of a rush by the riverside is as fixed as the place of a king—and the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses, for to God nothing is little and nothing is great.

20, 21. Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.” Let all the armies of Heaven break forth into one song—“Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.”

21, 22. You ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE MESSAGE FROM THE LORD’S MOUTH  
NO. 1431

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Son of man I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel: therefore hear the word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.” Ezekiel 3:17.**

IN most places the seasons in the Church are the reverse of those of Nature. Our wintry season generally comes when our hearers are busy in the fields, or resting in their summer retreats. And our harvest time for the ingathering of souls comes to us in the winter when, during the long evenings, the people can come together and special meetings for prayer and exhortation can be held. Just now, as the damp of autumn begins to fall and the days are sensibly shortening, we ought to take note of the signs of the times and begin sharpening our sickles for a plenteous harvest. The time when kings go forth to battle is coming on and we must muster the host. The season when we can, with special ease, gather the people and hopefully labor for their conversion is now at our doors and it is well that we gird up our loins for it!

I feel deeply anxious, dear Friends, that every time these seasons come round, all Christians should be fully prepared for them! I feel that we should make the best of every opportunity and use with thoroughheartedness, every hopeful occasion if, by any means, we may save some! Now is our time to use all our powers that we may be the means of bringing glory to our Lord Jesus Christ and of setting Him on high in hearts conquered by His love! We should all desire to take some part in this gracious work! Of course there are and always will be, in the Christian Church, special watchmen—chosen men who are set apart by God for the warning of the people—whose one business it is to cry aloud and spare not, whether men will hear or whether they will not!

Let us be thankful that the Lord gives us such men and let us beseech Him to multiply their number. We prayerfully expect to have our Ezekiels to whom the Lord shall say, “Son of man, I have made you a watchman.” But still, Beloved, when the camp is in imminent danger, every man should turn watchman! And though the special sentinels must keep their posts, walk their beats and must with double vigilance act as if everything depended upon them—yet all the rest of the host must also mount guard and aid in keeping the watches both by day and night. It seems to me, Brother, that if the Lord has opened your eyes, you have become a Seer. And when you have become a Seer and can see, you should also become a watchman and watch for the good of the Church of God and for the salvation of souls!

If this country were invaded, which may God grant it never may be, we could not confine the defense to our professional soldiers. No, every man would grasp such a weapon as he could reach and use it vigorously to drive the intruder over our white cliffs! I might even venture to say every

woman would do the same—and matrons would become Amazons! Dear are our hearths and homes and none of us would ask to be excused in the defense of our beloved isle! Even so in the work of the salvation of souls, every saved one longs to have a share! Can we let sinners perish? Can we permit our own kinsmen to go down into the Pit? No, not if our prayers, tears and earnest teaching can rescue them!

Jesus Christ, in mighty love has died to save sinners and He must be honored for His glorious deed of Grace—can we suffer His name to be trailed in the mire? Shall He still be despised and rejected by human hearts? Shall even the members of our own family refuse His gentle sway? No, not if our testimony may help to honor Him, nor if our earnest pleading may gain Him a throne in some human heart! We feel glad to think that Christ’s battles are not such as require strength of muscle and bone, nor do they need great mental capacity. Even the appointed watchman is set only to warn the people—he has not to charm them with eloquence, nor to electrify them with novelties of oratory! He is simply to warn them and the most plain language may suffice for that!

Surely it is a grave mistake of the present period that men think their preachers are bound to be oratorical and poetical. Why is such startling ability to be flaunted if the object is to warn a sinner to flee from the wrath to come? I fear that my Brothers are forgetting their real errand and are laboring to dazzle those whom the Lord sent them to warn! If a man is asleep and I have to wake him, I need not cultivate a fine tenor voice with which to sing him out of his slumbers! I have but to call with sufficient loudness and distinctness until he is startled. I am glad that you Christian people can all take a share in the service of your Master since that service is the warning of those around you! You will never deliver sensational discourses and I am sure you need not regret the inability! But you can give men warning from God. You can warn children, your own children to begin with. You can warn your neighbors. You can warn those of your own rank and age. You can warn all who come in your path, for that is simply to tell of danger and to recommend the way of escape. Brothers and Sisters, with but slender knowledge and stammering utterance, we can warn and we will!

I am going to address you, this morning, upon the supposition that all of you who are believers in Christ are panting to take a share in the necessary and earnest work of warning men, lest they come to destruction. May I not hope that this is the case? To me it seems as if there is nothing else worth living for! It cannot be worthwhile to linger in this land of sorrow and of toil unless God is to be glorified by us! Nothing but the accomplishment of His gracious purposes can compensate us for our exile from Heaven. No merely earthly object is worthy of an immortal spirit. If we could win the Indies—what is wealth? If we could compel the trumpet of fame to engross itself with our exploits—what is honor? There is nothing beneath the sun worth a man’s lifting his hand for except the glory of God! And God is best glorified by the conversion of men.

You believe that, my Brothers and Sisters, and therefore you mean to have a share in it, if it is but the bringing of one poor child to Christ! Therefore to you I speak with confidence, hoping that God may bless my words so that we may begin a new campaign right well prepared for it and so may achieve a greater success than any we have gained up to now! What are the qualifications for serving God by warning men? Ezekiel had them. What can we learn from the Lord’s words to Ezekiel by which we may better serve our Lord and act as watchmen to those around us? Three things I shall speak of this morning. First, the ears to be disciplined. Secondly, the tongue to be educated. Thirdly, a lesson in the text to be practiced. May the Holy Spirit bless the whole subject to us!

I. If we would be found really useful and serviceable for our Lord and Master, THE EARS ARE TO BE DISCIPLINED. Read the text. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word from My mouth.” To train the tongue you must begin with the ear. It is well known that no man is fit to command who has not first learned to obey—and assuredly no man is qualified to teach who has not, first of all, found pleasure in learning. You must be a disciple and sit at the Master’s feet before you can become an Apostle and go forth to speak in the Master’s name. To acquire eloquence we must train the ears and especially to warn our fellow men we must, ourselves, hear the voice of warning.

The text says, “Hear the word from My mouth.” What does this mean? I take it, first, that if we wish to be useful, our ears must be disciplined to hear only God’s Word. We must receive the Gospel as God’s own Word and go forth to proclaim it as such. I have lately met pretty frequently with the following sentiment—it is one of the fungi of this enlightened age of advanced thought—“The call is every day more loud for teaching which shall not appeal to the authority of the Bible but to the decision of the hearts and consciences of men! Our religious teachers should fall back upon the truth which men have gathered from their inner consciousness and should support their instructions by argument’s fetched from the experience of the thoughtful and philosophical. It is too late in the day to be always referring to a book and attempting to prove certain statements by the stereotyped utterances of an antiquated volume.”

That is the favorite notion and those who believe in it may go on and dote and dream as much as they please! And those who think their statements worth listening to may listen to them—they will, no doubt, greatly please themselves and they will, for awhile, amuse the little coteries who look up to them as little popes of a little party! They may even worship them as little gods, for surely the creator and maker of truth within himself falls not very short of deity! Brothers and Sisters, we can afford to let this plague of flies pass away—the nuisance is great, but it will not long endure! There will come an end of all this trifling. Man’s imaginations and reasoning are wood, hay and stubble—and the Day comes which will consume them!

Vainglorious mortals would supplant the Eternal Testimony with their maunderings, but this their way is their folly! Our assurance is that the teaching which is needed for this age must come more and more distinctly from the Bible and must court daily testing by the Bible! Teachers, if they are to have power, must sustain everything with, “Thus says the Lord.” Ours it is to stand or fall by Revelation and to declare, “We do not care one single farthing about your imaginary consciousness and the manufacturing of your dreams, your fancies and your whims! We declare to you that God has spoken and that what He has said, you are bound to receive because the Lord has said it!” This stands instead of all arguments—“The Lord has said it.”

Believe Him, for He cannot lie. We come to tell you of what we, ourselves, have received upon Divine authority and we demand that you receive our testimony, not because it is ours, but because it is supported by Divine authority and is, in fact, the echo of the Divine Word! Only by this mode of utterance can we hope to succeed! On any other footing we court failure and deserve it. Brother, do you say, “I desire to spread my religion because it is my own opinion”? You will never win anyone on such terms! How can you expect it? Your warning of another man, apart from God’s Truth, will be of no use to him, for your opinion is as good as his and his opinion is as good as yours! And neither is worth much!

Brother, do you say, “I regard my religion as my own views of things”? Ah, then your views of things and my views of things and everybody else’s views of things are worth little enough—and there is no use in making a stir about them! Any opinion which bears your name at the bottom, or mine, might just as well not be written! What are our names? What are our views? No, Brother, if you would speak as to affect the heart and conscience and destiny of men, you must repeat what you have received from God’s own mouth as God’s own Word—there is a value about that, a permanence, a certainty and it goes forth with a supreme majesty, involving woe upon any who dare reject it! It is power!

If it is, indeed, the Word of God, woe unto you if you do not speak it faithfully! And woe unto your hearers if they receive it not reverently! The very first thing, then, for us to remember, if we would be useful in warning men and saving souls, is that we feel the full conviction and impression that what we try to teach is God’s own Word. “You shall hear the word from My mouth.” We must feel it to be clothed with the imperial robe of Divine authority! We are not going to speak it because it is the doctrine authorized by the creed, nor because it is the doctrine of the community to which we belong, but because it is the sure Word of the living God! Here is power—power which hard hearts are forced to feel! Here is power before which even devils tremble! I guarantee you if you put God’s Word down among 50,000 words of men, it shall be like a lion among a flock of sheep, tearing them in pieces and it will prove by its own natural force from where it comes and where it goes!

Secondly, if we would have our ears educated, we must not only receive the Word as Divine authority, but to know what God’s Word is. Beloved, there are many who are willing to begin winning souls who had better first commence learning Christ. “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” was spoken to men who had been, for some time, with Jesus and had learned of Him. For others who were to be called it was provided that after Baptism they should be taught—that in due season they, also, might go forth to instruct the nations. I like not that a man should become so much a learner that he never wishes to speak and to teach others. But I like as little that a man should be so anxious to be a teacher that he runs before he is sent and tries to bring others to a Savior of whom he knows next to nothing!

Fill yourself, Brother, before you ask to be poured out, else there will not much come of your being poured out. Receive the bread and the fish from the Master, else you will have very little to distribute among the crowd. First of all get to know what it is you have to say, or else how can you speak for God? If a messenger runs swiftly and is out of breath at the end of his journey and then says, “I have something to say for my master, but I know not what it is,” he will be laughed at for his pains. His swift running is of little consequence, seeing he had nothing to carry. He should have waited till he knew the tidings which he had to bring. Brother, hear the Word from God’s mouth and then deliver it in God’s name!

What, then, shall we do? Let us study the Bible with diligence. Go to that fountain of the Truths of God, I pray you, and never be satisfied with a secondhand version of it. Go to the fountainhead and drink where the streams have not been muddied by human blundering. We desire to keep the Word of God pure, but we are conscious of infirmity—go to the undefiled well where there is no mixture of human error! Search the Inspired Book and desire to know everything which it teaches, for a little error may do much mischief to good teaching, like a fly in the pot of ointment. Even the omission of a Truth of God may injure a man’s usefulness to a very great extent.

The Lord does not bless some Churches as we would expect them to be blessed because they are in grievous error upon certain points and, though He will bless that part of the testimony which is true, yet the other portion hinders. Probably one reason why Christianity does not spread so rapidly just now as it once did is this—that it is so mixed up in most denominations with human tradition and opinion—and because, also, there is so little willingness to examine doubtful points to see whether or not they are according to the mind of God. The Church would be one with itself if it were one with the Truth of God. It would be impossible that there should be so many divisions if we all held to the one Lord, one faith, one Baptism—but there are sad mixtures which are allowed to go on from year to year unchallenged—and if any man is honest enough to speak out, he is straightway charged with bigotry and uncharitableness! While these things are so, the blessing will be restrained.

My dear Brother, if you would be eminently useful, let your mind bow before the doctrines of the Scripture! Seek to know all that the Bible teaches, especially upon the main points of salvation, and yield yourself to the mind of Christ in all things. Desire to tell your fellow men just what the Lord tells you, no more and no less! And endeavor throughout your whole life to follow after the revealed Truth of God in its purity, rather than the dogmas of the fathers or the decrees of the sects. The Truth of God as it is in Jesus, pure and simple as we find it in the Word of God, should be our rule and guide. This will greatly help us towards success. It does not seem a very practical remark, but it is so.

The Holy Spirit first gives the Truth of God to our understanding and then gives us Grace to impart it to others. Get your ears cleansed, thoroughly cleansed, to hear God’s Word as God’s Word and be determined to

know thoroughly what God’s Word has really taught and thus shall you be instructed to speak as God’s mouth to men. The great thing, I believe, with a successful winner of souls is to hear God’s Truth from God’s own mouth. What do I mean by this? I mean that a second-hand message is sure to be weakly delivered. A Brother repeats a story which somebody else has told to him! How cold it gets in passing from hand to hand—he who first saw the fact told it with far more life and energy!

What you need to do, Brother, is to tell the message as God, Himself, has told it to you by His Holy Spirit. Look how Ezekiel was prepared to prophesy! He says, “The hand of the Lord was there upon me and He said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with you.” Yes, we must get alone with God and hear what He will speak, for only can we fitly be His mouth to others! Do you want to know Christ’s way of making men useful? Turn to Mark 3:13-15 and read, “He went up into a mountain and called unto him whom He would and they came unto Him. And He ordained 12, that they should be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils.”

Do you see the order? He calls them to Him—you must not dream of winning souls till you first come to Christ, yourself. Next we read, “That they might be with Him”—you cannot go and teach Christ, or bring others to Him unless you have first been with Him. Communion with Jesus is training for service! To abide with your Lord must be your college and your preparation class for teaching others. After the fellowship comes the work—“That He might send them forth to preach and to have power.” The process requires that the man who is to have power for Christ must first be with Christ. He cannot work miracles till He has dwelt with the great Miracle-Worker. “You shall hear the word from My mouth.”

There lies the word in the Book. What infinite majesty is there! As I read each letter in that Book of God, I worship the eternal mind which dictated it! But oh, when a passage of Scripture leaps out of the Book and enters into my soul by the Divine flame of the Holy Spirit, how much more mighty it appears! When my inner ears hears God speak the text, what energy there is about it! Sitting down with the Bible on my knee, I say to myself, “This is no common book which lies before me—there is Inspiration here, not the inspiration of Milton or of Shakespeare, but Divine Inspiration—this is the language of the Eternal as truly so as though I now saw Sinai on a blaze and heard out of the thick darkness these accents ringing with trumpet tones and with the deep thunder of, “Thus says the Lord.”

When we thus consider, we are in a right mood to hear the Lord’s Word and to speak it to others. We must acknowledge and feel the majesty of the Gospel and be conscious of its power, or we shall not rightly warn men. Brothers, since this Book is God’s Word to your own souls, take care that you deliver it in deep reverence and holy awe to those whom you aim to instruct! Is it not the voice of God to you? When it speaks home to your heart, does it not move you as nothing else can do? I confess that the words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else ever can—they bear me aloft or dash me down! They tear me in pieces or they build me up after an unrivalled fashion! The Words of God have more power over me than ever David’s fingers had over his harp! Is it not so with you? Well, you will speak to others with power in proportion as you continually feel the power of the Word of God over your own heart and conscience.

This is very wonderful, this hearing the Truth of God newly spoken from the Lord’s mouth. Some will not know what I mean, but others of you will. The Holy Spirit has a way of showing unto us the old texts in a new light and applying them with new force—and this is what we greatly need. “You shall hear the word from My mouth.” I would like you teachers, this afternoon, before you go to your classes, to go upstairs and say, “Good Master, let us hear what we have to tell the children. Let us hear it in our souls as from Yourself. We are going to warn and instruct and invite them—be pleased to show us how. Master, say the words to us! Make us hear Your voice and when we have heard Your message from Your own lips, we shall talk to the children in quite another style from that which is usual to us.” Brothers and Sisters, in Spirit maintain your fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and so will you warn souls with warm, loving admonitions which God will bless! Let us have done with second-hand messages! Speak as the oracles of God!

Once more, to have our ears well tutored, we must feel the force of the Truth of God that we deliver. Ezekiel had to eat the roll. It must enter into himself before he could reveal its contents to the people. So we must feel the force and power of the Gospel before we can effectually declare it. Sin—are you going to talk about the evil of it? Do you know the evil of it, yourself? Get back to the place of repentance where you once wet the earth with your tears and talk to children or grown-up people about sin in that spirit! Pardon—are you going to speak about that? Do you know the sweetness of it? Go to the place where you first saw the flowing of the ever precious blood and feel, again, your load of guilt removed and you will speak of it most sweetly!

The power of the Holy Spirit—are you going to speak about that? Have you felt His quickening, enlightening, comforting and sanctifying influence? Then according as you have felt, you will be able to speak with effectiveness! It is poor work to preach a Christ you never knew! It is terrible to talk of bread you have never tasted; of living water you never drank and of joys you never felt! The farmer that labors must first be a partaker of the fruits. Go home and ask the Lord to teach you, but do not go on His errands till first you have sat at His feet, for unto those whom He has not taught, God says, “What have you to do that you should declare My statutes? First come and hear the word from My mouth and then give the people warning from Me.”

I think I have said enough to show how the ears are to be disciplined. II. Secondly, THE TONGUE IS TO BE EDUCATED. That is, indeed, the aim of the discipline of the ears. And to what end is the tongue educated? I answer, first, to be able to deliver an unpleasant message. Any man’s tongue is swift in telling good things, at least it ought to be, or where else is humanity? We are glad enough to tell you glad tidings of good things, but he that is to be useful must be willing to speak unpleasant things. Brothers and Sisters, are you ready when you meet with careless people to tell them Truths of God that will be unpalatable to them! And when they are awakened, are you willing, in God’s name, to try and beat to pieces their refuges of lies—to tell them plainly of the mistakes that they are so fond of and point them to the only way of salvation?  
You and I cannot be useful if we want to be sweet as honey in the mouths of men! God will never bless us if we wish to please men so that they may think well of us. Are you willing to tell them what will break your own heart in the telling and break theirs in the hearing? If not, you are not fit to serve the Lord! You must be willing to go and speak for God though you will be rejected! See the seventh verse, where God says, “They will not listen unto you, for they will not listen unto Me.” If they reject the Master, will they receive the servant? They took up stones to stone your own dear Lord and Master! And they finally took nails to fasten Him to the Cross! Do you think they will listen to you?  
If God is to bless you, dear Friend, you must be willing to bear witness for Him even if none should ever believe a word you say—because in so doing you will deliver your soul! Take good heed, all of you, to this danger of being guilty of the blood of others. Have not some of you quite forgotten it? There is blood on your garments! Do you see the spots? Some of you who never said a word for Christ to your own children, I say there are big drops of soul-blood on your garments! Soul-blood is worse than the blood of the body and you are smeared with it! Can’t you see the spots? Wash them out, I pray you! Oh, you say, it is of no use warning them—they would only laugh at you! But you would lose the blood stains if you did. Their blood would not be required at your hands and, therefore, if you want to be useful, be willing to do unpleasant duties in order to feel, “I have warned them and cleared my soul.”  
Next, you need your tongue tutored to speak the Truth of God as having, yourself, heard it. You know there are several ways of speaking. I was trying to illustrate differences of speaking when addressing my students the other day. I said, “Suppose you saw, by the look of my face, while I was sitting here, that I was in a terrible state of indignation when I rose to address you? You would say, ‘Now we shall have it! We can see by the look of him that he will drive at us.’” Just so, when a man preaches, or warns others—it ought to be in a living style which indicates that something is coming. The man should be full of emotion, not moved by anger, but by a sacred passion which awakens him and makes the people feel that he is in awful earnest, carried out of himself, not delivering set phrases and words from his mouth outwards, but speaking from his inmost heart!  
Now, if we were to meet with our Lord Jesus, Himself, and were then to speak of Him in the state of mind in which His Presence left us, what a style of speech that would be! I think I hear a mother who has been with Jesus talking to her girl. She says, “Dear child, there is such joy in loving Jesus that I pant for you to know it! He is so great and good that my dear little daughter must not forget Him.” I can imagine that a father has met with the Lord Jesus and felt God’s Truth sent into his own soul by the Holy Spirit—and I am sure that when he gets his boy, alone, he pleads with him in deep and tender earnestness which commands the boy’s ear and heart! He does not know what has happened to his father—he is so earnest and pleads so seriously—but the secret reason is that the father has listened to the Lord, Himself, and is, himself, the echo of that voice!  
Facts vividly brought before the mind greatly influence a speaker. A sinner seen as lost touches the heart. Jesus seen as crucified affects the speech! If I were to stand up in the council of a certain town to urge them to look to their fire escapes, I should do it with tremendous vehemence if I had just come out of the midst of that shuddering crowd which saw a poor woman hanging out of the window in the midst of the flames for lack of proper apparatus to reach her! Any man, fresh from such a sight, would plead with energy! His whole soul would burn as he thought of the poor perishing fellow creature in the midst of the fire! Would not yours? It is just so when you come fresh from talking with God—the Truth of God is vividly realized—an awe is upon you and holy zeal and sacred ardor inflame your breast!  
If you dwell away from God you do not feel the value of the Gospel message, nor the weight of men’s souls. The grandest of all the Truths of God lose force when they cease to be realized facts—but their power returns when we come, again, under their actual influence! When the voice of Jesus’ love is still ringing in your ears, then with a deep awestruck solemnity your whole soul is poured forth at your mouth and you speak as pleading with men that they would yield to God and accept His great salvation!  
The tongue must speak when the ears are tingling with the message of the Lord! The tongue needs to be trained in the case of each one of us to deliver the message as from God. I believe that God has given commission to every Christian who knows the Truth of God, to tell it, and that there is authority given to every man who has the living water within himself to let it flow out, for it is written, “Out of the midst of him shall flow rivers of living water.” You see your calling, Brothers. You may not all be called to the work of prophesying as ministers are, but you are all called by some means to warn men of the wrath to come and lead them to Christ—and I want you to feel that God is at the back of you when you warn sinners.  
You never pray for a soul; you never weep over a soul; you never drop one kernel of Divine Truth into a human ear; you never utter one word of warning or expostulation but what God is with you in so doing. God will acknowledge His Truth, therefore never be ashamed of it. Make your face like adamant if their hearts are like adamant—if they are not ashamed to sin, do not you be ashamed to warn them! If they are not ashamed of their unbelief, be not you ashamed of your faith in the Divine Testimony! The hosts of Heaven are on your side, therefore be not dismayed! Your faith may hear the noise of the wings of the living creatures, the noise of the wheels and the noise of a great rushing, for all Heaven is astir when the watchman moves to warn the people (Ezekiel 3:13). If God is at your back, speak boldly and do not let your testimony be silenced!  
The Lord tells Ezekiel that the people would be a restraint to him and how often they are so. Non-success often ties the preacher up so that he can scarcely speak. “You, O Son of Man, behold they shall put bands upon you and shall bind you with them, and you shall not go out among them.” But what a grand verse is the twenty-seventh—“But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth and you shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord God. He that hears, let him hear; and he that forbears, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.” None can silence a mouth which God has opened! May we henceforth feel that now, between here and Heaven, we have souls committed to our charge and that we will be clear of their blood!  
Each one of you has his little plot of ground to sow. You must resolve that it shall not lie waste. You will be called home very soon, my dear fellow workers, therefore work while it is day. I who have to lead you in this plowing may soon be called away. I feel it and I feel that the same is true of each one of us—therefore, since these poor souls are dying as well as we are and they are sinking into Hell forever, let us be in earnest and may God help us to save them! Let us begin to weep, for weeping, perhaps, may be the fittest beginning of a higher life as it was the beginning of our natural life. Let us cry unto God! Let us watch for opportunities and as they come, let us avail ourselves of them, if by any means we may save some. We dare no longer fritter away life. Dare we? We dare not furnish a continuation of man’s foolish history if, indeed, it is true that “all the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players.”  
We do not believe that statement and if it is true we will alter it. Let us upset the stage, tear off the masks and truly live. “Life is real, life is earnest,” as we shall know at the Judgment Seat of God! How real will it look by the light of the Last Great Day! Come, let us ask to have ears and tongue trained and let us begin, now, to serve our Lord by warning our fellow men!  
III. I finish my sermon this morning by, in the third place, endeavoring to practice THE LESSON OF THE TEXT. I desire to speak to those of you who are unconverted and to speak as if I had just come from an interview with my Lord and Master, as I trust I have. I want to speak as if I had just heard Him say what I am going to repeat to you. Try and help me with your imagination and may God give you faith!  
I have to say to you, dear Friends now present, that whatever may be your natural excellence of character and whatever the religiousness of your training, yet you must all of you be born again! You heard me say, “You must be born again,” but I want to say it as Jesus said it when, one evening, He was visited by a ruler of the Jews, a man of spotless character, of admirable reputation and of deep learning. Sitting alone with Him, our Lord treated Him with great kindness, but yet with solemn emphasis. He said, “You must be born again.”  
Yes, young Friend, there is much about you that is very admirable and you know a great deal of Divine Truth, but, “You must be born again.” The Master would lay a strong tender emphasis upon the, “must.” “You must be born again.” Jesus would not demand of us more than is absolutely necessary, nor say a syllable that would tend to shut a soul out of Heaven. If He says, “You must,” why then we must! I want you to admit that necessity.  
Next I desire to introduce you to Jesus sitting at the well with the woman of Samaria. You can see the smile upon His countenance as He instructs her. I need you, now, to hear Him say these words—“God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” I should like to say to you, dear Friend, that all the outward forms of religion in the world will be of no value to you unless you are spiritual. You must have a spiritual mind and a spiritual nature through being born again—and then you must worship God in a spiritual way, for mere outward religion is nothing in His sight. I desire to warn you as to that fact, but I would rather you should hear my Master say the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, “for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” You believe it, do you not? Oh, ask that the Spirit of God would teach you how to worship in spirit and in truth!  
Now listen to my Master again. He is addressing the Jews and He uses these words. I give them accurately translated—“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me that you might have life.” I am glad that you read your Bibles, but how is it that you feel so easy when you have read your chapter every day? Do you think you will get salvation by Bible reading? Alas, you are in error! You must go further than that! You must go to Christ Jesus Himself! Oh, that you would, by an act of faith, come to Him this morning! Do you think this Truth of God is hard? I hope you don’t, for it is the teaching of Jesus and I have heard Him say it to my own soul. You must come to Jesus, Himself, or the Scriptures will do you no good! The Scriptures are a road sign pointing to Christ—it will never do to sit down by the road sign—we must hasten on to find the Lord, Himself.  
Listen to my Master once again. He says to the Jews, “If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” I know, now, you will say that I speak hard things! Perhaps I do, but not with a hard heart. Now, my Lord is always tender, never man spoke like this Man and never man wept as He did when He had a hard thing to say. Hear, then, His declaration, “Except you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” “Die in your sins”? Do you know what that means? To die in irons, to die in a ditch, to die on the gallows—these are nothing compared with dying in your sins!  
I must tell you some other things which my Master says, because nowadays the fine new theologians do not like to have them spoken. I have heard Him speak them in my very soul and I must, therefore, warn you of them. He says there are tares growing among the wheat and that the Day will come when the angels will “gather the tares in bundles to burn them.” That is how He puts the destiny of the ungodly! Hear how the modern theologians hiss between their teeth, “Dreadful language. These horrible expressions are borrowed from Dante and Milton and the old writers.”  
No Dante, Milton, or the old writers had existed then, but Jesus Himself says, “The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Such will be the lot of some of you unless you repent! Though growing up among Christian people and hearing the Gospel—and looking very much like Christians—you will be separated from among the wheat to be cast into the fire! Some of you are rich and enjoy yourselves a great deal. I must tell you what Jesus said of one who fared sumptuously every day but cared not for his soul.  
He said, “The rich man, also, died and was buried. And in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.” My Lord, my sweet Lord— my dying, my bleeding Lord—the Man who receives sinners, it was thus He spoke! I would not speak less tenderly than He if I were able, but I want to assure you rich people who have your comforts in this life and yet are out of Christ, that this is what will happen to you! Nor will this be for a time, but forever!  
You will never be able to escape from torment, according to my Master’s teaching, for He says there is a great gulf fixed so that they who would come from there cannot. I pray you, therefore, take warning, as I would give you warning from His mouth! The last thing that was ever seen of my Lord and Master upon earth was this. He stood on tiptoe on this world which had treated Him so ill and around Him were gathered a few disciples. Just before He rose out of their sight He addressed them in loving tones and said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” They stood with their ears and eyes open to know how He would have them put the Gospel and He said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”  
Did He say that? Yes, just before the cloud received Him out of their sight, He said, “He that believes not shall be damned.” It was He that said it! I should have liked to have seen how He looked when He thus spoke— the evident pain which crossed His mind and showed itself in His eyes as He said in effect, “There will be some who will not believe, but you must tell them plainly, “He that believes not shall be damned.” I do warn you of this, men and women, every one of you—if I am not a believer in Christ, I shall be damned! And if you are not believers you will be damned! I beseech you run not so dreadful a risk!  
Trust yourselves with Jesus, right now, and you shall be saved, for it is He that says it, not I—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” And again, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” I do not think He meant me to try and put this in any pretty shape in order to amuse you with it and so I have not tried to do so. I have spoken to you His own Word as best I know how. May He be pleased to weed out my frailties and throw them away, but may all that is His own live in your souls and mine unto eternal life! Amen.

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SPARED!  
NO. 2807

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1860-61.

**“I was left.”  
Ezekiel 9:8.**

THE vision of Ezekiel which is recorded in the previous chapter brought to light the abominations of the house of Judah. The vision which follows in this chapter shows the terrible retribution that the Lord God brought upon the guilty nation, beginning at Jerusalem.

He beheld the men of slaughter who come forth with their weapons. He marked them begin the destroying work at the gate of the Temple. He saw them proceed through the main streets and not omit a single lane— they utterly slew all those who were not marked with the mark of the writer’s inkhorn on their brow. He stood alone—that Prophet of the Lord—himself spared in the midst of universal carnage and, as the carcasses fell at his feet, and the bodies stained with gore lay all around him, he said, “I was left.” He stood alive among the dead because he was found faithful among the faithless—he survived in the midst of universal destruction because he had served his God in the midst of universal depravity.

We shall now take the sentence altogether apart from Ezekiel’s vision and appropriate it to ourselves. And I think, when we read it over, and repeat it, “I was left,” it very naturally invites us to take a review of the past. It also very readily suggests a prospect of the future and, I think, it also permits a terrible contrast in reserve for the impenitent.

I. First of all, then, my Brothers and Sisters, we have here a pathetic reflection which seems to invite us to take A SOLEMN REVIEW—“I was left.”

You remember, many of you, times of sickness, when cholera was in your streets. You may forget that season of pestilence, but I never can— when the duties of my pastorate called me to continually walk among your terror-stricken households and to see the dying and the dead. Impressed upon my young heart must ever remain some of those sad scenes I witnessed when I first came to this metropolis and was, really, employed at that time to bury the dead rather than to bless the living. Some of you have passed through not only one season of cholera, but many, and you have been present, too, perhaps, in climates where fever has prostrated its hundreds and where the plague and other dire diseases have emptied out their quivers and every arrow has found its mark in the heart of some one of your companions. Yet you have been left.

You walked among the graves, but you did not stumble into them. Fierce and fatal maladies lurked in your path, but they were not allowed to devour you. The bullets of Death whistled by your ears and yet you stood alive, for his bullet had no billet for your heart. You can look back, some of you, through fifty, sixty, 70 years. Your bald and gray heads tell the story that you are no more raw recruits in the warfare of life. You have become veterans, if not invalids, in the army. You are ready to retire, to put off your armor and give place to others. Look back, Brothers and Sisters, I say, you who have come into the sere and yellow leaf— remember the many seasons in which you have seen death hailing multitudes about you—and think, “I was left.”

And we, too, who are younger, in whose veins our blood still leaps in vigor, can remember times of peril when thousands fell about us, yet we can say, in God’s house, with great emphasis, “I was left”—reserved, great God, when many others perished. Sustained, standing on the rock of life when the waves of death dashed about me, the spray fell heavily upon me and my body was saturated with disease and pain—yet am I still alive— still permitted to mingle with the busy tribes of men!

Now, then, what does such a review as this suggest? Ought we not, each one of us, to ask the question, Why was I spared? Why was I left? Many of you were, at that time—and some of you are even now dead in trespasses and sins! You were not spared because of your fruitfulness, for you brought forth nothing but the grapes of Gomorrah! Certainly God did not stay His sword because of anything good in you. A multitude of clamorous evils in your disposition, if not in your conduct, might well have demanded your summary execution. But you were spared. Let me ask you why? Was it that mercy might yet visit you—that Grace might yet renew your soul? Have you found it so? Has Sovereign Grace overcome you, beaten down your prejudices, thawed your icy heart, broken your stony will in pieces? Say, Sinner, in looking back upon the times when you have been left, were you spared in order that you might be saved with a great salvation?

And if you cannot say, “Yes,” to that question, let me ask you whether it may not yet be so? Soul, why has God spared you so long, while you are yet His enemy, a stranger to Him and far off from Him by wicked works? Or, on the contrary, has He spared you—I tremble at the bare mention of the possibility—has He prolonged your days to develop your propensities, that you may grow riper for damnation—that you may fill up your measure of crying iniquity and then go down to the Pit a seared and dry sinner, like wood that is ready for the fire? Can it be so? Shall these spared moments be spoiled by more misdemeanors, or shall they be given up to repentance and to prayer? Will you now, before the last of your sins shall set in everlasting darkness, will you now look to Him? If so, you will have reason to bless God through all eternity, that you were left—because you were left that you might yet seek and might yet find Him who is the Savior of sinners!

Do I speak to many of you who are Christians, who, too, have been left? When better saints than you were snatched away from earthly ties and creature kindred—when brighter stars than you were enclouded in night—were you still permitted to shine with your poor flickering ray? Why was it, great God? Why am I now left? Let me ask myself that question. In sparing me so long, my Lord, have You not something more for me to do? Is there not some purpose, not conceived in my soul, which You will yet suggest to me—and to carry out which You will yet give me Grace and strength and spare me a little while longer? Am I yet immortal or shielded at least from every arrow of death because my work is incomplete? Is the tale of my years prolonged because the full tale of the bricks has not yet been made up? Then show me what You would have me do! Since thus I have been left, help me to feel myself a specially-consecrated man, left for a purpose, reserved for some end, otherwise I had been worms many years ago and my body had crumbled back to its mother earth! Christian, I say, always be asking yourself this question, but especially be asking it when you are preserved in times of more than ordinary sickness and mortality. If I am left, why am I left? Why am I not taken home to Heaven? Why do I not enter into my rest? Great Lord and Master, show me what You would have me do and give me Grace and strength to do it!

Let us change the review for a moment and look upon the sparing mercy of God in another light. “I was left.” Some of you now present, whose history I well know, can say, “I was left,” and say it with peculiar emphasis. You were born of ungodly parents. The earliest words you can remember were base and blasphemous—too bad to repeat. You can remember how the first breath your infant lungs received was tainted air— the air of vice, of sin and iniquity. You grew up, you and your brothers and your sisters, side by side. You filled the home with sin. You went on together in your youthful crimes and encouraged each other in evil habits. Thus you grew up to manhood and then you were banded together in ties of immorality as well as in ties of blood. You added to your number—you took in fresh associates. As your family circle increased, so did the flagrancy of your conduct. You all conspired to break the Sabbath. You devised the same schemes and perpetrated the same improprieties. You recollect how one and another of your old comrades died—you followed them to their graves and your merriment was checked a little while—but it soon broke out again. Then a sister died, steeped to the mouth in infidelity. After that, a brother was taken—he had no hope in his death—all was darkness and despair before him. And so, Sinner, you have outlived all your friends! If you are inclined to go to Hell, you must go there along a beaten track—a path which, as you look back upon the way you have trodden, is stained with blood, for you can remember how all who have been before you have gone to the long home in dismal gloom, without a glimpse or ray of joy.

And now you are left, Sinner, and, blessed be God, it may be you can say, “Yes, and I am not only left, but I am here in the House of Prayer! And if I know my own heart—there is nothing I should hate so much as to live my old life over again. Here I am and I never believed I would ever be here! I look back with mournfulness, indeed, upon those who have departed, but, though mourning them, I express my gratitude to God that I am not in torments—not in Hell—but still here! Yes, not only here, but having a hope that I shall one day see the face of Christ and stand amidst blazing worlds robed in His righteousness and preserved by His love.”

You have been left, then—and what ought you to say? Ought you to boast? Oh, no! Be doubly humble! Should you take the glory to yourself? No! Put the crown upon the head of free, rich, undeserved Grace! And what should you do above all other men? Why, you should be doubly pledged to serve Christ! As you served the devil through thick and thin until you came to serve him, alone, and your company had all departed, so, by Divine Grace, may you be pledged to Christ—to follow Him, though all the world should despise Him—and to hold on to the end, until, if every professor should be an apostate, it might yet be said of you at the last, “He was left. He stood alone in sin while his comrades died and then he stood alone in Christ when his companions deserted him.” Thus of you it shall always be said, “He was left.”

This suggests also one more form of the same review. What a special Providence has watched over some of us and guarded our feeble frames! There are some of you, in particular, who have been left to such an age that, as you look back upon your youthful days, you recall far more of kinsfolk in the tomb than remain in the world, more under the earth than above it! In your dreams you are the associates of the dead. Still you are left! Preserved amidst a thousand dangers of infancy, then kept in youth, steered safely over the shoals and quicksands of an immature age and over the rocks and reefs of manhood, you have been brought past the ordinary period of mortal life—and yet you are still here. Seventy years exposed to perpetual death and yet preserved till you have come almost, perhaps, to your fourscore years! You have been left, my dear Brother or Sister—and why are you left? Why is it that brothers and sisters are all gone? Why is it that the ranks of your old schoolmates have gradually thinned? You cannot remember one, now alive, who was your companion in youth. How is it that now, you, who have lived in a certain quarter so long, see new names there on all the shop doors, new faces in the street and everything new to what you once saw in your young days? Why are you spared? Are you an unconverted man? Are you an unconverted woman? To what end are you spared? Is it that you may, at the 11th hour be saved? God grant it may be so! Or are you spared till you shall have sinned yourself into the lowest depths of Hell, that you may go there the most aggravated sinner because of the oft-repeated warnings so often neglected—are you spared for this, or is it that you may yet be saved?

But are you a Christian? Then it is not hard for you to answer the question, “Why are you spared?” I do not believe there is an old woman on earth, living in the most obscure cottage in England and sitting this very night in a dark attic, with her candle gone out, without means to buy another—I do not believe that old woman would be kept out of Heaven five minutes unless God had something for her to do on earth! And I do not think that yon gray-headed man would still be preserved unless there was something for him to do. Tell it out, tell it out, you aged man! Tell the story of that preserving Grace which has kept you up till now! Tell to your children and to your children’s children what a God He is whom you have trusted! Stand up as a hoary patriarch and tell how He delivered you in six troubles and in seven suffered no evil to touch you! Bear to coming generations your faithful witness that His Word is true and that His promise cannot fail! Lean on your staff and say, before you die in the midst of your family, “Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.” Let your ripe days bring forth a mellow testimony to His love and, as you become more and more advanced in years, so be you more and more advanced in knowledge and in confirmed assurance of the Immutability of His counsel, the truthfulness of His oath, the preciousness of His blood and the sureness of the salvation of all those who put their trust in Him! Then shall we know that you are spared for a high and noble purpose, indeed! You shall say it with tears of gratitude and we will listen with smiles of joy—“I was left.”

II. I must rather suggest these reviews than follow them up, though, did time permit, we might well enlarge abundantly and, therefore, I must hurry on to invite you to A PROSPECT.

You and I shall soon pass out of this world into another. This life is, as it were, but the ferry—we are being carried across and we shall soon come to the true shore, the real terra firma—for here there is nothing that is substantial. When we shall come into that next world, we have to expect, by-and-by, a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. And in that solemn day we are to expect that all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall be gathered together in one place. And He shall come, who came once to suffer—He shall come to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity! He who came as an Infant shall come as the Infinite! He who lay wrapped in swaddling bands shall come girt about the waist with a golden girdle, with a rainbow wreath and robes of storm! There shall we all stand, a vast, innumerable company—earth shall be crowned from her valley’s deepest base to the mountain’s summit—and the sea’s waves shall become the solid standing-place of men and women who have slept beneath its torrents. Then shall every eye be fixed on Him, every ear shall be open to Him and every heart shall watch with solemn awe and dread suspense for the transactions of that greatest of all days, that Day of Days, that sealing up of the ages, that completing of the dispensation!

In solemn pomp the Savior comes and His angels with Him. You hear His voice as He cries, “Gather together the tares in bundles to burn them.” Behold the reapers, how they come with wings of fire! See how they grasp their sharp sickles which have long been grinding upon the millstone of God’s long-suffering, but have become sharpened at the last. Do you see them as they approach? There they are, mowing down a nation with their sickles! The vile idolaters have just now fallen and yonder a family of blasphemers has been crushed beneath the feet of the reapers! See there a bundle of drunkards being carried away upon the reapers shoulders to the great blazing fire. See again, in another place, the whoremonger, the adulterer, the unchaste and such like, tied up in vast bundles—bundles the ropes of which shall never be cut—and see them cast into the fire and see how they blaze in the unutterable torments of that Pit! And shall I be left? Great God, shall I stand there wrapped in His righteousness, alone, the righteousness of Him who sits as my Judge, erect upon the Judgment Seat? Shall I, when the wicked shall cry, “Rocks, hide us; mountains, on us fall,” gaze upon Him? Shall these eyes look up, shall this face dare to turn itself to the face of Him that sits upon the Throne? Shall I stand calm and unmoved amidst universal terror and dismay? Shall I be numbered with the goodly company, who, clothed with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, shall await the shock, shall see the wicked hurled to destruction and feel and know themselves secure?

Shall it be so or shall I be bound up in a bundle to burn and swept away forever by the breath of God’s nostrils, like the chaff driven before the wind? It must be one or the other! Which shall it be? Can I answer that question? Can I tell? I can tell it—tell it now—for I have in this very Chapter of God’s Word, that which teaches me how to judge myself! They who are preserved have the mark on their foreheads! And they have a character as well as a mark—and their character is that they sigh and cry for all the abominations of the wicked. Then, if I hate sin, and if I sigh because others love it—if I cry because I, myself, through infirmity fall into it—if the sin of myself and the sin of others is a constant source of grief and vexation of spirit to me—then I have that mark and evidence of those who shall neither sigh nor cry in the world to come, for sorrow and sighing shall flee away!

Have I the blood-mark on my brow today? Say, my Soul, have you put your trust in Jesus Christ, alone, and as the fruit of that faith, has your faith learned how to love, not only Him that saved you, but others, too, who as yet are unsaved? And do I sigh and cry within while I bear the blood-mark without! Come Brother, Sister, answer this for yourself, I charge you! I charge you do so by the tottering earth and by the ruined pillars of Heaven that shall surely shake! I pray you, by the cherubim and seraphim that shall be before the Throne of the Great Judge by the blazing lightning that shall then illumine the thick darkness and make the sun amazed, and turn the moon into blood—by Him whose tongue is like a flame, like a sword of fire! I charge you by Him who shall judge you, and try you, and read your heart, and declare your ways, and divide unto you your eternal portion! I charge you by the certainties of death, by the sureness of judgment, by the glories of Heaven, by the solemnities of Hell—I beseech, implore, command, entreat you—ask yourself, now, “Shall I be left? Do I believe in Christ? Have I been born-again? Have I a new heart and a right spirit? Or am I still what I always was—God’s enemy, Christ’s despiser, cursed by the Law of God, cast out from the Gospel, without God and without hope—a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel?”

I cannot speak to you as earnestly as I would to God that I could. I want to thrust this question into your very loins and stir up your heart’s deepest thoughts with it. Sinner, what will become of you when God shall winnow the chaff from the wheat? What will be your portion? You that stand in the aisle, yonder, what will be your portion? You who are crowded over there—what will your portion be when He shall come and nothing shall escape His eyes? Say, shall you hear Him? Say, and shall your heart-strings crack while He utters the thundering sound, “Depart, you cursed”? Or shall it be your happy lot—your soul transported all the while with unutterable bliss—to hear Him say, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”? Our text reveals a prospect, I pray you to look at it, gaze across the narrow stream of death, and say. “Shall I be left?”—

*“When you, my righteous Judge, shall come To fetch Your ransomed people home,  
Shall I among them stand?  
Shall such a worthless worm as I,  
Who sometimes am afraid to die  
Be found at Your right hand?  
I love to meet among them now,  
Before Your gracious feet to bow,  
Though vilest of them all!  
But can I bear the piercing thought—  
What if my name should be left out  
When You for them shall call?  
Prevent, prevent it by Your Grace!  
Be You, dear Lord, my hiding place  
In this the accepted day—  
Your pardoning voice, oh let me hear  
To still my unbelieving fear  
Nor let me fall, I pray.”*

III. But now we come to A TERRIBLE CONTRAST which I think is suggested in the text, “I was left.”  
Then there will be some that will not be left in the sense we have been speaking of—and yet who will be left after another and more dreadful manner. They will be left by mercy, forsaken by hope, given up by friends and become a prey to the implacable fury, to the sudden, infinite and unmitigated severity and justice of an angry God! But they will not be left or exempted from judgment, for the sword shall find them out, the vials of Jehovah shall reach even to their heart! And that flame, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke, shall suddenly devour them and that without remedy. Sinner, you shall be left! I say, you will be left of all those fond joys that you now hug—left of that pride which now steels your heart—you will be low enough, then! You will be left of that iron constitution which now seems to repel the darts of death. You shall be left of those companions of yours that entice you on to sin and harden you in iniquity. You shall be left by those who promise to be your helpers at the last. They shall need helpers, themselves, and the strong man shall fail. You shall be left, then, of that pleasing fancy of yours and of that merry wit which can make sport of Bible Truths and mock at Divine solemnities!  
You shall be left, then, of all your buoyant hopes and of all your imaginary delights. You shall be left of that sweet angel, Hope, who never forsakes any but those who are condemned to Hell! You shall be left of God’s Spirit, who sometimes now pleads with you. You shall be left of Jesus Christ, whose Gospel has been so often preached in your ear. You shall be left of God the Father—He shall shut His eyes of pity against you—His heart of compassion shall no more yearn over you, nor shall He regard your cries. You shall be left but, oh, again I tell you, you shall not be left as one who has escaped, for, when the earth shall open to swallow up the wicked, it shall open at your feet and swallow you up! When the fiery thunderbolt shall pursue the spirit that falls into the Pit that is bottomless, it shall pursue you, reach you and find you! When God tears the wicked in pieces and there shall be none to deliver, He shall tear you in pieces! He shall be unto you as a consuming fire, your conscience shall be full of gall, your heart shall be drunk with bitterness, your teeth shall be broken, even as with gravel, your hopes melted with His hot thunderbolts and all your joys withered and blasted by His breath!  
O careless Sinner, mad Sinner, you who are now dashing yourself downward to destruction, why will you play the fool at this rate? There are cheaper ways of making sport for yourself than this! Dash your head against the wall. Go there and, like David, let your spittle fall upon your beard, but let not your sin fall upon your conscience—and let not your despite of Christ be like a millstone hung about your neck with which you shall be cast into the sea forever. Be wise, I pray you. O Lord, make the sinner wise! Hush his madness for a while. Let him be sober and hear the voice of reason! Let him be still and hear the voice of conscience! Let him be obedient and hear the voice of Scripture! “Thus says the Lord, because I will do this, consider your ways.” “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”  
I do feel that I have a message for someone tonight. Though there may be some who think the sermon not appropriate to a congregation where there is so large a proportion of converted men and women, yet what a large proportion of ungodly ones there is here, too! I know that you come here, many of you, to hear some funny tale, or to catch at some strange, extravagant speech of one whom you repute to be an eccentric man. Ah, well, he is eccentric and hopes to be so till he dies! But it is simply eccentric in being in earnest and wanting to win souls! O poor Sinners, there is no odd tale I would not tell if I thought it would be blessed to you! There is no grotesque language which I would not use, however it might be thrown back at me, if I thought it might but be serviceable to you! I set not my account to be thought a fine speaker—they that use fine language may dwell in the king’s palaces. I speak to you as one who knows he is accountable to no man, but only to his God—as one who shall have to render his account at the Last Great Day.  
And I pray you will not go away to talk of this and that which you have marked in my language. Think of this one thing, “Shall I be left”? Shall I be saved? Shall I be caught up and dwell with Christ in Heaven, or shall I be cast down to Hell forever and ever?” Turn over these things! Think seriously of them. Hear that voice which says, “Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out.” Give heed to the voice which expostulates, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”  
How else shall your life be spared when the wicked are judged? How else shall you find shelter when the tempest of Divine wrath rages? How else shall you stand in the lot of the righteous at the end of the days?

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **EPHESIANS 1.**

Verses 1, 2. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints, which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle desires the same blessing for us who are “the faithful in Christ Jesus,” as he did for the saints at Ephesus. He longs that we, also, may be filled with Grace and peace “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” And the wish of the Apostle is according to the will of God who would have us abound in Grace and in peace. Some of you Christian people are troubled in mind, yet your Lord said to His disciples and through them to you, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Jesus knew that in the world you would have tribulation, but He willed that in Him you would have peace. And the way to get that peace is by getting Divine Grace. “Grace be to you, and peace.” The more gracious you are, the more easily will you bear the trying circumstances which surround you. Look not for peace apart from Grace—when you have Grace, you have a right to peace.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. I notice how, often, in the Epistles, benedictions are followed by doxologies. This is because the true heart loves to bless the Lord. What a rich treasure we have who are blessed “with all spiritual blessings!” There is nothing we can need but what is provided for us by our gracious God. Why are you poor, then, when God “has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”? Is it not because you often forget to go to the heavenly in Christ, and begin looking to the earthly in yourselves? There is nothing but starvation there—all true riches are found in the heavenly in Christ.

4. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should he holy and without blame before Him in love. The Apostle did not ignore the glorious and blessed doctrine of Divine Election. He delighted to meditate upon it and to speak of it. I wish that some Christians, nowadays, were not so much afraid of it. All spiritual blessings come to us in this way—this is the fountainhead of all favor and Grace—“According as He has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world.” The objective of our election—that to which God has chosen us in Christ is—“that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Unless you are holy, how can you talk of being chosen of God, for the elect are chosen unto holiness, chosen to be delivered from all blame through the love and Grace of God?

5, 6. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. It is well said, by an old writer, that there is no book which is written with such brevity as the Bible. It seems to give us the condensed essence of the Truth of God in the smallest possible space. What a mass of thought there is in those few lines which I have just read to you! We see here that we become the children of God by adoption, whatever the Universal Fatherhood people may say—“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself”—and that this adoption is the result of predestination and is not because of our own merits, but, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Some systems of theology have much of logic, but little of God. But in Paul’s teaching, it is God first, and last, and in the middle and all over. “To the praise of the glory of His Grace.” What a wonderful expression this is—not only “the glory of His Grace,” but the praise of that glory! God has done all things with a view to magnifying His Grace in the hearts of the sons and daughters of men—“Wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” There seems to me to be a sacred poem in these words, “accepted in the Beloved.” To my heart there is more heavenly music in those four words than in any oratorio I ever heard! “Accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, what honey this is in the mouth, what cheer this is in the heart! Are all of you, dear Friends, “accepted in the Beloved”?

7, 8. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Wisdom and prudence are two of the handmaids of Grace. Grace reigns through righteousness and the wisdom and prudence of God are set to work so to conduct the whole of the arrangements that “the glory of His Grace” may be all the more conspicuous!

9. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself. Even our knowledge of God’s will is the result of “His good pleasure.” If your eyes have been divinely opened, you see the will of God coming in everywhere—and ordering all things according to His gracious and unerring purpose!

10. That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. All the things that are in Christ shall be gathered together. None of them shall be left out. His great Covenant work shall be, in all respects, fully accomplished. There shall be no failure in any point. Whether in Heaven, or on earth, the things which are in Christ shall be gathered together in One, “even in Him.”

11. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. How the Apostle delights to harp upon this theme! The Holy Spirit knew that a time would come when men would put a slur upon this glorious Truth of God, so He inspired His servant to set it forth as the very brightness of the sun in the spiritual firmament—“being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.”

12-14. That we should be to the praise of His glory, whom first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. Twice more, in these three verses you have this expression, “to the praise of His glory,” making a third time with that which he said before, “to the praise of the glory of His Grace.” The true Gospel glorifies God! False gospels may have what is called “the enthusiasm of humanity” about them, but the true Gospel has an enthusiasm for the living God and it magnifies and glorifies Him. Note, O Believers, that you first trust in Christ and after that you have the seal of the Spirit. There are some who look for the sealing of the Spirit before believing in Jesus— but neither God nor man will set a seal to a blank paper—there must be the writing of faith upon the heart and then the Spirit of God comes in, with His blessed seal, and sets it at the bottom as His Divine and gracious token of acceptance. The Holy Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance.” Now, an earnest is a part of the possession, itself—it is not simply a pledge, it is more than that—so the Holy Spirit in our heart is Heaven begun below—it is the young dawn of the everlasting day! Blessed be God, we have His Spirit within us, and we rejoice in His indwelling!

15-17. Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. You know Him, for He has saved you—now go on to know a great deal more of Him. You can scarcely have a better gift than this, “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” The knowledge of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences! It is better to be well acquainted with Christ than to be a very Solomon concerning all other things, yet not to know Him.

18. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. You have eyes— God’s Grace has given them to you—but they are capable of additional power and force and there is the telescope of faith, which you are allowed to use, which will enable you to see much more than you have ever seen as yet!

18. That you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. First, you are to know what your inheritance is. That is “the hope of His calling.” And, next, you are to know what Christ’s inheritance in you is, which is another thing. It is a most blessed subject for meditation that you are Christ’s, altogether Christ’s, and that all you are to be, will be Christ’s, and that in you, poor creatures though you are, He will yet have a rich inheritance. Paul would have you know what are “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”

19. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. It takes a great deal of Divine Grace to make a Believer, and to keep a Believer—nothing but the almighty power of God can do it.

19, 20. According to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Not only raising Him from the dead, but lifting Him up to His own right hand and setting Him there, “in the heavenly places.”

21. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. The power of God which works in a Believer is the same power with which He raised Christ from the dead and set Him in this preeminent place.

22. And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church. This power is also to be seen working in you who believe in Jesus. What wonders of Grace we shall be when God has exerted that stupendous and amazing energy in each one of us, even as in His own Son! What an inheritance Christ will have in us then!

23. Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Said I not truly to you that this blessed Book is full of Truth put into as few words as possible? Verily, there is none like it! Other books, at the best, are like gold hammered out very thin, but here you have ingots of solid spiritual wealth, priceless in value! God help us all to make them our own treasure, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE GREATEST WONDER OF GRACE  
NO. 3377

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1913. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “And I was left.”  
Ezekiel 9:8.

SALVATION never shines so brightly to any man’s eyes as when it comes to himself. Then is Divine Grace illustrious, indeed, when we can see it working with Divine power upon ourselves. To our apprehension, our own case is always the most desperate and, therefore, mercy shown to us is the most extraordinary! We see others perish and wonder that the same doom has not befallen ourselves. The horror of the ruin which we dreaded and our intense delight at the certainty of safety in Christ unite with our personal sense of unworthiness to make us cry in amazement, “And I was left.”

Ezekiel, in vision, saw the slaughter men smiting right and left at the bidding of Divine Justice. And as he stood unharmed among the heaps of the slain, he exclaimed with surprise, “I was left.” It may be the day will come when we, too, shall cry with solemn joy, “And I, too, by Sovereign Grace, am spared while others perish.” Special Grace will cause us to marvel. Emphatically will it be so at the Last Dread Day.

Read the story of the gross idolatry of the people of Jerusalem as recorded in the 8th Chapter of Ezekiel’s prophecy, and you will not wonder at the judgment with which the Lord at length overthrew the city. Let us set our hearts to consider how the Lord dealt with the guilty people. “Six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand.” The destruction worked by these executioners was swift and terrible—and it was typical of other solemn visitations. All through history the observing eye notices lines of justice, red marks upon the page where the Judge of all the earth has at last seen it necessary to decree a terrible visitation upon a guilty people. All these past displays of Divine Vengeance point at the coming judgment even more complete and overwhelming. The past is prophetic of the future! A day is surely coming when the Lord Jesus, who came once to save, will descend a second time to judge! Despised mercy has always been succeeded by deserved wrath—and so must it be in the end of all things. “But who may abide the day of His coming? Or who shall stand when He appears?” When sinners are smitten, who will be left? He shall lift the balances of Justice and make bare the sword of execution. When His avenging angels shall gather the vintage of the earth, who among us shall exclaim in wondering gratitude, “And I was left.”? Such an one will be a wonder of Grace, indeed, worthy to take rank with those marvels of Grace of whom we have spoken in many former discourses in this place! To each one of you, I put this enquiry—Will you be an instance of sparing Grace, and cry, “And I was left”?

We will use the wonderfully descriptive vision of this Chapter that we may, with holy fear, behold the character of the doom from which Grace delivers us. And then we will dwell upon the exclamation of our text, “I was left,” considering it as the joyful utterance of the persons who are privileged to escape the destruction. And lastly, the emotions which the escaped feel.

By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us solemnly consider—  
I. THE TERRIBLE DOOM from which the Prophet in vision saw himself preserved, regarding it as a figure of the judgment which is yet to come upon all the world.  
Observe, first, that it was a just punishment inflicted upon those who had been often warned—a punishment which they willfully brought upon themselves. God had said that if they set up idols, He would destroy them, for He would not endure such an insult to His Godhead. He had often pleaded with them, not with words only, but with severe Providences, for their land had been laid desolate, their city had been besieged and their kings had been carried away captive! But they were bent on backsliding to the worship of their idol gods. Therefore, when the sword of the Lord was drawn from its scabbard, it was no novel punishment, no freak of vengeance, no unexpected execution. So, in the close of life, and at the end of the world, when judgment comes on men, it will be just and according to the solemn warnings of the Word of God. When I read the terrible things which are written in God’s Book in reference to future punishment, especially the awful things which Jesus spoke concerning the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, I am greatly pressed in spirit. Some there are who sit in judgment upon the Great Judge and condemn the punishment which He inflicts as too severe! As for myself, I cannot measure the power of God’s anger—but let it burn as it may—I am sure that it will be just. No needless pang will be inflicted upon a single one of God’s creatures! Even those who are doomed forever will endure no more than Divine Justice absolutely requires, no more than they, themselves, would admit to be the due reward of their sins if their consciences would judge aright. Mark you, this is the very Hell of Hell that men will know that they are justly suffering. To endure a tyrant’s wrath would be a small thing compared with suffering what one has brought upon himself by willful wanton choices of wrong. Sin and suffering are indissolubly bound together in the constitution of Nature—it cannot be otherwise, nor ought it to be. It is right that evil should be punished. Those who were punished in Jerusalem could not turn upon the executioners and say, “We do not deserve this doom”— every cruel wound of the Chaldean sword and every fierce crash of the Babylonian battle-axe fell on men who in their consciences knew that they were only reaping what they themselves had sown! Brothers and Sisters, what wonders of Grace shall we be if, from a judgment which we have so richly deserved, we shall be rescued at the last!  
Let us notice very carefully that this slaughter was preceded by separation which removed from among the people those who were distinct in character. Before the slaughter men proceeded to their stern task, a man appeared among them clothed in linen with a writer’s inkhorn by his side, who marked all those who in their hearts were grieved at the evil done in the city. Until these were marked, the destroyers did not commence their work. Whenever the Lord lays bare His arm for war, He first gathers His saints into a place of safety! He did not destroy the world by the flood till Noah and his family were safe in the ark. He would not suffer a single fire drop to fall on Sodom till Lot had escaped to Zoar. He carefully preserves His own—flood, nor flame, nor pestilence, nor famine shall do them harm! We read in the Revelation that the angel said, “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” Vengeance must sheath her sword till Divine Love has housed its darlings. When Christ comes to destroy the earth, He will first take away His people. Before the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the pillars of the universe shall rock and reel beneath the weight of wrathful Deity, He will have caught up His elect into the air, so that they shall be forever with Him! When He comes He shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats— no sheep of His shall be destroyed! He shall without fail take the tares from among the wheat, but not one single ear of wheat shall be in danger. O that we may be among the selected ones and prove His power to keep us in the day of wrath! May each one of us say, amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, “And I was left.” Dear Friend, do you think you are marked on the forehead? If at this moment my voice were drowned by the trumpet of Resurrection, would you be among those who would awake to safety and glory? Would you be able to say, “The multitude perished around me, but I was left”? It will be so if you hate the sins by which you are surrounded and if you have received the mark of the blood of Jesus upon your soul! If not, you will not escape, for there is no other door of salvation but His saving name! God grant us Grace to belong to that chosen number who wear the Covenant seal, the mark of Him who counts the people!  
Next, this judgment was placed in the Mediator’s hands. I want you to notice this. Observe that according to the Chapter, there was no slaughter done except where the man with the writer’s inkhorn led the way. So, again, we read in the 10th Chapter that, “One cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims into the fire that was between the cherubims and took, thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it and went out,” and cast it over the city. See this! God’s Glory of old shone forth between the cherubim! That is to say, over the place of Propitiation and Atonement, and as long as that glow of light remained, no judgment fell on Jerusalem, for God in Christ condemns not! But by-and-by “the Glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house,” and then judgment was near to come! When God no longer deals with men in Christ, His wrath burns like fire and He commissions the ambassador of mercy to be the messenger of wrath! The very man who marked with his pen the saved ones, threw burning coals upon the city and led the way for the destruction of the sinful. What does this teach but this—“The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son”? I know of no Truth of God more dreadful to meditate upon! Think of it, you careless ones—the very Christ who died on Calvary is He by whom you will be sentenced! God will judge the world by this Man, Christ Jesus! He it is who will come in the clouds of Heaven and before Him shall be gathered all nations! And when those who have despised Him shall look upon His face, they will be terrified beyond conception! Not the lightning, not the thunder, not the dreadful sound of the last tremendous trumpet shall so alarm them as that face of injured love! Then will they cry to the mountains and hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne! Why, it is the face of Him that wept for sinners, the face which scoffers stained with bloody drops extracted by the thorny crown, the face of the Incarnate God who, in Infinite Mercy, came to save mankind! But because they have despised Him. Because they would not be saved. Because they preferred their own lusts to Infinite Love and persisted in rejecting God’s best proof of kindness, therefore will they say, “Hide us from the face,” for the sight of that face shall be to them more accusing and more condemning than all else besides! How dreadful is this Truth of God! The more you consider it, the more will it fill your soul with terror! Would to God it might drive you to fly to Jesus, for then you will behold Him with joy in that day!  
This destruction, we are told, began at the sanctuary. Suppose the Lord were to visit London in His anger—where would He begin to smite? “Oh,” somebody says, “of course, the destroying angel would go down to the low music halls and dancing rooms! Or He would sweep out the back slums and the drink palaces, the jails and places where women of illrepute congregate!” Turn to the Scripture which surrounds our text. The Lord says, “Begin at My sanctuary.” Begin at the Churches! Begin at the Chapels! Begin with the Church members! Begin with the ministers, the bishops! Begin with those who are teachers of the Gospel! Begin with the chief and front of the religious world—begin with the high professors who are looked up to as examples! What does Peter say? “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”  
The first thing the slaughter men did was to slaughter the ancient men which were before the Temple, even the 70 elders of the people, for they were secret idolaters! You may be sure that the sword which did not spare the chief men and fathers made but short work with the baser sort! Elders of our Churches, ministers of Christ—judgment will begin with us! We must not expect to find more lenient treatment than others at the Last Great Assize! No, rather, if there shall be a specially careful testing of sincerity, it will be for us who have taken upon ourselves to lead others to the Savior! For this cause let us see well to it that we are not deceived or deceivers, for we shall surely be detected in that day! To play the hypocrite is to play the fool! Will a man deceive his Maker, or delude the Most High? It cannot be! You Church members, all of you, should look well to it, for judgment will begin with you! God’s fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! In the olden times, the people fled to Churches and holy places for sanctuary—but how vain will this be when the Lord’s avengers shall come forth, since there the havoc will begin! How fiercely shall the sword sweep through the hosts of carnal professors—the men who called themselves servants of God while they were slaves of the devil—who drank of the cup of the Lord, but were drunk with the wine of their own lusts—who could lie, cheat, commit fornication and yet dared to approach the sacred Table of the Lord? What cutting and hewing will there be among the base-born professors of our Churches! It were better for such men that they had never been born, or being born, that their lot had fallen amid heathen ignorance, so that they might have been unable to add sin to sin by lying unto the living God! “Begin at My sanctuary.” The word is terrible to all those who have a name to live and are dead! God grant that in such testing times, when many fail, we may survive every ordeal and, through Grace, exclaim in the end, “And I was left.”  
After the executioners had begun at the sanctuary, it is to be observed that they did not spare any except those upon whom was the mark. Old and young, men and women, priests and people, all were slain who had not the sacred sign! And so in the Last Tremendous Day all sinners who have not fled to Christ will perish! Our dear babies that died in infancy, we believe to be all washed in the blood of Jesus, and all saved—but for the rest of mankind who have lived to years of responsibility, there will be only one of two things—they must either be saved because they had faith in Christ, or else the full weight of Divine Wrath must fall upon them. Either the mark of Christ’s pen, or of Christ’s sword, must be upon everyone! There will be no sparing of one man because he was rich, nor of another because he was learned, nor of a third because he was eloquent, nor of a fourth because he was held in high esteem. Those who are marked with the blood of Christ are safe! Without that mark all are lost! This is the one separating sign—do you wear it? Or will you die in your sins? Bow down at once before the feet of Jesus and beseech Him to mark you as His own so that you may be one of those who will joyfully cry, “And I was left.” Now, secondly, I have to call your very particular attention to—  
II. THE PERSONS WHO ESCAPED, who could each say, “And I was left.” We are told that those were marked for mercy who did “sigh and cry for the abominations that were done in the midst thereof.” Now, we must be very particular about this. It is no word of mine, remember—it is God’s Word and, therefore, I beg you to hear and weigh it for yourselves. We do not read that the devouring sword passed by those quiet people who never did anybody any harm—no

mention is made of such an exemption! Neither does the record say that the Lord saved those professors who were judicious and maintained a fair name and reputation until death. No, the only people who were saved were those who were exercised in heart—and that heart-work was of a painful kind—they sighed and cried because of abounding sin. They saw it, protested against it, avoided it and, last of all, wept over it continually. Where testimony failed, it remained for them to mourn. Retiring from public labors, they sat down and sighed their hearts away because of the evils which they could not cure. And when they felt that sighing alone would do no good, they took to crying in prayer to God that He would come and put an end to the dreadful ills which brooded over the land! I would not say a hard thing, but I wonder, if I were able to read the secret lives of professors of religion, whether I should find that they all sigh and cry over the sins of others? Are the tenth of them thus engaged? I am afraid that it does not cause some people much anxiety when they see sin rampant around them. They say that they are sorry, but it never frets them much, or causes them as much trouble as would come of a lost sixpence or a cut finger! Did you ever feel as if your heart would break over an ungodly son? I do not believe that you are a Christian if you have such a son and have not felt an agony on his behalf. Did you ever feel as if you could lay down your life to save that daughter of yours? I cannot believe that you are a Christian if you have not sometimes come to that! When you have gone through the street and heard an oath, has not your blood chilled in you? Has not horror taken hold upon you because of the wicked? There cannot be much Grace in you if that has not been the case. If you can go up and down in the world fully at ease because you are prospering in business and things go smoothly with you, if you forget the woe of this city’s sin and poverty and the yet greater woe which comes upon it, how dwells the love of God in you? The saving mark is only set on those who sigh and cry—if you are heartless and indifferent, there is no such mark on you!  
“Are we to be always miserable?” asks one. Far from it! There are many other things to make us rejoice, but if the sad state of our fellow men does not cause us to sigh and cry, then we have not the Grace of God in us! “Well,” says one, “but every man must look to himself.” That is the language of Cain—“Am I my brother’s keeper?” That kind of talk is in keeping with the spirit of the Wicked One and his seed—the heir of Heaven abhors such language! The genuine Christian loves his race and, therefore, he longs to see it made holy and happy. He cannot bear to see men sinning and so dishonoring God and ruining themselves. If we really love the Lord, we shall sometimes lie awake at night sighing to think how His name is blasphemed and how little progress His Gospel makes! We shall groan to think that men should despise the glorious God who made them and who daily loads them with benefits! It sometimes lies upon my heart like a huge mountain which rushes my spirit, to think that Jesus should be rejected and that in this land of Bibles, where Latimer lit a candle which shall never be put out, the old madness is returning and many are again bowing before the images of jealousy which the priests have set up! Yes, we have priests among us again! You can see them in their long and ugly garments in every street! And women have begun to confess to them! Shame! Shame! I marvel that the crimson blush does not mantle the cheek of everyone who dares to ask or answer the questions appointed for the confessional! And yet the questions are asked, modesty is outraged and the multitudes tamely look on!  
My countrymen are going back to Rome! Their fathers’ noble blood was shed for God and none was left for the veins of their sons. In vain the conflicts of the years gone by! In vain a Cromwell’s mighty arm and the purging of the land! In vain the Puritans driven from their pulpits and witnessing in poverty and persecution! Must England go back, again, to wear the fetters forged by papal Rome? My God, prevent it! Prevent it if it costs the lives of thousands of us, for we would be glad to die to save our country from so dire a curse! If you never sigh and cry because of the spread of Ritualism, I do not understand you! What stuff are you made of? “Oh, but my business goes on exceedingly well.” Yes, and so does mine when souls are saved, but when they are led away into error, my business cannot prosper and I have loss upon loss! I am happy enough when I think Christ’s Kingdom comes, but nothing beneath the sky can give me solid satisfaction if my Lord’s work is at a standstill! I would to God we were all so taken up with the Glory of God that the wickedness of mankind would grieve us to the heart!  
But it was not their mourning which saved those who escaped—it was the mark which they all received which preserved them from destruction! We must all bear the mark of Jesus Christ. What is that? It is the mark of faith in the atoning blood. That sets apart the chosen of the Lord and that alone! If you have that mark—and you have it not unless you sigh and cry over the sins of others—then in the Last Day no sword of justice can come near you! Did you read that word, “But come not near any man upon whom is the mark.” Come not even near the marked ones lest they be afraid. The Grace-marked man is safe even from the near approach of harm! Christ bled for him and, therefore, he cannot, must not die! Leave him alone, you bearers of the destroying weapons! Just as the angel of death, when he flew through the land of Egypt, was forbidden to touch a house where the blood of the lamb was on the lintel and the two side posts, so is it sure that avenging Justice cannot touch the man who is in Christ Jesus. Who is he that condemns since Christ has died? Have you, then, the blood mark? Yes, or no? Do not refuse to question yourself upon this point. Do not take it for granted, lest you are deceived. Believe me, your all hangs upon it. If you are not registered by the man clothed in linen, you will not be able to say, “And I was left.”  
This brings me to this last point of which I desire to speak. What were—  
III. THE PROPHET’S EMOTIONS WHEN HE SAID, “AND I WAS LEFT”?  
He saw men falling right and left and he, himself, stood like a lone rock amidst a sea of blood! And he cried in wonder, “And I was left.”  
“Let us hear what he further says—“I fell on my face.” He lay prostrate with humility. Have you a hope that you are saved? Fall on your face, then! See the Hell from which you are delivered and bow before the Lord! Why are you to be saved more than anyone else? Certainly not because of any merit in you. It is due to the Sovereign Grace of God alone! Fall on your face and acknowledge your indebtedness—  
*“Why was I made to hear Your voice,  
And enter while there’s room,  
When thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve than come?”*  
“And I was left.”  
If a man has been a drunkard and has at length been led to flee to Christ, when he says, “And I was left,” he will feel the hot tears rising in his eyes, for many other drinkers have died in delirium. One who has been a public sinner, when she is saved, will not be able to think of it without astonishment. Indeed, each saved man is a marvel to himself. Nobody here wonders more at Divine Grace in his salvation than I do! Why was I chosen, and called, and saved? I cannot make it out, and I never shall—but I will always praise, and bless, and magnify my Lord for casting an eye of love upon me! Will you not do the same, Beloved, if you feel that you, by Grace, are left? Will you not fall on your face and bless the mercy which makes you to differ?  
What did the Prophet do next? Finding that he was left, he began to pray for others. “Ah, Lord,” he said, “will You destroy all the residue of Israel?” Intercession is an instinct of the renewed heart. When the Believer finds that he is safe, he must pray for his fellow men. Though the Prophet’s prayer was too late, yet, blessed be God, ours will not be! We shall be heard. Pray, then, for perishing men! Ask God, who has spared you, to spare those who are like you. Somebody has said there will be three great wonders in Heaven—first, to see so many there whom we never expected to meet in Glory. Secondly, to miss so many of whom we felt sure that they must be safe. And thirdly, the greatest wonder of all will be to find ourselves there! I am sure that everyone who has a hope of being in Glory feels it to be a marvel and he or she resolves, “If I am saved, I will sing the loudest of them all, for I shall owe most to the abounding mercy of God!”  
Let me ask a few questions and I have done. The first—and let each man ask it of himself—shall I be left when the ungodly are slain? Answer it now to yourselves. Men, women, children—will you be spared in that Last Great Day? Are you in Christ? Have you a good hope in Him? Do not lie to yourselves. You will be weighed in the balances—will you be found wanting or not? “Shall I be left?” Let that question burn into your souls.  
Next, will my relatives be saved? My wife, my husband, my children, my brother, my sister, my father, my mother—will these all be saved? Happy are we who can say, “Yes, we believe they will,” as some of us can joyfully hope. But if you have to say, “No, I fear that my boy is unconverted, or that my father is unsaved,” then do not rest till you have wrestled with God for their salvation. Good woman, if you are obliged to say, “I fear my husband is unconverted,” join me in prayer. Bow your heads at once and cry unto your God, “Lord, save our children! Lord, save our parents! Lord, save our husbands and wives, our brothers and sisters and let the whole of our families meet in Heaven, unbroken circles, for Your name’s sake!”  
May God hear that prayer if it has come from the lips of sincerity! I could not endure the thought of missing one of my boys in Heaven—I hope I shall see them both there and, therefore, I am in deep sympathy with any of you who have not seen your households brought to Christ. O for Grace to pray earnestly and labor zealously for the salvation of your whole households!  
The next earnest enquiry is, if you and your relatives are saved, how about your neighbors, your fellow workmen, your companions in business? “Oh,” you say, “many of them are scoffers! A good many of them are still in the gall of bitterness.” A sorrowful fact, but have you spoken to them? It is amazing what a kind word will do. Have you tried it? Did you ever try to speak to that person who meets you every morning as you go to work? Suppose he should be lost? Oh, it will be a bitter feeling for you to think that he went down to the Pit without your making an effort to bring him to God! Do not let it be so. “But we must not be too pushy,” says one. I do not know about that. If you saw poor people in a burning house, nobody would blame you for being too forward if you helped to save them. When a man is sinking in the river, if you jump in and pull him out, nobody will say, “You were rude and intrusive, for you were never introduced to him!” This world has been lost and it must be saved—and we must not mind our manners in saving it. We must get a grip of sinking sinners somehow, even if it is by the hair of their heads, before they sink, for if they sink, they are lost forever! They will forgive us very soon for any roughness that we use, but we shall not forgive ourselves if, for lack of a little energy, we permit them to die without a knowledge of the Truth of God!  
Oh, beloved Friends, if you are left while others perish, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by the heart of compassion which is in Christ Jesus, by the bleeding wounds of the dying Son of God—love your fellow men and sigh and cry about them if you cannot bring them to Christ! If you cannot save them, you can weep over them. If you cannot give them a drop of cold water in Hell, you can give them your heart’s tears while they are yet in this body!  
But are you in very deed reconciled to God yourselves? Reader, are you cured of the awful disease of sin? Are you marked with the blood-red sign of trust in the atoning blood? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, the Lord have mercy upon you! May you have sense enough to have mercy upon yourself! May the Spirit of God instruct you to that end. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ROMANS 8:14-30.**

Verse 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Not those who say they are “the sons of God,” but those who undoubtedly prove that they are by being led, influenced, gently guided by the Spirit of God!

15. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear: but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. We did receive the spirit of bondage once. We felt that we were under the Law and that the Law cursed us. We felt its rigorous taxation and that we could not meet it. Now that spirit has gone and we have the spirit of freedom, the spirit of children, the Spirit of adoption. I suppose that the Apostle, when he thus spoke and said, “you,” felt so much of the Spirit of adoption in his own bosom that he could not talk of it as belonging to others alone. He was obliged to include it thus, and so he puts it, “You have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” He wanted to intimate that he, himself, was also a partaker of this blessed Spirit. And woe to the preacher who can preach an adoption which he never enjoyed! Woe to any of us if we can teach others concerning the spirit of sonship, but never feel it crying in our own souls, “Abba, Father.”

16. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. It corroborates the testimony of conscience. We feel that we are the children of God and the Spirit of God comes forward as a second, but still greater and higher witness, to confirm the testimony that we are the children of God!

17. And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. It is to be all with Him! With Him in the suffering. With Him in the glory. With Him in the reproach of men. With Him in the honor at the right hand of the Father. But if we shun the path of humiliation with Him, we may expect that He will deny us in the day of His Glory.

18. For I reckon. Judge, count it up, and calculate.  
18. That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. These sufferings, however, sharp, are short compared with eternal glory—infinitesimal, not worthy to be taken account of—like one drop falling into a river and lost in it.  
19-21. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. There is a future even for materialism. That poor, dusky clod in which we dwell is yet to be illuminated with the light of God—and these poor bodies which are akin to the dust of the earth, and still remain as if they were not delivered, being subjected to pain, and weakness, and death—even they are yet to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God!  
22-23. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. The soul has obtained its redemption. Therefore, our heart is glad and our glory rejoicing. But our body has not yet obtained its redemption. That is to come at the Resurrection. Then will be the adoption. “Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Oh, blessed fact! Though now, in common with the whole creation, the body is subjected to bondages, yet it shall be delivered and we—the whole man, body as well as soul and spirit—shall be brought into the liberty of the children of God!  
24-25. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if we could be all we should like to be, there would then be no room for the exercise of hope! If we had all that we are to have, then hope, which is one of the sweetest of the Divine Graces, would have no room in which to exercise herself. It is a blessed thing to have hope. Though I have heard that faith and hope are not to be found in Heaven, I very much question it. I do not think they will ever die. “Now abide these three—faith, hope, and love”—for in Heaven there will be room, surely, for trust in the ever blessed God that He will never cast us out from our blessedness—room for the expectation of the Second Advent—room for the expectation of the conquest of the world—room for the fulfilled promise of bringing all the elect to Glory! Still something to be hoped for! Still something to be believed! Yet here is the main sphere of hope and, therefore, let us give it full scope. And when other graces seem to be at a non-plus, let us still hope. I believe the New Zealand word for hope is “swimming thought,” because that will swim when everything else is drowned. Oh, happy is that man who has a hope that swims on the crest of the stormiest billow!  
26. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. And especially our infirmities in prayer, for there is where infirmities are mostly seen.  
26. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. I should have thought that it would have read, “But the Spirit Himself teaches us what we should pray for.” But it does more than that. He goes beyond teaching us what we should pray for—He “makes intercession for us, with groans which cannot be uttered.” Do you know what those groans are? I am afraid that those who never had groans which cannot be uttered will never know anything of that glory which cannot be expressed, for that is the way to it. The groans that cannot be uttered lead on to unutterable joy!  
27. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. That is the philosophy of prayer. Whatever God’s will is, the Spirit of God writes it on the hearts of praying saints, and they pray for the very thing which God intends to give. As the barometer often foretells the weather that is coming, so the spirit of prayer in the Christian is the barometer which indicates when showers of blessing are coming. It is well with us when we can pray. If we cannot do anything else, if we feel that we can pray, times are not so bad with us as we might think.  
28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. We know it! We are assured of it!  
29-30. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. No breaking of these links! Where God gives one of these blessings, He gives the rest. There is no intimation of a failure somewhere in between. The predestinated are called, and the called are justified and the justified are glorified!  
31-33. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who shall? Who may? Who dares?  
33-35. It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? All these have done their worst.  
36. As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But have they divided the saints from the love of Christ? Have they made the saints leave off loving Christ, or Christ cease from loving His people?  
37-39. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For which blessed be the name of the adorable Trinity, world without end!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #223 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE EVIL AND ITS REMEDY  
NO. 223

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 14, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“The Iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” Ezekiel 9:9.  
“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.**

I SHALL have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” And “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.”

We can learn nothing of the Gospel except by feeling its Truths—no one Truth of the Gospel is ever truly known and really learned until we have tested and tried and proved it and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds and yet he had learned all he knew in his study and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who think themselves great theologians. They might even pretend to take a doctor’s degree in divinity. And yet, if we came to the root of the matter and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, “No. I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit. I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness and experience.”

Be assured that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men’s observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines—or felt the influence of them upon his heart—knows nothing whatever and all the knowledge he pretends to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

I have made use of this remark as the preface to my sermon because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring rod for sin except its condemnation in our own conscience when the Law of

God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us—of that also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God has cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse—“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” There are two great lessons which every man must learn and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing. And he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by His infinite Spirit and by His great wisdom teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the Gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah, how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the Gospel. You shall go to Sinai and you shall there hear its thunders rolling. You shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightning, till, like Moses, you shall exceedingly fear and quake and come away declaring that sin must be a terrible thing otherwise the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about Him. But after that you shall go to Calvary. There you shall see no lightning and you shall hear no thunder, but instead thereof you shall hear the groans of an expiring God and you shall behold the contortions and agonies of One who bore—

*“All that Incarnate God could bear,  
With strength enough and none to spare.”*

And then you shall say, “Now, though I never fear nor quake, I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be since such a Sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it.” Oh, Sinners! If you come to the Gospel imagining that there you shall find an apology for your sin, you have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin and tells you that you are without excuse. But as for the Gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering. It leaves you without a cloak for your sin. It tells you that you have sinned willfully against the Most High God—that you have not an apology that you can possibly make for all the iniquities that you have committed against Him. And so far from smoothing over your sin and telling you that you are a weak creature and therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature and makes that itself the most damning sin of all. If you seek apologies you better look into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the majesty of the terrors of the Law, than into the face of the Gospel—for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the Gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the Law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man—that He did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter Law—something which would be more easy for them to obey—a Law which they can more readily keep, or which if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threats. Ah, not so. The Gospel came not into the world to soften down the Law. Till Heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail. What God has said to the sinner in the Law, He says to the sinner in the Gospel. If He declares that, “the soul that sins it shall die,” the testimony of the Gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the Law. If He declares that whosoever breaks the sacred Law shall most assuredly be punished, the Gospel also demands blood for blood and eye for eye and tooth for tooth and does not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands. It is as severe and as terribly just as even the Law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the Law? I reply that you know not, then, the mission of Christ.

What said He Himself? The Lord has said in the Law “You shall not commit adultery”—has Christ softened the Law? No. Says He, “I say unto you that whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” That is no softening of the Law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine Justice to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ has not put out the furnace. He rather seems to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little. But when He came sin became exceeding sinful and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

“But,” says one, “Surely the Gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin?” Ah, no. You shall appeal to Moses. Let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” And his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down—and now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says He with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah, Sirs, there was never such a preacher of the fires of Hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love but He was all honesty, too. “Never man spoke like that man,” when He came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other Prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—“He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment”? Or this—“Where their worm dies

not and their fire is not quenched”?

Stand at the feet of Jesus when He tells you of the punishment of sin and the effect of iniquity and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, Brethren, the Gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ today by His minister is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.”

And now let us endeavor to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My Brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back frightened from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true—you say within yourselves, “I cannot, I will not receive that doctrine of sin. I know I am a frail weak creature. I have made a great many mistakes in my life—that I will admit. But still such is my nature and I therefore could not help it. I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals. I may be a sinner—I confess I am with all the rest of mankind—but as to my sin being anything so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it. I reject the doctrine.”

And do you think, my Friend, that I am surprised at your doing so? I know who you are. It is because as yet the grace of God has never touched your soul that therefore you say this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. You do not know this truth because you have never felt it. But if you had felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, you would say, “The man cannot describe its terrors as they are. They must be felt before they can be known and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fullness of terror.”

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin is great, although you think it small. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, I am not about to make out that your sin is greater than mine. I speak to you and I speak to myself also—your sin is great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps you will better understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when according to the Word of God one sin could suffice to damn the soul? One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit and that one sin blasted Eden and made all of us inheritors of the curse and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, even unto this day. But it may be asked, could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of Hell and then close them upon the guilty soul forever and that God should refuse His mercy and shut out that soul forever from the presence of His face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must believe that. Oh, how great must my sins be if this is the terrible effect of one transgression. Sin cannot be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul forever!

Think again my Friend, for a moment, what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold, there is one God who fills all in all and He is the Infinite Creator. He makes me and I am nothing more in His sight than an animated grain of dust. And I, that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against His will! I dare to proclaim war against the Infinite Majesty of Heaven! It is a thing so audacious—so infernally full of pride—that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of Heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin and mine seem if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it? The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day. He has put the breath into our nostrils and has held our souls in life. He has clothed the earth with mercies and He has permitted us to walk across these fair fields. And He has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us. And yet you and I have persevered in breaking all His laws willfully and wantonly—we have gone contrary to His will. It has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has been God’s will and we have at once run contrary to it. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of His mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with His favors, we must each of us say our sins, indeed, are exceedingly great!

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the Word itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer and the thief as being great sinners. We should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceedingly great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man’s morality and the laws of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to you who have been the most moral. To you whose outward carriage is everything that could be desired. To you who have kept the Sabbath. To you who have frequented God’s house and outwardly worshipped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye— but if we came to dig into the heart and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we must say of them they are exceeding great.

And again—I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My Hearer, have you ever felt this doctrine to be true?—“My sin is exceeding great.” Sickness is a terrible thing, more especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is

racked to an extreme so that the spirit fails within us and we are dried up like a potsherd. But I bear witness in this place this morning that sickness, however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of sin. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain and the most languishing sickness than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean, for you have felt the same. Once you were playing with your lusts and dallying with your sin and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state—it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them—and you loathed yourselves.

Before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily be gotten rid of—they were matters that might be speedily washed out by repentance or purged away by amendment of your life. But now sin seemed an alarming thing and knowing that you had committed all this iniquity—life seemed to you a curse and death. If it had not been for that dreary something after death, it would have been to you the highest blessing if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours. But you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed.

It was my sad lot for three or four years to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God’s mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders and sustain a grief that so far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole hill. And I often wonder to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt, when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet I had not been a greater sinner than anyone of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered and then I knew—oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson—“The iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great.” This is the first part of the discourse.

II. “Well,” cries one, turning on his heel, “there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself.” Ah, Friend, such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it is a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one—the first of John, the first chapter and the seventh verse—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from all sin.” There lies the blackness—here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will He do with it? Will He go and speak to it and say, “This is no great evil. This blackness is but a little spot?” Oh, no—He looks at it and He says, “This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt. This is an exceeding great evil.” Will He cover it up then? Will He weave a mantle of excuses and then wrap it round about the iniquity?

No—whatever covering there may have been He lifts it off and He declares that when the Spirit of Truth is come He will convict the world of sin and lay the sinner’s conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will He do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of His own blood which is able to save unto the uttermost! The Gospel does not consist in making a man’s sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shriveled and shrinking until they seem small to them. On the contrary—they, first of all, see their sins expanding and then—after that—they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away—far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans us from ALL sin.” Dwell on the word “all” for a moment. Our sins are great. Every sin is great. But there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there is, before long man will invent it—for man seems exceedingly cunning and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavor to injure His Maker.

But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak—of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleans from all sin.” There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane. Lust, however bestial. Covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and plunder. Breach of the Commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run—all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ.

In all the long lists of human sins, though they are long as time, there stands but one sin that is unpardonable and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy. For that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead and seared and never desires afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to you, O trembling Sinner, that however great your iniquity may be, whatever sin you may have committed in all the lists of guilt, however far you may have exceeded all your fellow-creatures, though you may have distanced the Pauls and Magdalenes and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin—the blood of Christ is able to wash your sin away.

Mark—I speak not lightly of your sins, they are exceedingly great. But I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as your sins are, the blood of Christ is greater still. Your sins are like great mountains—but the blood of Christ is like Noah’s Flood—twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail and the top of the mountains of your sin shall be covered.

Take the word “all” in another sense. Not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here Sinner, you with the gray head. What are we to understand in your case by this word “all”? Bring here the tremendous load of the sins of your youth Those sins are still in your bones and your tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of your early youth. But all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring here the sins of your riper manhood, your transgressions in the family, your failures in business—all the mistakes and all the errors you have committed in the thoughts of your heart. Bring them all here. And then add the iniquities of your frail and trembling age. What a mass is there! What a mass of sin! Stir up that putrid mass—but put your finger to your nostrils first—for you can not bear the stench if you are a man with a living and quickened conscience. Could you bear to read your own diary if you had written there all your acts? No. Though you are the purest of mankind, your thoughts—if they could have been recorded—would now if you could read them, make you startle and wonder that you are demon enough to have had such imaginations within your soul. But put them all here and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

No, more than that. Come here you thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God. What is the aggregate of your guilt? Here you have come, men of every grade and class and women of every age and order—what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could you put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole? Even if it were as a mountain with a base, broad as eternity and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel? But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans from all sin. Let but the blood be applied to our consciences and all our guilt is removed and cast away forever—all— not one left, not one solitary stain remaining—all gone, like Israel’s enemies—all drowned in the Red Sea so that there was not one of them left. All swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleans from all sin.”

Yet, once more—in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There are some of you here who are saying, “Ah, that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away. It is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ shall wash and purge and purify the transgressions of life.” But, mark—my text doesn’t say that! It does not say the blood of Christ shall cleanse—that is true—but it says something greater than that—it says, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans”—cleans now. And is it possible that now a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot now have all her sins blotted out of the Book of God? And can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgressions cast into the sea. And can he know it?

Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the Throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes! Tell the wide world over that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you NOW. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing—

*“Oh, how sweet to view the flowing  
Of my Savior’s precious blood,  
With Divine assurance knowing,  
He has made my peace with God.”*

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out now? Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God forever, if now your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, “What shall I do to obtain this mercy?” Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed. O Beloved! To the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, Soul, this moment come to Him that hung upon the Cross of Calvary! Come now and be washed!

But what do I mean by coming? I mean this—come and put your trust in Christ and you shall be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that “to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me.” That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily believe that

Christ died for him. His believing that will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that.

To believe in Christ is to trust Him. The way I believe in Christ and I know not how to speak of it except as I feel it myself, is simply this—I know it is written that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” I do firmly believe that those He came to save He will save. The only question I ask myself is, “Can I put myself among that number whom He has declared He came to save?” Am I a sinner? Not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense, but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? Do I stand and feel convicted, guilty and condemned? I do. I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner—guilty, consciously guilty and often miserable on account of that guilt.

Well, then, the Scripture says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”— *“And when your eye of faith is dim,  
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim.;  
Thus, at His footstool, bow the knee  
And Israel’s God your peace shall be.”*

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which He offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have in my prayers, my works, my feelings, my weeping, my preaching, my thinking, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to your Cross I cling.”*

And if there is any power in Christ to save I am saved. If there is an everlasting arm extended by Christ and if that Savior who hung there was “God over all, blessed forever,” and if His blood is still exhibited before the Throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then I cannot perish till the Throne of God shall break and till the pillars of God’s justice shall crumble.

Now, Sinner, what have you to do this morning? If you feel your guilt to be great, cast yourself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. “But no,” says one, “I have not felt enough.” Your feelings are not Christ. “No, but I have not prayed enough.” Your prayers are not Christ and your prayers cannot save you. “No, but I have not repented enough.” Your repentance may destroy you, if you put that in the place of Christ. All that you have, I repeat this morning, is this—do you feel yourself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast yourself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners and rest there. What? Do you say you cannot do it? Oh may God enable you, may He give you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. “Well, but,” you say, “I may not—being such a sinner.” You may—and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had.

Come, the crumb is under the table. Though you are but a dog, come and pick it up. It is a privilege even for the dog to take it. And mercy that is great to you is but a crumb to Him that gives it freely—come and take it. Christ will not reject you. And if you are the worst sinner that ever lived, only simply trust yourself upon Him and perish you cannot, if God is God and if this Bible is the book of His Truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ and to His name be glory. Amen.

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“THUS SAYS THE LORD”—OR, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES OF THE SANCTUARY  
NO. 591

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

**“Thus says the Lord.”  
Ezekiel 11:5.**

THE wise man says, “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” What power must there be where there is the word of the King of kings who rules over all! We are not left to conjecture as to the power of the Divine Word, for we know that, “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Out of nothingness the glorious Creation leaped at the bidding of the Most High. And when the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, there was nothing wanted but that solemn voice, “Light be,” and straightway light was. God’s Word was sufficient in itself to build the temple of the universe. And to finish it from its foundations to its pinnacles.

That same Word upholds by its power and rules all things by its might. The pillars of Heaven stand because the Divine Word has fixed them upon their bases, nor shall they be shaken until that same almighty Word shall bid them remove. Then, as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave which bears it and is gone forever, so shall the whole creation melt away. His Word which created, shall also destroy. But until that Word is spoken every atom of this world is imperishable.

Consider, my Brethren, what power is concentrated in Him who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and whose name is “THE WORD OF GOD.” With what glorious power our Lord Jesus Christ uplifted the burden of our sins, carried the load up to the Cross and cast it forever into the Red Sea of His own atoning blood! You know how He burst the bars of death, tore away the gates of the grave, overthrew all the hosts of Hell and dragged the mightiest principalities of darkness as captives at His chariot wheels. At this day the government is upon His shoulders and His name is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Heaven and earth salute Him as the Omnipotent Word.  
He sustains the spiritual life of all His people by feeding them upon

Himself—and He shall, in due time, perfect His saints and present them without spot before His Father’s Throne. We ought, therefore, to bow with reverence to that which is truly the Word of God since it contains within itself the highest degree of power and is ever the way in which Divine Omnipotence manifests itself.

It is in the Word that we must find wisdom and power—“because the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And the weakness of God is stronger than men.” The faintest whisper of Jehovah’s voice should fill us with solemn awe and command the deepest obedience of our souls. Brethren, how careful should we be that we do not set up in God’s temple anything in opposition to His Word—that we do not permit the teachings of a creature to usurp the honor due to the Lord alone.

“Thus says antiquity.” “Thus says authority.” Thus says learning.” “Thus says experience”—these are but idol-gods which defile the temple of God! Be it yours and mine as bold iconoclasts to dash them in pieces without mercy, seeing that they usurp the place of the Word of God. “Thus says the Lord”—this is the motto of our standard! The war cry of our spiritual conflict! The sword with which we hope yet to strike through the loins of the mighty who rise up against God’s Truth. Nothing shall stand before this weapon in the day when God comes out of His hiding place. Even at this hour when, “Thus says the Lord,” sounds from the trumpet of the Lord’s ministers, the hosts of Midian begin to tremble! They well know the might of that terrible watchword in days of yore!

This morning I shall endeavor first to show, briefly, the value of a, “Thus says the Lord.” Then, secondly, I shall, with as much calmness of spirit as I can command, request a, “Thus says the Lord” for certain things which are received and practiced in the State Establishment of our land. Then I shall close with a word of personal application, beseeching you to seek a, “Thus says the Lord,” for any hopes which you may entertain of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE VALUE OF A “THUS SAYS THE LORD.” 1. Our first observation is that it is the minister’s message. If he is God’s minister he does not found his teaching upon his own authority, for then his message would be only that of himself and not to be esteemed. But he shows the authority of his Master and none can oppose him. He claims men’s attention on the ground that he utters a, “Thus says the Lord.” No matter how aged he may be, he does not proclaim the Truth of God as merely the result of his long investigations or his extraordinary experience—he grounds it upon, “Thus says the Lord.”  
So spoke the hoary-headed Joshua when for many a year he had known the faithfulness of God and was about to die—he was singing his swan song, preaching his last sermon. But he did not commence with, “Thus says my age”—“thus I say upon my own authority,” but—“Thus says the Lord God of Israel.” A God-sent minister is the ambassador of the Most High, but he has no right to go beyond his commission. And when he does so, his office cannot yield him support. The Prophets of God did not say, “Thus I speak as a Prophet,” but, “Thus says the Lord.”  
The Prophet came in Gideon’s days and spoke to erring Israel. He opened his mouth with, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel.” Turn to the pages of Isaiah and mark how frequently he quotes the Divine authority! Study the plaintive words of Jeremiah and observe how solemnly his prophetic woes are prefaced with, “Thus says the Lord.” Also the soaring Ezekiel, to whom was given, as it were, six wings that he might take more lofty flights than the eagle knows—even he relied not upon the sublimity of his language or the glory of his imagery, but found the sinews of his strength in, “Thus says the Lord God.”  
This is the trowel and the hammer of God’s builders! This the trumpet of His watchmen and the sword of His warriors. Woe to the man who comes in any other name! If we, or an angel from Heaven, shall preach unto you anything but a, “Thus says the Lord,” no matter what our character or standing—give no heed to us—but cleave unto the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. To the Law and to the Testimony! If we speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in us. That test which we demand to be exercised upon others we cheerfully consent to be exercised upon ourselves, praying that we may have Grace to forsake our errors as we would have other men forsake theirs.  
2. “Thus says the Lord” is the only authority in God’s Church. When the tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness, what was the authority for its length and breadth? Why was the altar of incense to be placed here, and the brazen laver there? Why so many lambs or bullocks to be offered on a certain day? Why must the Passover be roasted whole and not boiled? Simply and only because God had shown all these things to Moses on the holy mount. And thus had Jehovah spoken, “Look that you make them after their pattern, which was showed you on the mount.”  
It is even so in the Church at the present day. True servants of God demand to see for all Church ordinances and doctrines the express authority of the Church’s only Teacher and Lord. They remember that the Lord Jesus bade the Apostles to teach Believers to observe all things whatever He had commanded them—and He neither gave to them nor to any man power to alter His commands.  
The Holy Spirit revealed much of precious Truth and holy precept by the Apostles, and to His teaching we would give earnest heed. And when men cite the authority of fathers and councils and bishops—do we give place for subjection? No! Not for an hour! They may quote Irenaeus or Cyprian, Augustine or Chrysostom. They may remind us of the dogmas of Luther or Calvin. They may find authority in Simeon, or Wesley, or Gill— we will listen to the opinions of these great men with the respect which they deserve as men, but having so done—we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the Church of God! For there nothing has any authority, but, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts.”  
Yes, if you shall bring us the concurrent consent of all tradition—if you shall quote precedents venerable with fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries of antiquity—we burn the whole lot as so much worthless lumber unless you put your finger upon the passage of Holy Writ which warrants the matter to be of God! You may further plead, in addition to all this venerable authority, the beauty of the ceremony and its usefulness to those who partake—but this is all foreign to the point—for to the true Church of God the only question is this—is there, “Thus says the Lord,” for it? And if Divine authority is not forthcoming, faithful men MUST thrust forth the intruder as the cunning craftiness of men.  
3. “Thus says the Lord” is the most fitting word of rebuke for erring saints. God’s people, when they err, if they are rebuked, even though it should be in the gentlest manner, are too apt to resent the rebuff. But when we can come to them with, “Thus says the Lord,” if there is a spark of spiritual life left, it is sure to catch at this flame. When the man of God came to Eli, how Eli’s heart trembled when he began, “Thus says the Lord,” and described to him the doom of his house because his sons had made themselves vile and he had not restrained them!  
David, the king, might have been moved to anger against Nathan, for that personal parable and pungent application, but his anger was stayed—no, better still—his heart was broken because the Prophet could say, “Thus says the Lord.” My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you and I have often risen in anger at the intrusive reproofs of ignorant men! But I hope we have far more often felt the melting power of a, “Thus says the Lord.” When the heart is right, the Word of God sweetly melts us as the breath of the south wind melts the frozen rivers.  
4. “Thus says the Lord” is the only solid ground of comfort to God’s people. Where can a child of God find true solace apart from that which comes out of the mouth of the Most High? Truly, “man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God does man live.” “Your Words were found and I did eat them.” “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” When Nathan came to tell David of the Covenant which the Lord would make with him and his house, David would scarcely have believed so great a mercy to be really his if the Prophet had not begun with, “Thus says the Lord.”  
It was not, “Thus says Nathan,” or, “Thus do the ancients say,” but, “Thus says the Lord,” and David’s heart was full of holy joy when he saw the Covenant to be ordered in all things and sure. When Hezekiah lay sick unto death he turned his face to the wall and prayed. But there was no comfort to the royal suppliant until the Prophet came with, “Thus says the Lord.” And when Sennacherib was about to besiege Jerusalem and Lachish had fallen, Hezekiah prayed and the people with him. But oh, they could not think it possible that there should be a hook put into the jaw of the mighty Assyrian and that he should be turned back by the way in which he came till the Prophet reassured their hearts with a, “Thus says the Lord”!  
Zion’s sons and daughters feast upon the sure Word of their faithful God. Brethren, I need not enlarge here, for I hope most of you know the preciousness of a Divine promise. There is nothing needed to stay your soul in your worst troubles but the Word of God applied with power. God may not send you a friend—He may not raise up a deliverer. But if He shall only give you Divine Grace to believe His Word, that shall be enough for you! Martin Luther said, “I have covenanted with my Lord that He should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary both for this life and that which is to come.”  
Oh Lord, only feed me on Your Word and I will not envy kings their delicacies, nor even the angels around Your Throne the bread of Heaven on which they live.  
5. Yet, again—“Thus says the Lord” is that with which we must confront the Lord’s enemies. When Moses went in before Pharaoh, the words which he used were not, “The elders of Israel have consulted and thus have they bid me say.” Nor, “Our Father Abraham once said and his words have been handed to us by long tradition”—such talk would have been readily resisted. No, he confronted the haughty monarch with, “Thus says the Lord, let My people go,” and it was the power of this Divine Word which rained plagues upon the fields of Zoan and brought forth the captives with silver and gold.  
Pharaoh might boast, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” But before long he knew that Jehovah’s Word was mightier than all the horsemen and chariots of Mizraim and was not to be resisted without terrible defeat. To this day, if we would break sinners’ hearts, our hammer must be, “Thus says the Lord.” And if we would woo them to obedience to King Jesus, our reasons must come from His own Word. I have often noticed in conversions, that though sometimes a particular passage of the sermon may be quoted by the converted person as the means of enlightenment, yet in the majority of cases it is the text, or some passage of Scripture, quoted during the sermon, which is blessed to do the work.  
McCheyne says, “Depend upon it, it is God’s Word, not our comment upon God’s Word, that saves souls.” And so it is. Let us use much of Scripture, much of the pure silver of sacred Revelation and no human alloy. “What is the chaff to the wheat, says the Lord?”  
6. To close this point. Such an authority has a, “Thus says the Lord,” that it is not to be despised without entailing upon the offender the severest penalty. Samuel came to Saul with, “Thus says the Lord,” and bade him destroy the Amalekites. He was to utterly cut them off and not to spare so much as one of them. But Saul saved the best of the cattle and the sheep, and brought home Agag—and what was the result? His kingdom was taken from him and given to a neighbor of his that was better than he. And because he exalted himself beyond measure to do otherwise than according to the letter of God’s command, he was put away forever from having dominion over Israel.  
And mark this word—if any Church in Christendom shall continue, after light is given, and after plain rebuke is uttered, to walk contrary to the Word of God and to teach that which is inconsistent with Holy Scripture— as Saul was put away from the kingdom so shall that Church be put away from before the Lord of Hosts. And if any man, be he who he may, after receiving light from on high, continues willfully to shut his eyes, he shall not, if an heir of Heaven, be rejected from eternal salvation, but he shall be cast off from much of the usefulness and comfort which he might otherwise have enjoyed. He knew his Master’s will and did it not—he shall be beaten with many stripes. He has been as the horse or the mule which have no understanding and his mouth shall be held in with bit and bridle.  
Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler by opposing His, “Thus says the Lord.” Upon whomever this stone shall fall it shall grind him to powder and whoever shall fall upon it shall be broken to his own lasting damage. O, my Brethren, I would that we trembled and stood more in awe of God’s Word! I fear that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion—but remember that opinion cannot govern in God’s House! God’s Word, not man’s opinion, claims your allegiance!  
Remember that although our ignorant conscience may not accuse us of error, yet if we walk contrary to God’s Word, our conscientiousness does not screen us from sin—for conscience is not the sovereign arbiter of right and wrong—the plain Word of God is the rule of equity. I do not sin so foully as if I sinned against my conscience. But I still sin, if, having an unenlightened conscience I ignorantly transgress. But if I willfully keep my conscience in darkness and continue in errors which I might easily know to be such by a little thought and searching of God’s Word, then my conscience can offer me no excuse, for I am guilty of blindfolding the guide which I have chosen and then, knowing him to be blindfolded, I am guilty of the folly of letting him lead me into rebellion against God. O Church of God, hear the voice of your great Founder and Lord! “Whoever, therefore shall break one of these least Commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven.” “He that has My Commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” O for a stern integrity that will hold the Word and will never depart from it, come what may! This much concerning the value of a, “Thus says the Lord.”  
II. Dear Friends, the second part of our subject may be very displeasing to some who have strayed in here, but that I cannot help. I do not remember ever asking anyone to come and hear me, and therefore, as you come of your own wills, when I have any Truth of God to speak, I shall not conceal it because you choose to be present. At the present crisis I feel that it is, “woe unto me,” if I do not lift up my voice like a trumpet and urge with all my might the necessity of reformation in our State Church.  
I have moreover an excellent excuse for the enquiry I am about to make—for as I am publicly charged with ignorance, it is at once my duty and my privilege to seek instruction of those who claim authority to teach. When one is known to be profoundly ignorant and there are certain fathers in the faith who have the power to instruct, the least thing that can be allowed us is to ask questions—and the smallest gift we can expect is to have them answered by men expressly ordained to instruct the ignorant.  
The Rev. W. Goode, the Dean of Ripon, appears to be much better acquainted with the extent of my reading and mental acquirements than I am myself. He speaks with all the positiveness of a personal acquaintance concerning my reputed ignorance, and for my own part I am not at all anxious to question so very reverend an authority. He writes—“As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question, which is a question, not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology.  
“And his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, ‘This is My body.’ But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing judgment on such a point. And He would be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham Judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the Evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as he pleases—but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer and brings a charge of dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms.”  
When these paragraphs caught my eye, my heart leaped with joy, for I knew that the sinners in Zion were afraid! And I thought I heard a voice crying from the Word, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty. And base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are that no flesh should glory in His Presence.”  
My mind flew back to the valley of Elah and I remembered the words of the old record—“And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth and ruddy and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that you come to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me and I will give your flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field.”  
My spirit kindled at these words of the boastful champion of yore and at their modern reproduction by the vainglorious Divine of Ripon and the answer of David was in my heart as it is even now upon my tongue—“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day will the Lord deliver you into my hands...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands.”  
Admitting the witness of the venerable dean to be correct and that “the young minister” is not an expert in logic, I am not, therefore, ashamed! Far otherwise! I will rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me, “for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Take, O you great ones of the earth, every profit that can be made out of your belief in my utter total ignorance and your own profound and extensive learning, and then go your ways and learn what this means—“Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you. And you have said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon you! You shall not know from where it rises.”  
And now at this hour having been condemned as intolerably ignorant, I feel I have the liberty to ask just a few explanations of those reverend divines who do know, or ought to know, the grounds of their faith and practice.  
1. I open this little book—the Prayer Book, of whose occasional services, the more I know, the less I approve—and I find in the Baptismal Service that when little children are brought to be sprinkled, certain godfathers and godmothers promise for them that they shall renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, etc. And that they shall obediently keep all God’s holy will and Commandments and walk in the same all the days of their life.  
To me it seems that they might as well promise that the infants should grow up with Roman noses, auburn hair and blue eyes, for they are just as able to make them do the one as the other. I shall not, however, intrude my opinion further, but simply ask whether there is a, “Thus says the Lord,” for any man’s standing proxy for a babe and making such promises in its name?  
In other words, I ask for Apostolic, Prophetic, or any other form of Scriptural precept, or precedent, for the use of proxies in Baptism! True religion is a personal matter—is its first manifestation in Regeneration to be connected with the impossible promises of others? Plain proof texts are requested for godfathers and godmothers. And such important persons deserve to be defended by the clergy, if texts of Scripture can be discovered! As I cannot imagine where the texts will be found, I must pause till the learned shall produce them.  
Further I find that these children enter into a covenant by proxy, of which we are assured that the promise of our Lord Jesus, will for His part, most surely keep and perform. But the children are bound to do their part, that part being something more than the gigantic task of keeping all the Commandments of God. Now I ask for a, “Thus says the Lord,” for such a covenant as this! I find two Covenants in the Word of God—one is the Covenant of Works, “This do and you shall live.”  
I find another, the Covenant of Grace, which runs only in this wise, “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” I find it expressly declared that there cannot be a mixture of works and Grace, for says Paul, “If by Grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more Grace: otherwise work is no more work.” And I ask a, “Thus says the Lord,” for this baptismal covenant, which is nominally of Grace, but really of works, or at best an unnatural conglomerate of Grace and works. I ask those who have searched Scripture through to find me the form or the command for any baptismal covenant whatever! It is idle to say that such a covenant was allowed among the early Christians. Their witness is not early enough for us—we want a, “Thus says the Lord,” and nothing but this will justify this pretended covenant.  
We then find that after this covenant has been made and the water has been applied in a manner which we think needs also a, “Thus says the Lord,” to justify it, it is publicly declared that the babe is regenerated— “Seeing now, dearly beloved Brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.”  
And, again, “We yield You hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased You to regenerate this infant with Your Holy Spirit, to receive him for Your own child by adoption and to incorporate him into Your holy Church,” etc. We are told we do not understand the meaning of, “regeneration,” as it is used in the Services of the Anglican Church. The meaning of this passage is historical, hypothetical, ecclesiastical, and we know not what. The words, “To be born again” did not formerly seem to us to be so very difficult to understand, nor do they appear so now as they stand in Scripture, for we find in them the one regeneration which has renewed us in the spirit of our mind and we cannot consent to use those words in any other sense.  
Well, whether regeneration is or is not a very equivocal word, we simply ask, is there a, “Thus says the Lord,” for the assertion that a sprinkled infant is therefore regenerate in any sense of the word? Will any person find us a text of Scripture? He shall have large rewards from clergymen with uneasy consciences! We put our enquiry again in plain terms—will someone oblige us with a plain, “Thus says the Lord,” proving that water Baptism in any one instance makes an unconscious babe a member of Christ and a child of God in any sense which any sane person chooses to attach to those words?  
Where is the passage? Where? Echo answers, “where?” But this subject you have been considering for some time and are well convinced that the process of regenerating babies by occult influences conveyed by water is a pure, no, an impure invention of priest-craft. There is therefore no necessity that I enlarge upon a point so well understood.  
2. I have a second question to ask. There is prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, a peculiar ceremony called Confirmation. I do not remember to

ave read of that in Scripture. I would like to have a, “Thus says the Lord,” for that rite. As I am ready to yield as far as possible, suppose we take it for granted that this ceremony is defensible from Holy Writ. I would like to know whether there is any, “Thus says the Lord,” allowing a person called a bishop to give to the assembled youths an assurance of Divine favor by laying his hands on their heads?  
The bishop having laid his hands on every head presented to him, whether it be gracious or graceless, talks thus in the collect—“Almighty and ever living God, who makes us both to will and to do those things that are good and acceptable unto Your Divine majesty, we make our humble supplications unto You for these, Your servants, upon whom (after the example of your holy Apostles), we have now laid our hands to certify them (by this sign) of Your favor and gracious goodness towards them.”  
Does this mean that the bishop’s hand certifies the person touched thereby of special Divine favor? So it seems to teach, as far as I can see. We want, then, a, “Thus says the Lord,” authorizing this individual to exercise the office of an Apostle! We then desire Scriptural warrant permitting him to certify these kneeling youths the enjoyment or possession of any particular Divine favor by putting his hands on their heads! If this means the common goodness of God, the bishop’s hands are not needed to certify them of that—but as he has already declared in prayer that they were regenerated by water and the Spirit and had been forgiven all their sins—it is clear that special favor is intended! We enquire, therefore, for his authority for giving these young people a further certificate of special Divine favor by the imposition of his hands.  
Why his hands? Who is he that he can certify these persons of God’s favor more than any other man? Where is his Scriptural warrant to confer, by his hands, a certificate of Divine Grace upon young people, who, in innumerable cases are thoughtless and unconverted, if not profane? We want a, “Thus says the Lord,” for the whole thing and then for each item in detail. Endless is the task thus proposed to the honest Churchman.  
3. Another matter needs a little clearing up and, as this book was set forth by learned divines and bishops, I would like a lucid explanation. The priest visits a sick man, sits down by his bedside, reads certain prayers, bids the patient remember his Baptism, questions him as to his creed, gives him good advice about forgiving his enemies and making his will. He moves him to make a special confession of his sin if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, after which confession the rubric says, “the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desires it), after this sort.”  
Here is absolution and I humbly and heartily desire a, “Thus says the Lord,” for it”! “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgives you your offenses—and by His authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Sir Priest, I want you to give me a plain warrant from God’s Word for your absolving my dying neighbor at this rate.  
Who are you that you should use such words? The season is solemn, it is the hour of death. And the matter is weighty, for it concerns the eternal interests of the dying man, and may, no, will, if you are found to be acting presumptuously in this matter, involve your own soul in eternal ruin! Where did you derive your right to forgive that sick man? Might he not raise his withered hands and return the compliment by absolving you? Are you quite sure as to the committal of Divine authority to you? Then show me the deed of gift and let it be clearly of Divine origin!  
The Apostles were empowered to do many things, but who are you? Do you claim to be their successors? Then work miracles similar to theirs! Take up serpents and drink deadly things without being harmed! Prove to us that you have seen the Lord, or even that cloven tongues of fire have sat upon each of you! You evangelical clergy—do you dare claim to be successors of the Apostles and to have power to forgive sins? Your Puseyite Brethren go the whole length of superstitious pretension, but you have too much light to be so superstitious and yet you do what is quite as wicked—you solemnly subscribe that this absolution is not contrary to the Word of God—when you know it is!  
Gorham case, you say! I care nothing for your Gorham case! I want a, “Thus says the Lord,” warranting you to swear to what you know to be false and dangerous! Mr. Mozley and Mr. Maskell may give you all the comfort which they can afford, but one word of Peter or of Paul would be of more weight in this matter than a thousand words from either of them! You are aware, perhaps, that it is not every man who is permitted by the Established religion to pronounce this absolution. A person called a “deacon” is, I am informed, allowed to preach and do a great many things, but when he reads the Book of Common Prayer in the daily service he must not grant absolution!  
There is a supernatural something which the man has not yet received, for he has only once felt the Episcopal imposition of hands. We shall see, by-and-by, where absolving power comes from. The deacon has attained to one grade of priest-craft, but the full vigor of mystic influence rests not upon him. Another touch, another subscription and the keys of St. Peter will swing at his girdle—but his time is not yet. I ask him, whether he calls himself a deacon or a priest, where he gets a, “Thus says the Lord,” for this absolution? Which, if it is not of God, is a piece of impertinence, superstition, blasphemy and falsehood!  
4. I turn on and find that when the sick dies, he is buried in consecrated ground and though he may have cut his throat while under delirium tremens—if the jury does not return a verdict of suicide—the priest shall say, as he casts earth upon the body, “Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear Brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.”  
And again, “We give You hearty thanks for that it has pleased You to deliver this, our Brother, out of the miseries of this sinful world.” And yet again, “We meekly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him, as our hope is this, our Brother, does.” We beg a, “Thus says the Lord,” for burying every baptized thief, harlot, rogue, drunkard and liar who may die in the parish—“in sure and certain hope of the blessed resurrection.”  
Oh, “it is commanded by authority.” What authority? We challenge it and permit none to pass muster but a, “Thus says the Lord.” Until clergymen will bring us Scriptural warrant for uttering falsehoods over a grave, we dare not cease our testimony against them! How long will the many godly laymen in that Church remain quiet? Why do they not bestir themselves and demand revision or disruption?  
5. Turning a little further on, into a part of the Prayer Book not much frequented by ordinary readers, we come to the “Ordering of Priests,” or the way in which priests are made. Why priests? Is one Believer more a priest than another when all are styled in Scripture a “royal priesthood”? Let that pass. Of course, Brethren, the priests are made by the bishops, as the bishops are made by Lord Palmerston, or Lord Derby, or any other political leader who may be in office!  
The Prime Minister of England is the true fountain from whom all bishops flow and the priests are minor emanations branching off from the miter rather than the crown. Here is the way of ordering priests! Let Heaven and earth hear this and be astonished! “When this prayer is done, the bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally upon the head of everyone that receives the order of priesthood. The receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees and the Bishop saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ ”  
Listen to it, now! Imagine you behold the scene—a man of God, a bishop whom you have been in the habit of considering a most gracious, godly man and such, no doubt, he may be—imagine you see him putting his hands upon the head of some evangelical man whom you will go and hear, or if you like, upon some young rake fresh from Oxford and imagine you hear him say, “Receive the Holy Spirit for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed unto you by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins you do forgive, they are forgiven and whose sins you do retain, they are retained”!  
We want a, “Thus says the Lord,” for that! For that is putting it rather strongly in the popish line, one would think. Is the way of ordering priests in the Church of Rome much worse than this? That the Apostles did confer the Holy Spirit we never thought of denying, but that Oxford Exeter, or any other occupants of the bench can give the Holy Spirit needs some proof other than their silk aprons or long sleeves can afford us! We ask, moreover, for one instance in which an Apostle conferred upon any minister the power to forgive sins. And where it can be found in Scripture that any man other than an Apostle ever received authority to absolve sinners?  
Sirs, let us speak the truth—however much yonder priest may pretend at his parishioner’s bedside to forgive sins—the man’s sins are not forgiven. And the troubled conscience of the sinner often bears witness to the fact as the Day of Judgment and the fearful Hell of sinners must also bear witness! And what do you think, Sirs, must be the curse that fills the mouth of damned souls, when, in another world they meet the priest who absolved them with this sham absolution? With what reproaches will such deceived ones meet the priest who sent them down to perdition with a lie in their right hands?  
Will they not say to him, “You did forgive me all my sins by an authority committed unto you, and yet here I am cast into the pit of Hell!” Oh, if I do not clear my soul upon this infamous business and if the whole Christian Church does not cleanse herself of it, what guilt will lay upon us! This is become a crying evil and a sin that is not to be spoken of behind the door, nor to be handled in gentle language. I have been severe, it is said, and spoken harshly. I do not believe it possible to be too severe in this matter! But, Sirs, if I have been so, let that be set down as my sin if you will, but is there any comparison between my sin and that of men who know this to be contrary to the Word of God and yet give it their unfeigned assent and consent? Or between the sin of those who can lie unto the Holy Spirit by pretending to confer Him, who goes where He wills, upon men who as likely as not are as graceless as the very heathen?  
Fresh from the dissipations of college life, the sinner bows before the man and rises a full blown priest—fully able to remit or retain sins! After this, how can the priests of the Church of England denounce the Roman Catholics? It is so very easy to fume and bluster against Puseyites and Papists, but the moment our charity begins at home and we give our Evangelical Brethren the same benefit which they confer upon the open Romanists, they are incensed beyond measure! Yet will we tell them to their faces, that they, despite their fair speeches, are as guilty as those whom they denounce, for there is as much popery in this priest-making as in any passage in the mass-book?  
Protestant England! Will you long tolerate this blasphemy?

Land of Wickliffe, birthplace of the martyrs of Smithfield—how long this is to be borne with? I am clear of this matter before the Most High, or hope to be, before I sleep in the grave. And having once sounded the trumpet, it shall ring till my lips are dumb. Do you tell me it is no business of mine? Is it not the National Church?—does not its sin rest, therefore, upon every man and woman in the nation—Dissenter and Churchman—who does not shake himself from it by open disavowal?  
I am not meddling with anybody else’s Church! But the Church that claims me as a parishioner would compel me, if it could, pay its Church Rates and does take from me my share of tithe every year. I ask the sturdy Protestants of England and especially the laity of the Church of England, whether they intend forever to foster such abominations? Arise, Britannia, nation of the free, and shake your garments from the dust of this hoary superstition! And as for you, O Church of England, may God bless you with ministers who will sooner come forth to poverty and shame, than pervert, or assist in perverting the Word of God.  
6. I have not quite done—I have another question to ask. Look at the thanksgiving which is offered on the twentieth day of June on account of Her Majesty’s accession. In this thanksgiving we very heartily join, although we decline to pray by book on the twentieth of June or any other day! Look at the close of that thanksgiving and you see the name of Lord John Russell as a sort of official authority for the prayer! Is Earl Russell also among the prophets? And on the other side of the page, in order that the Tories may edify the Church as well as the Whigs, I see the hand of S. H. Walpole. Is he also a governor in Christ’s Church?  
Has the Lord given these men power to legislate for His Church, or sign mandates for her to obey? But what is it all about? “Victoria Regina—our will and pleasure is that these four forms of prayer,” etc. Do you see? Here is royal supremacy! Further on in the next page—“Now, therefore, our will and pleasure is,” etc. See the Preface to the Articles—“Being by God’s Ordinance, according to our just Title, Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church, within these our Dominions.” And again—“We are Supreme Governor of the Church of England.”  
This is the way in which your Church bows herself before the kingdoms of this world! I demand, earnestly demand, a, “Thus says the Lord,” for this royal supremacy! If any king, or queen, or emperor, shall say in any Christian Church, “Our will and pleasure is”—we reply, “We have another King, one Jesus!” As to the Queen, honored and beloved as she is, she is by her sex incapacitated for ruling in the Church—Paul decides that point by his plain precept, “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” And if a king were in the case, we should say—“We render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things which are God’s.”  
In civil matters, we cheerfully obey princes and magistrates, but if any king, queen, emperor, or what not, usurps power in the Church of God, we reply, “One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are Brethren. The crown-rights belong to King Jesus. He alone is King in Zion!” But I am met at once with the reply, “Well, but Christ is the Head of the Established Church as well as the queen.” I remember reading about a three-headed dog which kept the gates of Hell, but I never dreamed of a two-headed Church till I heard of the Anglican Establishment. A two-headed Church is a monster!  
The Queen, the Head of the Church and King Jesus the Head of the Church, too? Never! Where is a, “Thus says the Lord,” for this? No man living who calls himself an Englishman has a word to say of Her Majesty except that which is full of honor and esteem and loyal affection. But the moment we come to talk about the Church of Christ, whoever shall say, or think, or believe that there is any headship to the Church of Christ except the Person of Christ Himself—he knows not what he says nor whereof he affirms. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body—the fullness of Him fills all in all.  
Here stand the two letters, “V. R.,” at the top of certain mandates and they mean just this —“Our royal authority commands that you shall not believe this, and you shall believe that. You shall not pray this and you shall pray that. And you shall pray on such a day,” and so on. The Church which thus bows to authority commits fornication with the kings of the earth and virtually renounces her allegiance to Christ to gain the filthy lucre of State endowments! He is the free man whom the Truth of God makes free and who wears no gilded collar with a chain hanging therefrom held in a royal hand.  
Remember how the Chancellor laughed to scorn the whole bench of bishops and rightly so—for he who voluntarily makes himself a bondman deserves to feel the lash. May the little finger of our State grow heavier than the loins of James or Elizabeth until all good men flee from the house of bondage! Servants of God, will you be servants of man? You who profess to follow King Jesus and see Him crowned with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals—do you take off His diadem to put it upon the head of another? No, it shall never be! Scotland has repelled the royal intrusion right bravely by her sons of the Free Church—who have left all to follow King Jesus.  
Her bush burned in the olden times but was not consumed. The Covenant was stained with blood. But it was never slain! Let us revive that Covenant and if need be, seal it with our blood. Let the Church of England have what king she pleases, or what prince she pleases for her head, but this I know, that there is no, “Thus says the Lord,” concerning the Ecclesiastical supremacy of Victoria Regina, nor the authority of Lord John Russell, or S. H. Walpole, or any of that company, honorable though they may be!  
7. Now, once more, one other question. I am profoundly ignorant and have not the power to judge of these things (so I am informed) and therefore I would like to ask for a, “Thus says the Lord,” for a few of the canons—no, perhaps I had better not read them—they are too evil. They are all full of malice and uncharitableness and everything that comes of the foul Fiend. I will ask whether there can be found any, “Thus says the Lord,” for this Canon 10—“Maintainers of Schismatic in the Church of England to be censured. Whoever shall hereafter affirm that such ministers as refuse to subscribe to the form and manner of God’s worship in the Church of England, prescribed in the Communion Book and their adherents, may truly take unto them the name of another Church not established by law, and dare presume to publish it, that this their pretended Church has of long time groaned under the burden of certain grievances imposed upon it, and upon the members thereof before mentioned, by the Church of England and the orders and constitutions therein by law established—let them be excommunicated and not restored until they repent and publicly revoke such their wicked errors.”  
What Scripture warrants one Church to excommunicate another merely for being a Church and complaining of undoubted grievances? Canon 11—“Maintainers of Conventicles, censured. Whoever shall hereafter affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the King’s born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful Churches; let him be excommunicated and not restored but by the Archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors.” Where does Holy Scripture authorize the excommunication of every good man who is charitable enough to believe that there are other Churches beside his own?  
Get the Book of the Lord and read it! For very much in this Book of Canons I beg to be informed of a, “Thus says the Lord.” For matters which do not concern religion and have only to do with the mere arrangement of service, we neither ask nor expect a Divine precept. But upon vital points of doctrine, ceremony, or precept, we cannot do without it. Scarcely can any document be more inconsistent with Scripture than the Book of Canons and therefore it is ever kept in the background because those who know anything about it must be ashamed of it! And yet these are Canons of the Church of England—canons which are inconsistent, many of them, with even the common rules of our own present enlightened law, let alone the Word of God! We ask a, “Thus says the Lord,” for them and we wait until a, “Thus says the Lord,” shall be found to defend them.  
Now some will ask why I take this matter up and look into it. I have already told you the reason, dear Friends. There is an opportunity for pushing another Reformation given to us just now, of which, if we do not avail ourselves, we shall be verily guilty. Some have said, “Why not go on preaching the Gospel to sinners?” I do preach the Gospel to sinners as earnestly as ever I did in my life and there are as many conversions to God as at any former period. This is God’s work. And beware lest any of you lift a finger against it. The hand of the Lord is in this thing and he that lives shall see it! Let us have your prayers, that good may come of this controversy, even though you may deplore it.  
As for anything else that you can do, it shall not turn us a hair’s breadth from this testimony to which we feel God has called us—though it brings upon us every evil that flesh would shrink from! The words of Dr. Guthrie are well worth quoting here—“The servant is no better than his master. And I do believe, were we more true to God, more faithful and honest in opposing the world for its good, we should get less smoothly along the path of life and have less reason to read with apprehension these words of Jesus, ‘Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.’ Not less true than shrewd was the remark of a Scotch woman respecting one who, just settled in the ministry, had been borne to his pulpit amid the plaudits of all the people, ‘If he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have all the blackguards in the parish on his head before a month is gone.’ ”  
III. Now to close, let me ask you, my Hearers—have any of you a hope of Heaven which will not stand the test of, “Thus says the Lord”? What are you resting upon? Are you resting upon something which you felt when excited at a Prayer Meeting or under a sermon? Remember you will not have that excitement to bear you up in death and the religion of excitement will not suffice in the Day of Judgment! Are you building upon your own works? Are you depending upon your own feelings? Do you rely upon sacraments? Are you placing your trust upon the word of man? If so, remember that when God shakes all things He will shake these false foundations.  
But O, build upon the Word of my Lord and Master! Trust your soul with Jesus! Hating sin and clinging to the great Sin-Bearer, you shall find in Him a rock of refuge which can never, never fail you! I beg you, as the Lord lives, search and try yourselves by the Word of God! No doubt there are many among us who are not built upon the Rock of Ages and we may any of us be deceived by a mere name to live. Do then, since the test-day must come—since you must be weighed in the balances—weigh yourselves now, my Hearers! And let none of us go down to the chambers of destruction believing ourselves to be heirs of Heaven, being all the while enemies to the Most High God! May the Lord exalt His own Word and give us a sure inheritance in the blessings which it brings. Amen.

[ BAPTISMAL REGENERATION. The following Sermons contain Mr. SPURGEON’S views upon the Question now under controversy No. 573— “Baptismal Regeneration.” No. 577—“Let Us Go Forth.” o. 581—“Children Brought to Christ, Not to the Font.” No. 591—“Thus Says the Lord”—Or, the Book of Common Prayer Weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary.” Two LETTERS from C. H. SPURGEON—one to the Evangelical Alliance, signifying his withdrawal from that Association and another to The Christian Public, proving that his accusations against the Evangelical clergy are neither novel nor singular.—25th Thousand. One Penny each. The five post free for six stamps.]

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2001 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“A LITTLE SANCTUARY”  
NO. 2001

**INTENDED FOR READING ON THE LORD’S DAY, JANUARY 8, 1888, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

**“Therefore say, Thus says the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary**

**in the countries where they shall come.”  
Ezekiel 11:16.**

THE text begins with “therefore.” There was a reason for God’s speaking in this way. It is profitable to trace the why and the wherefore of the gracious words of the Lord. The way by which a promise comes usually shines with a trail of light. Upon reading the connection we observe that those who had been carried captive were insulted by those who tarried at Jerusalem. They spoke in a very cruel manner to those with whom they should have sympathized. How often do prosperous Brothers look with scorn on the unfortunate! Did not Job of old complain, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease”?

The Lord hears the unkind speeches of the prosperous when they speak bitterly of those who are plunged in adversity. Read the context— “Son of man, your Brethren, even your Brethren, the men of your kindred and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord—unto us is this land given in possession.” This unbrotherly language moved the Lord to send the Prophet Ezekiel with good and profitable words to the children of the captivity. Many a time the cruel word of man has been the cause of a tender word from God. Because of the unkindness of these people, therefore God, in loving kindness, addressed in words of tender grace those whom they despised.

As in our Savior’s days, the opposition of the Pharisees acted upon the Savior like a steel to the flint and fetched bright sparks of the Truth of God out of Him. So the wickedness of man has often been the cause why the grace of God has been more fully revealed. This is some solace when under the severe chastisement of human tongues. Personally, I am glad of this comfort. I would gladly be at peace with all men—I would not unnecessarily utter a word of provocation—but it is a world in which you cannot live at peace unless you are willing to be unfaithful to your conscience.

Offenses, therefore, will come. But why should we fret unduly under this trial when we perceive that out of opposition to the cause of God occasions arise for the grandest displays of God’s love and power? If from the showers we gain our harvests, we will not mourn when the heavens gather blackness and the rain pours down. If the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, then let man be wrathful if he wills. Brethren, let us

brace ourselves to bear the bruises of slanderous tongues! Let us take all sharp speeches and cutting criticisms to God. It may be that He will hear what the enemy has said and that He will be very pitiful to us. Because of the bitterness of the oppressor He will bring home to our heart by the Spirit, with greater tenderness and power, some sweet Word of His which has lain hidden from us in His Book. Be not dismayed, but go to Him who is the God of all comfort, who comforts all those that are bowed down and He will give you a Word which shall heal your wounds and breathe peace into your spirit.

Now to proceed at once to our text, seeing that the occasion of it is a sufficient preface. Let us notice, first, where God’s people may be and yet be God’s people. They may be by God’s own hand, “scattered among the countries and cast far off among the heathen.” And, secondly, what God will be to them when they are in such circumstances, “Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.” May the Holy Spirit, who spoke by Ezekiel, speak though these words to our hearts!

I. First, then, WHERE GOD’S PEOPLE MAY BE. If you ask where they may be, the answer to the question is, first, they may be under chastisement. If you will remember, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God threatened Israel that if they, as a nation, sinned against Him, they should be scattered among the nations and cast far off among the heathen. Many a time they so sinned. I need not recapitulate the story of their continued transgressions and multiplied backslidings. The Lord was slow to fulfill His utmost threats but put forth His utmost patience till there was no more room for long-suffering. At last the threatened chastisement fell upon them and fierce nations carried them away in bonds to the far-off lands of their dread.

They were not utterly destroyed—their being scattered among the people showed that they still existed. Though they were a people scattered and peeled, yet they were a people, even as Israel is to this day. For all that tyrants and persecutors have ever done, yet the Jew is still extant among us, even as the bush burned with fire but was not consumed, Israel is still to the front and will be to the world’s end. The Lord has not cast away His people, even though He has cast them far off among the heathen. He has scattered them among the countries but they are not absorbed into those countries. They still remain a people separated unto the living God, in whom He will yet be glorified.

But, assuredly, the chosen seed came under chastisement. By the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept—yes—they wept when they remembered Zion, because they were under the Lord’s heavy hand. The instructed among them knew that their being in exile was the fruit of the transgressions of their fathers and the result of their own offenses against God. And yet, though they were under chastisement, God loved them and had a choice word for them, which I will by-and-by endeavor to explain to you. For the Lord said, “Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary.”

Beloved, you and I may lie under the rod of God and we may smart sorely because of our iniquities, even as David did. And yet we may be the children of God towards whom He has thoughts of Divine Grace. Our moisture may be turned into the drought of summer, while day and night the Lord’s hand is heavy upon us. We may be in sore temporal trouble and may be compelled by an enlightened conscience to trace our sorrow to our own folly. We may be in great spiritual darkness and may be compelled to confess that our own sins have procured this unto ourselves.

And yet, for all that, the Lord may have sent the chastisement in love and in nothing else but love. And He may intend by it, not our destruction, but the destruction of the flesh. Not our rejection, but our refining, not our curse, but our cleansing. Let us take comfort, seeing that God has a Word to say to His mourners and to His afflicted and that Word in the text is a “yet” which serves to show that there is a clear limit to His anger. He smites but it is with an “although” and a “yet”—He scatters them to a distance but He sends a promise after them and says, “I will be to them as a little sanctuary.”

In the Lord’s hand towards His chosen there may be a rod but not a sword. It is a heavy rod, but it is not a rod of iron. It is a rod that bruises but it is not a rod that batters to pieces. God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be. And though, apparently, He strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of His hand. His anger endures but for a night—He hastens to display His favor. Listen to His own Words of overflowing faithfulness—“For a small moment have I forsaken you. But with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” However, it is clear that God’s own people may be under chastisement.

But, secondly, wherever they are, whether they are under chastisement or not, they are where the Lord has put them. Read the text carefully— “Although I have cast them far off among the heathen and although I have scattered them among the countries.” The Lord’s hand was in their banishment and dispersion—Jehovah Himself inflicted the chastisement for sin. You say to me, “Why, it was Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away—the Babylonians and the Chaldeans took them captive.” Yes, I know it was so. But the Lord regards these as instruments in His hand and He says, “I have done it,” just as Job, when the Chaldeans and the Sabeans had swept away his property and his children had been destroyed through the agency of Satan, yet said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.”

The Lord was as truly in the taking away as He was in the giving. It is well to look beyond all second causes and instrumentalities. Do not get angry with those who are the nearer agents but look to the First Cause. Do not get fretting about the Chaldeans and Sabeans. Let them alone and Satan, too. What have you to do with them? Your business is with God. See His hand, and bow before it. Say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.” Come to that, for then you will be able to say, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Though your trials be peculiar and your way be

hedged up, yet the hand of the Lord is still in everything. And it behooves you to recognize it for your strengthening and consolation.

Note, next, that the people of God may dwell in places of great discomfort. The Jews were not in those days like the English, who colonize and find a home in the Far West, or even dwell at ease beneath sultry skies. An ancient Hebrew out of his own country was a fish out of water—out of his proper element. He was not like the Tyrian, whose ship went to Tarshish, and passed the gates of Hercules, seeking the Ultima Thule. The Jew tarried at home. “I dwell among my own people,” said a noble woman of that nation. And she did but speak the mind of a home-loving people who settled each one upon his own patch of ground and sat down under his vine and fig tree, none making him afraid.

Their Lord had driven them into a distant land, to rivers whose waters were bitter to their lips, even to the Tigris and the Euphrates. They were in a foreign country, where everything was different from their ways— where all the customs of the people were strange and singular. They would be a marked and despised people—nobody would fraternize with them but all would pass them by in scorn. The Jews excited much prejudice, for, as their great adversary, the wicked Haman, said, “their laws were diverse from all people,” and their customs had a peculiarity about them which kept them a distinct race. It must have been a great discomfort to God’s people to dwell among idolaters and to be forced to witness obscene rites and revolting practices.

God’s own favored ones in these days may be living where they are as much out of place as lambs among wolves, or doves among hawks. Do not imagine that God makes a nest of down for all His eaglets. Why, they would never take to flying if He did not put thorns under them and stir up their nest that they may take to their wings and learn the heavenward flight to which they are predestinated! Perfect comfort on earth is no more to be expected than constant calm on the sea. Sleep in the midst of a battle and ease when on the march would be more in place than absolute rest in this present state. God means not His children to take up their inheritance on this side of the Jordan. “This is not your rest—because it is polluted.”

And so He often puts us where we are very uncomfortable. Is there any Christian man who can say that he would, if he might, take up his lot forever in this life? No, no. There is an irksomeness about our condition, disguise it as we may. In one way or another we are made to remember that we are in banishment. We have not yet come unto our rest. That rest “remains for the people of God,” but as yet we have not come into the land which the Lord our God has given to us to be our place of rest. Some of God’s servants feel this in a very peculiar manner, for their soul is among lions and they dwell among those whose tongues are set on fire of Hell.

Abel was hated by Cain, Isaac was mocked by Ishmael, Joseph was among envious brethren, Moses was at first rejected by Israel, David was pursued by Saul, Elijah was hunted by Jezebel, Mordecai was hated by Haman. And yet these men were wisely placed and the Lord was eminently with them. I mention this in order that tried Believers may still know that, however uncomfortable their position, it is nevertheless true that God has put them there for some good end. The beloved of God may yet be in a place of great barrenness as to all spiritual good. “I have cast them far off among the heathen”—far off from My temple—far off from the place of My worship—far off from the shrine of My glory.

“I have scattered them among the countries,” where they will learn no good—where, on the contrary, they will see every abominable thing and often feel like Lot, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people among whom he dwelt. We are not kept apart from the wicked by high walls, or guards of heavenly soldiery. Even our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world. Grace builds neither monasteries nor nunneries. “Woe is me,” is frequently the cry of God’s chosen,” that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

David knew what it was to be cut off from the assemblies of the Lord’s house and to be in the cave or in the wilderness. It may be so with you and yet you may be a child of God. You may not be out of your place, for the dear path to His abode may go straight through this barren land. You may have to pass for many a day through this great and terrible wilderness, this land of fiery serpents and of great drought, on your way to the land that flows with milk and honey. To make Heaven the sweeter we may find our exile made bitter. Our education for eternity may necessitate spiritual tribulation and bereavement from visible comforts.

To be weaned from all reliance on outward means may be for our good, that we may be driven in upon the Lord and made to know that He is All in All. Doubtless the jeers of Babylon endeared the quiet of Zion to the banished—they loved the courts of the Lord’s house all the more for having sighed in the halls of the proud monarch.

Worse still, the Lord’s chosen may be under oppression through surrounding ungodliness and sin. The captive Israelites found Babylonia and Chaldea to be a land of grievous oppression. They ridiculed them and bade them sing them one of the songs of Zion. They required of them mirth when their hearts were heavy. On the festivals of their false gods they demanded that the worshippers of the Eternal One should help in their choirs and tune their harps to heathenish minstrelsy. Even Daniel, in his high position under the Persian monarch, found that he was not without adversaries who rested not till they had cast him into a den of lions. Those who were far away, whether in Babylonia or in Persia, found themselves the constant subjects of assault from the triumphant foe.

They were crushed down until they cried by reason of their oppression. It was not the first time that the people of God had been in the iron furnace. Did they not come forth from the house of bondage at the first, even from Egypt? Neither was Babylon the last place of trial for saints. For until the end of time the seed of the serpent will war with the Seed of the woman. Is it not still true of us, as well as of our Savior, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son”? Expect still to meet with opposition and oppression while you are passing to the land where the Seed shall possess the heritage. Those of us who bear public testimony may have to bear the brunt of the battle and suffer much from angry tongues. Nevertheless, to us it

shall be an evident token of the Lord’s favor, inasmuch as He counts us worthy to suffer for His name’s sake.

But enough of that. I am making a very long story about the grievous routes through which we wend our way to the Celestial City. We climb on hands and knees up the Hill Difficulty. We tremblingly descend the steep of Humiliation. We feel our way through the tremendous pass of the Shadow of Death and hasten through Vanity Fair and walk warily across the Enchanted Ground. Not much of the way could one fall in love with. Perhaps the only part of it is that Valley of Humiliation, where the shepherd boy sat down and sang his ditty among the wild flowers and the lambs. One might wish to be always there. But fierce adversaries invade even those tranquil meadows, for nearby where the shepherd sang his happy pastoral song, Christian met Apollyon and had to struggle hard for his life.

Do you not remember the spot where—  
*“The man so bravely played the man,  
He made the fiend to fly”?*

You see where God’s people may be and yet may be none the less but all the more, under Divine protection. Are you in difficult places? Be not dismayed, for this way runs the road to Glory. Sigh not for the dove’s wing to hurry to your rest but take the appointed path—the footsteps of your Lord are there.

II. So, now, I hasten at once into the sweet part of the subject, which consists of this—WHAT GOD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET INTO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. “Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.”

Brethren, the great sanctuary stood on Mount Zion, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” That glorious place which Solomon had built was the shrine to which the Hebrew turned his eye—he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Alas! when the tribes were carried away captive they could not carry the holy and beautiful house with them—neither could they set up its like within the brazen gates of the haughty city. “Now,” says the Lord God in infinite condescension, “I will be a traveling temple to them. I will be as a little sanctuary to each one of them. They shall carry My temple about with them. Wherever they are, I will be, as it were, a holy place to them.”

In using the word “little,” the gracious God would seem to say, “I will condescend to them and I will be as they are. I will bow down to their littleness and I will be to each little one of them a little sanctuary.” Even the temple which Solomon built was not a fit habitation for the infinite Jehovah and so the Lord will stoop a little further and be unto His people, not as the sanctuary, “exceedingly magnificent,” but as a little temple suitable for the most humble individual, rather than as a great temple in which vast multitudes could gather. “I will be to them as a little sanctuary” is a greatly condescending promise, implying an infinite stoop of love. There is a good deal more in my text than I shall be able to bring out, and I may seem, in making the attempt, to give you the same thought twice. Please bear with me. Let me begin at the beginning.

A sanctuary was a place of refuge. You know how Joab fled to the horns of the altar to escape from Solomon’s armed men—he ran to the temple hoping to find sanctuary there. In past ages, Churches and abbeys and altars have been used as places of sanctuary to which men have fled when in danger of their lives. Take that sense and couple it with the cities of refuge which were set up throughout all Israel, to which the man who killed another by misadventure might flee to hide himself from the manslayer.

Now, Beloved, wherever you are, wherever you dwell, God will be to you a constant place of refuge. You shall flee from sin to God in Christ Jesus. You shall flee from an accusing conscience to His pardoning love. You shall flee from daily cares to Him who cares for you. You shall flee from the accusations of Satan to the advocacy of Jesus. You shall flee, even, from yourselves to your Lord and He will be to you in all senses a place of refuge. This is the happy harbor of all saints in all weathers. Here come all weather-beaten boats and cast anchor in placid waters—

*“God is our refuge, tried and proved,  
Amid a stormy world—  
We will not fear though earth be moved,  
And hills in ocean hurled.”*

O my Hearer, make the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation and then shall you know the Truth of this text—“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Wherever you are cast, God will be to you a suitable refuge, a little haven for your little boat—not little in the sense that He cannot well protect you. Not little in the sense that His Word is a small Truth, or a small comfort, or a small protection but little in this respect—that it shall be near you, accessible to you, adapted to you. It is as though the refuge were portable in all our wanderings, a protection to be carried and kept in hand in all weathers.

You shall carry it about with you wherever you are, this “little sanctuary.” Your God and your thoughts of your God and your faith in your God shall be to you a daily, perpetual, available, present refuge. Oh, it is a delightful thought to my mind, that from every danger and every storm God will be to us an immediate refuge which we carry about with us, so that we abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

Next, a sanctuary signifies also a place of worship. It is a place where the Divine Presence is peculiarly manifested—a holy place. It usually means a place where God dwells, a place where God has promised to meet with His people, a place of acceptance where prayers and praises and offerings come up with acceptance on His altar. Now, notice, God says to His people, when they are far away from the temple and Jerusalem, “I will be to them as a little sanctuary.” Not, “I have loved the people and I will build them a synagogue, or I will lead others to build for them a meeting place,” but, “I Myself will be to them as a little sanctuary.” The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the true place of worship for saved souls.

“There is no Chapel in the place where I live,” says one. I am sorry to hear it but Chapels are not absolutely essential to worship, surely. Another cries, “There is no place of public worship of any sort where the Gospel is fully and faithfully preached.” This is a great want, certainly, but still, do not say, “I am far away from a place of worship.” That is a mistake. No

godly man is far away from a holy place. What is a place of worship? I hope that our bed-chambers are constantly places of worship. Place of worship? Why, it is one’s garden where he walks and meditates. A place of worship? It is the field, the barn, the street, when one has the heart to pray. God will meet us by a well, a stone, a bush, a brook, a tree. He has great range of meeting places when men’s hearts are right—

*“Wherever we seek Him He is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.”*  
When a man lives near to God and abides in Him, he should shake off

the folly of superstition and talk no more of holy places. God Himself, His own Presence makes a place of worship. Do you not catch the fullness of the thought? Yonder is Jacob. He lies down to sleep in a desert place with a stone for his pillow. No bishop had ever been upon the spot to consecrate it, no service had been held in the place by way of dedication and yet when he awoke in the morning, he said, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven.”

God had been to His servant a little sanctuary in that instance, as He has been oftentimes since. Whenever you go to sea, God in your cabin shall be to you a little sanctuary. When you travel by railway, the carriage shall, through the Lord’s presence, be a little sanctuary. God’s presence, seen in a bit of moss, made in the desert for Mungo Park a little sanctuary. How often have the streets of London been to some of us as the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, for God has been there! The Lord Himself is the temple of saints in Heaven and He is their temple on earth. When God draws near to us, we worship and rejoice. Whenever we are abroad and cannot come to the visible sanctuary where multitudes worship, let us ask the Lord to be to us as “a little sanctuary.”

Have not your hearts cried out as you have thought of this house when you have been far away—“Zion, Zion, the place of our solemn assemblies, when shall we return to you? O sacred spot where we have worshipped God and God has met with us and made the place of His feet glorious, when shall we again behold you?” I shall not contend with the feeling, but I would supplant it with this higher thought—the Lord Himself is our dwelling place and our holy temple. Has he not said, “I will be to them as a little sanctuary”?

Now, go a little farther. Our God is to us a place of stillness. What was the sanctuary of old? The sanctuary was the most holy place, the third court, the innermost of all within the veil. It was the most still place that ever was on earth—a closet of absolute silence. You must not think of the tabernacle in the wilderness as being a huge building. It was a small affair and the innermost room of all was of narrow dimensions. The Holy of Holies was great for holiness but not for space. There was this peculiarity about it, that it was the shrine of unbroken quiet. Was ever a voice heard in it? Once in the year the high priest went in and filled it full of the smoke of incense as he waved his censer in the mystic presence.

But otherwise it was a chamber in which there was no footfall of living thing, or voice of mortal man. Here was the home of absolute quiet and silence. The stillness within the Holy of Holies of the temple must have reached the intensity of awe. What repose one might enjoy who could dwell in the secret place of the Most High! How one sighs for stillness! We cannot get it to the full anywhere in this country—even to the loneliest hilltop the scream of the railway engine rises to the ear. Utter and entire stillness, one of the richest joys on this side of Heaven, one cannot readily obtain. Those who live in the wear and tear of this city life—and it is an awful wear and tear—might well pay down untold gold to be still for a while.

What would we not give for quiet, absolute quiet, when everything should be still and the whirring wheels of care should cease to revolve for at least a little while? I sometimes propose to myself to wait upon God and be still. Alas! There is the bell! Who is this? Somebody that will chatter for a quarter of an hour about nothing! Well, that intruder has gone. Let us pray. We are on our knees. What is this? A telegram! One is half frightened at the very sight of it—it is opened and it calls you away to matters which are the reverse of quieting. Where is stillness to be had? The only prescription I can give is this promise—“I will be to them as a little sanctuary.”

If you can get with God, you will then escape from men, even though you have to live among them. If you can baptize your spirit into the great deeps of Godhead, if you can take a plunge into the fathomless love of the Covenant, if you can rise to commune with God and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend, then will He be unto you as a little sanctuary and you shall enjoy that solemn silence of the soul which has music in it like the eternal harmonies. The presence of the Lord will be as a calm hand for that fevered brow and a pillow for that burdened head. Use your God in this way, for so He presents Himself to you.

The sanctuary was a place of mercy. When the high priest entered within the veil, he passed into the throne room of mercy. The blood had been sprinkled there and man might draw near to the God of mercy. A light was shining—a light of love and mercy, between the wings of the cherubim. Those angelic forms were ministers of mercy, attendants upon the Lord of Grace. Before the high priest stood the Mercy Seat. That was the name of the cover of the sacred Ark of the Covenant. On that Mercy Seat there was the Shekinah, which symbolized the Presence of a merciful God.

Of that Mercy Seat the Lord had said, “There will I meet with you.” The holy place was a house of mercy. God was not there in power to destroy, nor in subtle wisdom to discover folly—He was there in mercy, waiting to forgive. Now, dear Friends, God says, “I will be to them as a little sanctuary,” that is to say, an accessible throne of mercy, an accessible palace of mercy. When men have no mercy on you, go to God. When you have no mercy on yourself—and sometimes you have not—run away to God. Draw near to Him, and He will be to you as a little sanctuary.

The sanctuary was the house of mercy and hence, a place of condescension—“a little sanctuary.” Brethren—to suit our needs the blessings of Divine Grace must be given in little forms. What are we great in at all except in sin? We hear of “great men.” O Friends, a great man? Does not the term make you laugh? Did you ever hear of a great dog, or a great ant, or

a great nothing? And that is all that the greatest of us can ever be. Our degrees and ranks are only shades of littleness. That is all. When the Lord communes with the greatest of men, He must become little to speak with him.

I cannot convey to you quite what I see to be the meaning of this little sanctuary, laying the stress upon the adjective “little.” If you are talking of anything that is very dear, the tendency is always to call it “little.” The affectionate terms of language are frequently diminutives. One never says, “My dear great wife,” but we are apt to say, “My dear little wife.” We speak thus of things which are not “little,” really, but we use the word as a term of affection. To speak very simply, there is a coziness about a little thing which we miss in that which is on a large scale. We say, “Well, I did so enjoy that little Prayer Meeting. But when it grew so much in numbers I seemed lost in it.”

It is to me so marvelous that I hardly dare to say what I mean. But when the Lord brings Himself down to our capacity He is greatly dear to us and He would have us feel at home with Him, comfortable with Him. When He becomes to us “as a little sanctuary,” and we are able to compass His mercy to ourselves and perceive its adaptation to our little trials and little difficulties, then we feel ourselves at home with Him and He is most dear to us. O blessed God! You are so great that You must, as it were, belittle Yourself to manifest Yourself to me! How I love and adore You that You will deign to do this! Glory be to Your great name, though the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You, yet You dwell in the temple of my poor heart!

Dear Brethren, the sanctuary was only a little place. But then, if it had been ever so great—if it had been as spacious as this whole island and had been shut in to be the House of God—would it have been a house fitted to contain the infinite God? If you take the arch of Heaven as a roof and floor it with the sea, or if you soar into still more boundless space—is that a house fit for Him who fills all immensity? When Jehovah makes Himself little enough to be in the least comprehended by us, the descent is immeasurable. It is nothing more to Him to come down to count the hairs of our head than to bow in the infinity of His mercy to take an interest in our littlenesses.

Go a stage further. That sanctuary, of which we read in the Old Testament, was not only a place of great stillness, great mercy and great condescension, but it was a place of great holiness. “Holiness becomes Your house.” This applied to the whole temple but the inner shrine was called “sanctum sanctorum”—the Holy of Holies, for so the Hebrews make a superlative. It was the holiest place that could be. The world is an unholy place and at times it is most grievously so. You mix up with people who defile you—how can you help it? Your daily business calls you to see and hear many things which are defiling.

When these things are more than ordinarily glaring, you say to yourself, “Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might get away from the very sight of men!” I was with a mountain climbing friend some time ago and being thirsty, I drank some water from a fountain by the roadside. When I held the cup to my companion, he refused it, saying, “I don’t drink that.” I said, “Why don’t you drink it?” He answered, “I wait till I have climbed up into the mountains, where mortal men never pollute the streams and then I drink. I like drinking of fountains at which none but birds sip—where the stream pours forth from God’s hand pure as crystal.”

Alas! I cannot climb with my Alpine friend as to material things. But what a blessed thing it is to get right away from man and drink of the river of God which is full of water and know the joys of His own right hand, which are forevermore! What bliss to enter into the Holy of Holies! Now, you cannot do that by getting into a cell, or by shutting yourselves up in your room. But you can enter the most holy place by communion with God. Here is the promise. The text means this—“I will be to them as a little sanctuary—a little Holy of Holies. I will put them into Myself as into the most holy place and there will I hide them. In the secret of My tabernacle will I hide them. I will set them up upon a rock.” Away from the unholiness of your own hearts and the unholiness of those about you, get to your God and hide yourselves in Him.

Again—we may regard the sanctuary as a place of cleansing. That may be gathered from the other rendering of my text. “I will be unto them a little sanctification.” God is the sanctification of His people—He cleanses them from daily defilements and is Himself their righteousness. Those that come to God shall find in Him sanctification for the daily acts of life, cleansing from ordinary as well as extraordinary transgression. We want not only the great blood-washing but also the lesser washing of the feet with water. The Lord Himself will give us this blessing. Did not Jesus take a towel, and gird Himself for this very purpose?

Lastly, God will be to us a place of communion and of revelation. In the Holy of Holies God spoke with man. On that one day in the year, in a wondrous manner did He speak. And he that had been there and came forth alive, came out to bless the congregation. Every day of the year the teaching of the sanctuary was that in God there was everything His people wanted. In the holy place was the Shekinah light—“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” In the holy place were the cherubim—God has legions of angels at His bidding, waiting to bless His people. In the holy place was the ark—God is to us the Ark of the Covenant. He has entered into covenant with man, towards us He has a throne of Divine Grace and there He meets us, even in Christ Jesus, who is our propitiation.

Within that ark there were three things—the rod of Aaron, that Divine work of Christ which always buds. The pot of manna, the emblem and token of the living bread whereon His people feed. And the tablets of the Law unbroken, in all their splendor, whereby the saints are justified. O Brethren, if you want anything, if you want everything, go to God for it! He will be to you as a little sanctuary. That is to say, He will bring to you everything which was inside that holy place. Though but one piece of furniture, yet that Ark of the Covenant did really contain in itself and round about it, all that the heirs of God can ever need while in this wilderness.

Let this be a joy to you this day.

Do not rely upon the creature. “All men are liars,” said David. And he was not far off. Broken cisterns abound on all sides—why waste your time on them? Get you straight away to your Creator and find your all in Him. If this day you are wrapped up in the things that are seen and temporal, may God deliver you from them, for all these things will melt as you hold them in your hand! The joys of this life are like the ice palace of Montreal, which is fair to look upon while the winter lasts but it all dissolves as the spring comes on. All things round about us here are myths and dreams. This is the land of fancies and of shadows. Pray God to get out of them and that you may find in Him your sanctuary, and indeed, all that you want.

If at this time you have lost many of the comforts of this life and seem bereaved of friends, then find in God your “little sanctuary.” Go home to your chamber with holy faith and humble love and take Him to be your All in All and He will be All in All to you. Pray after this fashion—“O Lord, so work in me by Your Spirit that I may find You in all things and all things in You!” The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only.

God blows out our candles and makes us find our light in Him—to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle—for the glory of God is their light. And where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The holy leads to the holiest—living upon God here leads to living with God hereafter. Oh, that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible and bring us more and more into the inward and unseen!

If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle. And if you do know it, ask Him to keep you to the life and walk of faith and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling. For Christ’s sake we ask it. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1164 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

NOW, A SERMON FOR YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN  
NO. 1164

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1874, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of the times that are far off” Ezekiel 12:27.**

ONE would have thought that if the glorious Lord condescended to send His servants to speak to men of the way of salvation, all mankind would delight to hear the message. We should naturally conclude that the people would immediately run together in eager crowds to catch every word—and would at once be obedient to the heavenly command. But, alas, it has not been so! Man’s opposition to God is too deep, too stubborn for that. The Prophets of old were compelled to cry, “Who has believed our report?” and the servants of God in later times found themselves face to face with a stiff-necked generation who resisted the Holy Spirit as their fathers did.

Men display great ingenuity in making excuses for rejecting the message of God’s love. They display marvelous skill, not in seeking salvation, but in fashioning reasons for refusing it. They are dexterous in avoiding Divine Grace and in securing their own ruin. They hold up, first, this shield and then the other to ward off the gracious arrows of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which are only meant to slay the deadly sins which lurk in their bosoms. The evil argument which is mentioned in the text has been used from Ezekiel’s day right down to the present moment, and it has served Satan’s turn in tens of thousands of cases. By its means men have delayed themselves into Hell.

The sons of men, when they hear of the great Atonement made upon the Cross by the Lord Jesus, and are bid to lay hold upon eternal life in Him, still say concerning the Gospel, “The vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of times that are far off.” That is to say, they pretend that the matters of which we speak are not of immediate importance, and may safely be postponed. They imagine that religion is for the weakness of the dying and the infirmity of the aged, but not for healthy men and women.

They meet our pressing invitation, “All things are now ready, come to the supper,” with the reply, “Religion is meant to prepare us for eternity, but we are far off from it as yet, and are still in the heyday of our being. There is plenty of time for those dreary preparations for death. Your religion smells of the vault and the worm. Let us be merry while we may. There will be room for more serious considerations when we have enjoyed life a little, or have become established in business, or can retire to live upon our savings. Religion is for the sere and yellow leaf of the year’s fall, when life is fading, but not for the opening hours of spring, when the

birds are pairing and the primroses smiling upon the returning sun. You prophesy of things that are for many days to come, and of times that are far off.”

Very few young people may have said as much as this, but that is the secret thought of many. And with this they resist the admonition of the Holy Spirit, who says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” They put off the day of conversion as if it were a day of tempest and terror, and not, as it really is, a day most calm, most bright—the marriage of the soul with Heaven. Let every unconverted person remember that God knows what his excuse is for turning a deaf ear to the voice of a dying Savior’s love! You may not have spoken it to yourself so as to put it into words. You might not even dare to do so, lest your conscience should be too much startled—but God knows it all.

He sees the hollowness, the folly and the wickedness of your excuses. He is not deceived by your vain words, but makes short work with your apologies for delay. Remember the parables of our Lord and note that when the man of one talent professed to think his Master a hard man, He took him at his word and out of his own mouth condemned him! And in the case of the invited guests who pleaded their farms and their merchandise as excuses, no weight was attached to what they said, but the sentence went forth, “None of these men that are bidden shall taste of My supper.” God knows the frivolity of your plea for delay. He knows that you, yourself, are doubtful about it, and dare not stand to it so as to give it anything like a solemn consideration.

Very hard do you try to deceive yourself into an easy state of conscience concerning it, but in your inmost soul you are ashamed of your own falsehoods. My business at this time is, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to deal with your consciences and to convince you even more thoroughly that delay is unjustifiable, for the Gospel has present demands upon you, and you must not say, “The vision that he sees is for many days to come, and he prophesies of the times that are far off.”

I. For, first, granted for a moment that the message we bring to you has most to do with the future state, yet, even then, the day is not far of— neither is there so great a distance between now and then that you can afford to wait. Suppose that you are spared for threescore years and ten! Young man, suppose that God spares you in your sins till the snows of many winters shall whiten your head? Young woman, suppose that your now youthful countenance shall still escape the grave until wrinkles are upon your brow? Still, how short will your life be! You, perhaps, think 70 years a long period, but those who are 70, in looking back, will tell you that their age is as an hand’s breadth!

I, who am but 40, feel at this time that every year flies more swiftly than the last! And months and weeks are contracted into twinkling of the eyes. The older one grows, the shorter one’s life appears. I do not wonder that Jacob said, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,” for he spoke as an extremely old man. Man is short-lived compared with his surroundings—he comes into the world and goes out of it—as a meteor flashes through yonder skies which have remained the same for ages. Listen to the brook which murmurs as it flows and the meditative ear will hear it warble—

*“Men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever.”*

Look at yonder venerable oak, which has, for 500 years, battled with the winds—what an infant one seems when reclining beneath its shade! Stand by some giant rock which has confronted the tempests of the ages and you feel like the insect of an hour! There are persons here tonight of 70 years of age who look back to the days of their boyhood as if they were but yesterday! Ask them, and they will tell you that their life seems to have been little more than a wink of the eye—it has gone like a dream, or a lightning’s flash—

*“What is life? ‘tis but a vapor,*

*Soon it vanishes away.”*  
Therefore do not say, “These things are for a far-off time.” for even if we could guarantee to you the whole length of human existence, it is but a span.

And there comes upon the heels of this a reflection never to be forgotten—that not one man among us can promise himself, with anything like certainty, that he shall ever see threescore years and ten! We may survive and by reason of strength we may creep up to fourscore years—yet not one of us can be sure that he shall do so—the most of us will assuredly be gone long before that age. No, we cannot promise that we shall see half that length of time! You young men and women cannot be certain that you shall reach middle life. Let me check myself! What am I talking of? You cannot be certain that you will see this year out and hear the bells ring in a new year! Yes, close upon you as tomorrow is, boast not yourselves of it, for it may never come. Or, should it come, you know not what it may bring forth to you—perhaps a coffin or a shroud.

Yes, and this very night, when you close your eyes and rest your head upon your pillow, reckon not too surely that you shall ever again look on that familiar chamber, or go forth from it to the pursuits of life. It is clear, then, that the things which make for your peace are not matters for a faroff time. The frailty of life makes them necessities of this very hour. You are not far from your grave—you are nearer to it than when this discourse began. Some of you are far nearer than you think. To some, this rejection comes with remarkable emphasis, for your occupation has enough of danger about it, every day, to furnish Death with a hundred roads to convey you to his prison in the sepulcher! Can you look through a newspaper without meeting with the words, “total,” or, “sudden death”?

Traveling has many dangers and even to cross the street is perilous. Men die at home and many, when engaged about their lawful callings, are met by death. How true is this of those who go down to the sea in ships, or descend into the heart of the earth in mines! But, indeed, no occupations are secure from death—a needle can kill as well as a sword— a scald, a burn, a fall may end our lives quite as readily as a pestilence or a battle. Does your business lead you to climb a ladder? It is not a very perilous matter, but have you never heard of one who missed his footing and fell, never to rise again? You work amidst the materials of a rising building—have you never heard of stones that have fallen and have

crushed the workers?—  
*“Dangers stand thick through all the ground To push us to the tomb,  
And fierce diseases wait around  
To hurry mortals home.”*

Notwithstanding all that can be done by sanitary laws, fevers are not unknown and deadly strokes which fell men to the ground in an instant, as a butcher slays an ox, are not uncommon. Death has already removed many of your former companions. You have ridden into the battle of life like the soldiers in the charge at Balaclava. And, young as you are in this warfare, you have seen saddles emptied right and left around you. You survive, but death has grazed you. The arrow of destruction has gone whizzing by your ear to find another mark! Have you never wondered why it spared you? Among this congregation there are persons of delicate constitution. It grieves me to see so many fair daughters of our land with the mark of consumption upon their cheeks.

Full well I know that lurid flame upon the countenance and that strange luster of the eyes—signs of exhausting fires feeding upon life and consuming it too soon! Young men and women, many of you, from the condition of your bodily frames, can only struggle on till middle life—and scarcely that—for beyond 30 or 40 you cannot survive. I fear that some of you have, even in walking to this place, felt a suspicious weariness which argues exhaustion and decline. How can you say, when we talk to you about preparing to die, that we are talking about things that are far off? Dear Souls, do not be so foolish! I implore you, let these warnings lead you to decision! Far be it from me to cause you needless alarm, but is it needless? I am sure I love you too well to distress you without cause—and is there not cause enough?

Come now, I press you most affectionately, answer me and say, does not your own reason tell you that my anxiety for you is not misplaced? Ought you not, at once, lay to heart your Redeemer’s call and obey your Savior’s appeal? The time is short! Catch the moments as they fly and hasten to be blessed. Remember also, once again, that even if you knew that you should escape from accident and fever and sudden death, yet there is one grand event that we too often forget, which may put an end to your day of mercy all of a sudden. Have you never heard of that Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was crucified on Calvary, died on the Cross, and was laid in the tomb? Do you not know that He rose again the third day? And that after He had spent a little while with His disciples, He took them to the top of the Mount of Olives and there, before their eyes, ascended into Heaven, a cloud hiding Him from their view?

Have you forgotten the words of the angels, who said, “This same Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven”? Jesus will certainly come a second time to judge the world! Of that day and of that hour knows no man—no, not the angels of God! He will come as a thief in the night to an ungodly world! They shall be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage just as they were when Noah entered into the ark—and they knew not until the Flood came and swept them all away! In a moment— we cannot tell when! Perhaps it may be before the next words escape my lips—a sound far louder than any mortal voice will be heard above the clamors of worldly traffic—yes, and above the roaring of the sea.

That sound as of a trumpet will proclaim the day of the Son of Man. “Behold, the Bridegroom comes: go you out to meet Him,” will sound throughout the Church. And to the world there will ring out this clarion note, “Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they, also, which crucified Him.” Jesus may come tonight! If He were to do so, would you, then, tell me that I am talking of far-off things? Did not Jesus say, “Behold, I come quickly!” and has not His Church been saying, “Even so, come Lord Jesus”? His tarrying may be long to us, but to God it will be brief. We are to stand hourly watching and daily waiting for the coming of the Lord from Heaven! Oh, I pray you do not say that the Lord delays His coming, for that was the language of the wicked servant who was cut in pieces, and it is the mark of the mockers of the last days, that they say, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong, but listen to the undoubted voice of prophecy and of the Word of God, “Behold, I come quickly.” “Be you, also, ready, for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes.” Now, then, it is clear enough that even if the Gospel message did concern only our life in another world, yet still it is unwise for men to say, “The vision is for many days to come, and he prophesies of the times that are far off.”

II. But, secondly, I have to remind you that our message really deals with the present. The blessings of the Gospel have as much to do with this present life as with existence beyond the tomb. For observe, first, we are sent to plead with you, young men and women, and tenderly to remind you that you are, at this hour, acting unjustly and unkindly towards your God. He made you and you do not serve Him. He has kept you alive and you are not obedient to Him. He has sent the Word of His Gospel to you and you have not received it. He has sent His only begotten Son and you have despised Him. This injustice is a thing of the present—and the appeal we make to you about it is that in all reason such conduct should come to an end. Oh, may God’s Holy Spirit help you to end it!

If I feel that I have done any man an injustice, I am eager to set it right. I would not wait till tomorrow. I wish to make amends with him at once. Yes, and even when I have forgotten to render assistance to some needy widow, I chide myself and feel uneasy till I have attended to the matter. Do you not feel the same? Would you willfully wrong or neglect another? I feel sure you would not! How is it, then, that you can be content to be unjust to God? Cruel to the dear Lover of the souls of men? And antagonistic to the loving pleadings of the Holy Spirit? That first chapter of Isaiah—you remember it, how striking it is! Why, if men had hearts that were at all tender it would break them! Read it—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel does not know; My people do not consider.” It is the wail of God Himself over man’s unkindness to his Maker!

Young man of honor, young man of integrity, does nothing speak to your conscience in this? “Will a man rob God?” You would not rob your employer! You would not like to be thought unfaithful or dishonest towards man! And yet your God, your God, your God—is He to be treated so basely, notwithstanding all His goodness? As Jesus said, “For which of these works do you stone Me?” So does Jehovah say, “I have made you. I have kept the breath in your nostrils. I have fed you all your life and for which of all these good things do you live without Me, and neglect Me, and perhaps even curse My name? For which of these do you sin with a high hand against My sacred Law?”

Now, can you think it right to remain in so wantonly unjust a course of life as this? Can it be right to continue to wrong your God and grieve His matchless love? Provoke Him no more, I pray you! Let conscience lead you to feel that you have dealt ill with the Lord. Come to Him for forgiveness and change of heart! O Spirit of God, make this appeal to be felt by these beloved young men and women! Again, our message has to do with the present, for we would affectionately remind you that you are now at enmity with your best Friend—the Friend to whose love you owe everything! You have grieved Him and are, without cause, His enemy! Can you bear this thought? I know a little child who had done something wrong and her kind father talked to her, and at last, as a punishment, he said to her in a very sad voice, “I cannot kiss you tonight, for you have grieved me very much.”

That broke her little heart. Though not a stroke had been laid upon her, she saw sorrow in her dear father’s face and she could not endure it. She pleaded and wept and pleaded again to be forgiven. It was thought wise to withhold the kiss, and she was sent to bed, for she had been very wrong. But there was no sleep for those weeping eyes and when mother went up to that little one’s chamber she heard frequent sobs and sighs, and a sorrowful little voice said, “I was very, very naughty, but pray forgive me, and ask dear Father to give me a kiss.” She loved her father and she could not bear that he should be grieved.

Child of mercy. Erring child of the great Father of spirits, can you bear to live forever at enmity with the loving Father? “Would He forgive me?” you ask. What makes you ask the question? Is it that you do not know how good He is? Has He not portrayed Himself as meeting His prodigal son and falling upon his neck and kissing him? Before the child had reached the Father, the Father had reached the child! The Father was eager to forgive, and therefore, when the son was yet a great way off his Father saw him and ran, and had compassion. Say no longer that we are talking of things of a far-off time! It is not so. I am speaking of that which, I pray, may be true to you tonight, that you may not remain enemies to God even another hour, but now may become His dear repenting children and fly into your tender Father’s arms!

I have to remind you, however, of much more than this, namely, that you are this night in danger. On account of your treatment of God and your remaining an enemy to Him, He will surely visit you in justice and punish you for your transgressions. He is a just God and every sin committed is noted in His book—there it stands recorded for His Judgment Day. The danger you are in is that you may, this moment, go down into the Pit—and while sitting in that pew may bow your head in death and appear before your Maker in an instant—to receive the just reward of your sins. We come to tell you that there is immediate pardon for all the sins of those who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—and that if you will believe in Jesus, your sins, which are many—are all forgiven you!

Don’t you know the story (you have heard it many times) that the Lord Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all who trust Him, and suffered, in their place, the penalty due to their sins? He was our Substitute, and as such He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He laid down His life for us, that “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Will you refuse the salvation so dearly purchased but so freely presented? Will you not accept it here and now? Can you bear the burden of your sins? Are you content to abide for a single hour in peril of eternal punishment? Can you bear to be slipping down into the open jaws of Hell as you now are? Remember, God’s patience will not last forever! You have provoked Him long enough!

All things are weary of you. The very earth on which you stand groans beneath the indignity of bearing a sinner upon its surface! So long as you are an enemy to God, the stones of the field are against you and all creation threatens you. It is a wonder that you do not sink at once to destruction! For this cause we would have you pardoned now and made free from Divine wrath now. The peril is immediate! May the Lord grant that the rescue may be so. Do I hear you ask, “But may pardon be had at once? Is Jesus Christ a present Savior? We thought that we might, perhaps, find Him when we came to die, or might obtain a hope of mercy after living a long life of seeking.”

It is not so. Free Grace proclaims immediate salvation from sin and misery! Whoever looks to Jesus at this very moment shall have his sins forgiven! At the instant he believes in the Lord Jesus, the sinner shall cease to be in danger of the fires of Hell. The moment a man turns his eyes of faith to Jesus Christ he is saved from the wrath to come. It is present salvation that we preach to you—and the present comfort of that present salvation, too! Many other reasons tend to make this weighty matter exceedingly pressing. And among them is this—there is a disease in your heart, the disease of sin—and it needs immediate cure.

I do not hear persons say, if they discover an incipient disease in their systems, that they will wait a while till the evil is more fully developed, and will then resort to a physician. The most of us have sense enough to try to check disease at once. Young man, you have a leprosy upon you! Young woman, you have a dreadful malady within your heart! Do you not desire to be healed now? Jesus can give you immediate healing if you believe in Him. Will you hesitate to be made whole? Do you love your mortal malady? Is hideous sin so dear to you? O that you would cry to be saved immediately, then Jesus will hear you! His Spirit will descend upon you and cleanse you. He will give you a new heart and a right spirit, yes, and make you whole from this time forward and forever! Can you wish to have so great a blessing postponed? Surely a sick man can never be

cured too soon.

The Gospel which we preach to you will also bring you present blessings. In addition to present pardon and present justification, it will give you present regeneration, present adoption, present sanctification, present access to God, present peace through believing and present help in time of trouble! And it will make you, even for this life, doubly happy. It will be wisdom for your way, strength for your conviction and comfort for your sorrow. If I had to die like a dog I would still wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter—though the supposition is not to be tolerated— yet let me live for and with Jesus, my beloved Lord! Balaam chose the righteous man’s death. I choose it, too. But quite as much do I choose the righteous man’s life, for to have the love of God in the heart, to have peace with God, to be able to look up to Heaven with confidence and talk to my heavenly Father in childlike trustfulness is a present joy and comfort worth more than worlds!

Young men and women, in preaching the Gospel to you, we are preaching that which is good for this life as well as for the life to come. If you believe in Jesus you will be saved now, on the spot, and you will now enjoy the unchanging favor of God, so that you will go your way, from now on, not to live as others do, but as the chosen of God, beloved with special love, enriched with special blessings, to rejoice every day till you are taken up to dwell where Jesus is. Present salvation is the burden of the Lord’s message to you and therefore it is not true, but infamously false, that the vision is for many days to come, and the prophecy for times that are far off.

Is there not reason in my pleadings? If so, yield to them! Can you answer these arguments? If not, I pray you cease delaying. Again would I implore the Holy Spirit to lead you to an immediate decision.

III. My third point is that I shall not deny, but I shall glory, rather, in admitting that the Gospel has to do with the future. Albeit, that it is not exclusively a Revelation for far-off times, yet it is filled with glorious hopes and bright prospects concerning things to come. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with the whole of a young person life. If you receive Jesus Christ you will not merely have Him tonight, but that faith by which you receive Him will operate upon your whole existence throughout time and eternity.

Dear young Friends, if you are saved while yet you are young, you will find religion to be a great preventive of sin. What a blessing it is not to have been daubed with the slime of Sodom—never to have had our bones broken by actual vice! Many who have been saved from a life of crime will, nevertheless, be spiritual cripples for life! To be snatched out of the vortex of vice is cause for great gratitude, but to have been kept out of it is better! It is doubly well, if the Grace of God comes upon us while we are still untainted by the pollution of the world, and have not gone into excess of riot. Before dissolute habits have undermined the constitution and selfindulgence has degraded the mind—it is, above all things, well to have the heart renewed! Prevention is better than cure, and Grace gives both.

Thank God that you are still young—pray earnestly that you may now receive Divine Grace to cleanse your way by taking heed, according to His Word. Grace will also act as a preservative as well as a preventive. The good thing which God will put in you will keep you. I bless God I have not to preach a temporary salvation to you at this time. That which charmed me about the Gospel when I was a lad was its power to preserve from sinning. I saw some of my school companions who had been highly commended for their character. They were a little older than myself and became sad offenders when they left home. I used to hear sad stories of their evil actions when they had gone to London to be apprenticed, or to take positions in large establishments.

And I reasoned, thus, with myself—“When I leave my father’s house I shall be tempted, too, and I have the same heart that they have. Indeed, I have not been even as good as they have been. The probabilities are, therefore, that I shall plunge into sin as they have done.” I felt horrified with that. I could not bear that I should cause my mother to shed tears over a dissolute son, or break my father’s heart with debauchery. The thought could not be endured and when I heard that whoever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ should be saved, I understood that he would be saved from sinning, and I laid hold upon Jesus to preserve me from sin— and He has done it! I committed my character to Christ and He has preserved me to this day. And I believe He will not let me go. I recommend to you, young men and women, a character-insurance in the form of believing in Jesus Christ!

Dear young woman, may that modest cheek of yours never need to blush for shameful deeds. May your delicate purity of feeling never be lost through gross defiling sin—but remember, it may be so unless the Lord keeps you. I commend to you the blessed preserving power of faith in Christ Jesus which will secure for you the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and abide in you, and sanctify you all your days. I know I speak to some who shudder at the thought of vice. Trained as you have been by Christian parents and under the holiest influences, you would rather die than act as some who disgrace their father’s name. I know you would. But you must not trust your own hearts. You may yet become as bad as others or worse than they unless your natures are renewed—and only Jesus Christ can do that—by the power of the Holy Spirit. Whoever believes in Him has passed from death unto life. He shall not live in sin, but he shall be preserved in holiness even to the end.

My dear young Friends, if God shall be pleased to change your hearts tonight, as I pray He may, you will be prepared for the future. You have not fully entered into the battle of life. You have your way to make, your professions and trades to choose. You, young women, are still under the parental wing. You have domestic relationships to form. Now, consider how well prepared you will be for life’s work and service if you give your hearts to Jesus. Young man, you will be the right man to enter a large establishment—with the Grace of God in your heart you will be a blessing there. Though surrounded by her snares in this wicked city, the strange woman will hunt in vain for your precious life. And other vices will be unable to pollute you.

Young woman, you will have wisdom to choose for your life’s companion no mere fop and fool, but one who loves the Lord as you will do—with whom you may hope to spend happy and holy days! You will have placed within yourself resources of joy and pleasure which will never fail. There will be a well of Living Water within you which will supply you with joy and comfort and consolation—even amid trial and distress. You will be prepared for whatever is to come. A young Christian is fit to be made an emperor or a servant, if God shall call him to either post. If you want the best materials for a model prince, or a model peasant, you shall find it in the child of God! Only, mark you, the man who is a child of God is less likely to sink into utter destitution because he will be saved from the vices of extravagance and idleness which are the frequent causes of poverty.

And, probably, on the other hand, he is less likely to become a prince, for seldom has God lifted His own children to places so perilous. You will be ready, young man, for any future, if your heart is right with God. And know when I think of you, and of what the Lord may make of you, I feel an intense respect, as well as love, for you. I hope none of us will be lacking in respect to old age—it is honorable and it is to be esteemed and reverenced—but I feel frequently inclined to do homage to our youth. When a celebrated tutor entered his schoolroom, he always took off his hat to his boys, because, he said, he did not know which of them might yet turn out to be a poet, a bishop, a lord chancellor, or a prime minister!

When I look at young men and women, I feel much the same, for I do not know what they are to be. I may be addressing, tonight, a Livingstone, or a Moffat! I may be speaking, tonight, to a John Howard, or a Wilberforce! I may be addressing a Mrs. Judson, or an Elizabeth Fry! I may be speaking to some whom God will kindle into great lights to bless the sons of men for many a day, and afterwards to shine as the stars forever and ever. But you cannot shine if you are not lighted. You cannot bless God and bless the sons of men unless God first blesses you. Unregenerate, you are useless! Born again, you will be born for usefulness. But while you are unconverted your usefulness is being lost. I will not insinuate that I expect everyone here to become famous. It is not even desirable. But I do know this—that everyone whose heart shall be given to Jesus will be so useful and so necessary to the Church and to the world, that this world without them would lack a benefactor—and Heaven’s company would be incomplete unless they joined its ranks.

Oh, the value of a redeemed soul! The importance of a young life! I wish I could multiply myself into a thousand bodies that I might come round and take the hand of every young person here, as he or she shall leave the Tabernacle, and say, “By the preciousness of your life, by the hallowed uses to which you may be put, by the good that you may do and by the glory you may bring to God, do not think of pardon and Grace as things of the future, but now, even NOW, lay hold of them, and they will become to you the great power by which you shall benefit your generation and go down to the grave with honor.”

When I grow gray, if God shall spare me—may I see around me some of you with whom I speak today—who shall be some 20 years younger than myself, of whom I shall say, “My former deacons and elders are either very old or have gone home to Heaven. The dear men of God who were with me when I was 40 years of age have passed away. But those whom I preached to on that night in March, 1874, have come to fill their places! Those dear Sisters who used to conduct the classes, teach the school and manage the various societies for the poor, have gone and we have followed them to their graves and wept over them. But here come their daughters to fill their places.”

I pray that names honored in our Churches may never die out from our midst. May the fathers live, again, in their children! It may not be my honor to be succeeded in this pulpit by one of my own sons, greatly as I would rejoice if it might be so, but at least I hope they will be here in this Church to serve their father’s God and to be regarded with affection by you for the sake of him who spent his life in your midst. I pray that all my honored Brothers may have sons and daughters in the Church—yes, from generation to generation may there be those in our assemblies of whom it shall be said—“These are of the old stock—they keep up the old name.”

Brothers and Sisters of my own age, we shall soon die. God grant us to die at our posts! The standard-bearer will fall and in his last embrace he will press the standard to his heart, for it is dearer than life to him. But courage, my Brethren, our sons will urge on the sacred war and carry on the good old cause to victory. What do you say, dear Ones? Do not your hearts say, “Amen”? Young men, will you not take up the bloodstained banner when we shall go our ways? Sons and daughters of the faithful, will you desert your fathers’ God? Oh, will it be that He whom we love shall be despised by you? Will you turn your back on the Christ who was All in All to us? No. It cannot be! Be of good cheer, Abraham—Isaac shall succeed you! Jacob shall rise up to serve your God! Jacob shall live to see his son Joseph, and even to bless Ephraim and Manasseh—and so from generation to generation shall the Lord be praised!

Thus far concerning this life. But now let me remind you, dear young Friends, that if your hearts are given to Christ you need not tremble about the end of life. You may look forward to it with hope. It will come. Thank God, it will come! Have you never wished that you could ride to Heaven in a chariot of fire, like Elijah? I did, once, till I reflected that if a chariot of fire should come for me I should be more afraid to get into it than to lie down and die upon my bed! And of the two, one might prefer to die, for to die in the Lord is to be made like our glorious Head! I see no joy in the hope of escaping death. Jesus died, and so let me die! On His dear face the seal of death was set, so let it be on mine, that I may talk of resurrection as they cannot who shall be changed at His coming.

You need not be afraid to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Young people, whether you die in youth or old age, if you are resting in Jesus you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan singing. As our friends sang last night—

*“Never mind the river.”*  
The parting song will be sweet, but oh, the Glory! Oh, the Glory! I will not try to paint it. Who can? The judgment will come, but you will not tremble at it! On the right hand shall you stand, for who can condemn those for whom Christ has died? The conflagration of the globe will come. The

elements shall melt with fervent heat, but you will not tremble, for you shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air—and so shall you be forever with the Lord! Hell shall swallow up the unjust—they shall go down alive into the pit—but you shall not tremble for that, for you are redeemed by the precious blood!

The millennial Glory, whatever that may be, and the reign with Christ, and the triumph over death and Hell. And the giving up of the kingdom to God, even the Father, when God shall be All in All, and eternity with all its infinite Glory—these shall be all yours! If you had to go through Hell to reach this Glory, it would be worth the cost! But you have not to do any such thing! You have only to believe in Jesus and even faith is the Lord’s own gracious gift. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” This is the Gospel. Look! Look! Look! ‘Tis but a look. Look, blearyeyed Soul, you who can scarcely see for ignorance! Look! You whose eyes are swimming in tears! Look! You who see Hell before you! Look! You who are sinking into the jaws of Perdition!

Look you ends of the earth, that are farthest gone in sin, if such are here! You who are plunged deep in iniquity—look! ‘Tis Jesus on the Cross you are bid to look at—yes, Jesus at the right hand of God—the crucified Son of Man exalted at the right hand of the Father! Look unto Him, and be you saved, for He is God, and besides Him there is none else. God grant you to look to Jesus, even now, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 18:1-23.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—95 (VER. II), 497, 492.  
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THE WALL DAUBED WITH UNTEMPERED MORTAR  
NO. 816

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Because, even because, they have seduced My people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto**

**them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen,  
shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?”  
Ezekiel 13:10-12.**

EZEKIEL was sent to arouse the people of Jerusalem to a sense of danger. This task was in itself difficult enough since he had to deal with a slumbering people who were carnally secure. But the difficulty was much increased by the fact that a large number of base pretenders to prophecy, both male and female, sprang up at that time and exercised great influence among the people. They imitated the Prophet’s speech. They came forward with their lies and prefaced them with the solemn words, “Thus says the Lord,” pretending to have a commission from the Lord of Hosts.

Thus the people of Jerusalem scarcely knew which to believe—Ezekiel prophesying terrors—or these pretenders saying, “Peace, peace.” Their evil hearts always leaned to the side of the false prophets because they flattered them grossly. They heaped to themselves teachers who, for a piece of bread, prophesied as they desired. You may well believe that the Prophet’s blood often boiled within him as he saw his own labors spoiled, and the souls that he loved so well so fearfully deluded by the baseborn hirelings who wore a rough mantle to deceive. He was not of those who could be content to deliver his message and let others alone, as we nowadays are bid to do, but he turned upon the deceivers and denounced them with terrible earnestness because he saw them to be wolves in sheep’s clothing devouring the flock.

Now, in these days we are somewhat similarly circumstanced. The true servant of God in his ministry dares not prophesy smooth things to unconverted men and women. He is the bearer of glad tidings to such as turn unto the Lord, but while “the burden of the Lord” is upon him concerning the impenitent, and such as believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, he has heavy tidings for those who live estranged from God. These he warns of a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. He sees before them an eternity of utter destruction and he proclaims the day of vengeance of his God.

To deliver these mournful warnings boldly and fearlessly is no easy work, and to bring men to receive them is a labor impossible apart from the power of the Holy Spirit! Men love present pleasure and license and they hate to be told of the day when these things shall be required of them. Why toll the funeral knell when men love merry peals? Nor is this all, for as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do false prophets withstand us. Even at this hour there are those who oppose us—those who are always speaking smooth things to the people. With Satan at their head, that arch-master and prince of deceivers, there is a great company abroad in the world who are always saying, “It shall not be so. You shall have pleasure though you sin. You shall have rest though you disobey, and it shall be well with you at the end even though you reject the Gospel of Christ.”

Not in so many words, but in effect this is the loud proclamation of the messengers of Satan who are permitted to buffet us. A Prophet’s courage is still needed by preachers of the Word of God! O may we be able to say with Wesley*—*

*“My life, my blood, I here present* ,  
*If for Your truth they may be spent:  
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord  
Your will be done, Your nature adored!  
Give me Your strength, O God of power!  
Then let wind blow, or thunders roar,  
Your faithful witness will I be  
‘Tis fixed! I can do all through You.”*

Tonight we shall try, and may our puny power be strengthened by the power which comes from on high, to talk with any who may have been lulled into a state of false peace by anything to which they have listened of late, or who may have fallen into evil security simply by their own desires—their wishes being fathers to the deceitful hope that there is peace for them while yet they are living in sin.

I. Not taking up your time with any kind of preface, I shall advance at once to the text and you will notice that THE TEXT SPEAKS OF A WALL. It is a remarkable fact that the most ungodly men who persist in sinning with a high hand nevertheless are very pleased if they can find some defense for their sin. These men of Jerusalem were exceedingly gratified when they could get some wall, no matter how rotten it might be, behind which they might shelter themselves.

Some are such outrageous offenders that they can sin boldly with a brazen face and scorn to invent an excuse, but 999 out of every 1,000 prefer to have some kind of apology, some sort of hope, some refuge to which, in the hour of danger they can fly. Men look about them to discover some sort of wall or other behind which to shelter from conscience and Divine threat. I suppose this is because conscience is not quite dead in any man. In some men it has been so drugged and chloroformed that it never seems to act with anything like vigor, and when it speaks it is only with a still small voice and not at all with the thunder which its voice ought to have to the mind of men. Yet that little relic of conscience which with a microscope you can detect in all men, needs to be pacified—and men are glad if by any lie, however barefaced, they can create an excuse by which they may go on quietly in their sins.

Sing men a soft song of peace in sin and safety out of Christ, and they will cry your name up to the skies! You shall have a ready market, for every man will be a buyer. Perhaps the greatest wall behind which men in London shelter themselves is that of utter indifference to anything like Divine Truth. To men of all classes the great bread and cheese and jacket question is the grand question of the day, “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?” Let a man attend to his business and what other care need he have? Let the working man go about his toil and give a fair day’s work for a fair day’s wage, and what has he to do with the world to come? Let the merchant meet his bills and keep clear of the bankruptcy court, and what has he to fear as to the court of Heaven? Why need he worry his head about dying and rising again from the dead?

The mass of mankind, though they will put up with religion and will even show some sort of interest in it, and some decent respect thereto, yet have no more sense of its reality or its power than the swine that feed at a trough. Look at these dense masses thronging the thoroughfares of this huge city, and answer me—Are not the most of them like the stones in Jordan’s bed, dead and lifeless as to spiritual things? What care they for Heaven or Hell? What care they about the precious blood of Jesus, or about the power of the Holy Spirit? It is a great deal more important question to them what horse won the Derby, or what turf speculator gained thereby, than to ask who is going down to Hell, or who has an interest in the precious blood of Christ.

Some silly dancer at the opera. Some new invention. Some novel trick of magic. Some fresh anything or nothing, and the world is all agog! But as to things which will outlast sun and moon and stand fast when yon blue Heaven, like a scroll, has been rolled up and put away—these all important things our wiseacres think but trifles—and they continue trampling God’s eternal Truth beneath their feet as swine trample pearls! And they rush madly after the bubbles of this world as though they were all that men were made to hunt after. This is the wall behind which many men hide. “It really does not matter. It will be all right at the last. Why make so much ado about it? Let a man mind his business and take what comes.”

Alas! Alas, for an age given up to eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage! Has it never heard of Noah’s flood, or of that greater deluge which so soon will sweep them all away? The great hailstones and tempest of last Friday fluttered them a little, but they went to their sports again when the flashes of lightning had ceased. Numbers, however, are not quite so stupid, so besotted, so blind, so brutalized as to put up with this. They have a heart which palpitates with a measure of spiritual fear and will not be silenced by gross material considerations. Like a crying child their conscience will be heard. Like a horse-leech it ever cries, “Give, give,” and will not be content.

Who comes next? Who is the anointed one of Satan to quiet this spirit? Who will yield a quietus to an alarmed mind? See yonder priest pointing to the wall of ceremonies behind which many rest so contentedly? Were you not christened? Oh, the blessedness of that christening—a thing which is as gross a piece of evil as ever was practiced by Mohamed— which has no more warrant in the Word of God than the baptism of bells or the burning of Hindu widows! And yet this idle farce, this wicked mockery, this godfathering and godmothering, no ordinance of God’s, but an invention of the Pope of Rome—this is a soul-saving thing, supposedly— and regenerates the children that are subjected to it! Behind this wall of baptismal regeneration, crowds find a temporary rest.

And then comes the confirmation, another rite of imbecility! A rite, again, which has no Scriptural warrant, but is a piece of nonsense and falsehood from beginning to end. Then follows what priests call a “Sacrament,” a blessed ordinance if rightly used to those who are saved, but a dreadful perversion if administered to unsaved persons with the idea that through bread and wine, which can only enter into the stomach, Divine Grace can be communicated to the heart—as if spirituals could be wrapped up in carnality—as if the infinite Grace of the blessed Father could be brought to us by cakes which the baker bakes in the oven, or wine that runs forth from the winepress trod from the grapes of earth!

Yet are there thousands of people, no, millions of our fellow men, not Romanists either, so they say, who think that the christening and the confirming, and the “Sacrament,” and perhaps the priestly burial at the last will make it all right. Has not God declared, “Incense is an abomination unto Me. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates”? And in saying that He is plainly showing that outward ceremonies, apart from a gracious heart, He could not bear! Outward ordinances, even when most gorgeous, are nothing when compared to walking and living righteously.

To walk before God in holiness—this is acceptable to Him. Not the visible, not the symbolical, not the outward, but the inward, the spiritual, the heart worship—this it is which God accepts. Go and rend your hearts, not your garments. Seek the bread which came down from Heaven, not the baker’s wafers! Think of Christ, and not of your own doings. Draw near to Him and not to the outward altars of wood and stone. Bow before the Priest in the heavens, and not before pretenders here below! Confess to the Lord, and not to prying confessors! This sacramental theory, which is now forced upon us in England under the name and sanction and authority of the National Church—this is a wall, a bowing wall, and a tottering fence—behind which hundreds seek to find shelter, but which, as the Lord my God lives, in the day of His coming He will sweep away and not a vestige thereof shall be left!

In the day when He comes to judge the earth in righteousness, woe unto those who cry, “We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence,” for what is this? Where has God required it at your hands? Woe yet seven times to those who have deluded the people! Their judgment is heavy and it tarries not. There are but few among you, dear Friends, perhaps, who care for this sacramental theory. You are not idiots and therefore you sneer at it, but you may be building another wall, namely, that of selfrighteousness. This is the more popular wall by far! How many have been piling up their wall, and gathering their wood, their hay, their stubble with which to erect a defense to screen themselves from God by their own doings?

They pray so regularly! They read the Bible so constantly! They attend a place of worship with such precision! They owe no man anything! They have a contribution for the cause of charity. They give a donation for anything that is being done by the Church of God—and these are their confidences. They have done this and that, and the other. Like the Pharisee of old they have fasted twice in the week. They have paid tithes of all they possess. It is all in vain that this grand old Book thunders out against self-righteousness—self-righteousness still lives! It is all in vain that God declares that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified—men will persist in trying to be justified by the works of that Law which can only curse them, and cannot save them!

This Book declares again and again that we are justified by faith, that we must be saved through the righteousness of Christ—its great teaching is this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But for all that man goes his way and declares that he will force a path to Heaven, even up the steep and blazing sides of Sinai, and will do what God declares to be impossible, namely, lay another foundation beside that which God has laid in the work and Person of His dear Son!

O my Hearers, if you are sheltering behind your good works, I pray that you may be delivered from the delusion and that you may find no refuge there, for only Christ can save you! The wall will fall, daub it as you will— it must come down—it is no refuge for a perishing sinner—

*“What is all righteousness that men devise? What but a sordid bargain for the skies?  
But Christ as soon would abdicate His own, As stoop from Heaven to sell the proud a throne.”*

II. And now, secondly, WHENEVER A MAN TRIES TO BUILD A WALL BEHIND WHICH TO SHELTER HE ALWAYS FINDS A VOLUNTEER BAND OF READY ASSISTANTS. If he were laboring to build upon the foundation which God has laid, a great company would rise against him, but whenever he begins to put up a structure of his own, crowds come to help him. What a multitude there are who will assist a rebellious spirit to build his mud wall of false security! For instance, a man who is easy in his pleasures—how many will help him to continue at his ease? “He is right,” says one. “You are a good fellow,” says another. And they both try to keep him in countenance by their company.

“Oh,” says one, “never care because one of those Puritan fellows has been troubling your conscience!” “Do not listen to him,” answers another. And so they help to daub the wall and plaster it till it looks as neat and substantial as if it were built of polished stones. When these people get together you would really believe, to hear them talk, that they were the only wise people in all the world and that the men who give due consideration to religion and the next world are positively mad, or infected with irrational fanaticism! If they happen to be of the educated class, it is wonderful how learned they become in matters of which they know nothing! As for boastful talkers, how they weigh us all and do up our motives in parcels, as grocers do their goods!

We have sometimes met with men, wise in their own conceit, as ignorant of religion as the chairs they lolled upon. They in the grandest manner denounce the Puritans and sneer at “those hypocrites” who are always talking about another world. It is observable that the more their intellects become disturbed by wine or beer, the more they consider themselves capable of passing judgment upon eternal realities—in fact, a man half drunk is altogether infallible! Meanwhile the men who believe that there is a God, and who love Him and wish to serve Him. The men who believe that there is another state and wish to be prepared for it, are noted down as mere simpletons, or crafty men who would make a gain of godliness. We do not accept the verdict, but appeal to the judgment to come.

Meanwhile we can well understand how this unanimity in folly helps to daub the wall when a man has once put it up! All his friends come in to help him with their commendations, emulating one another in their Babel building. Another company of scoffers will loudly boast themselves and cry, “Yes, you are all right in continuing in neglect of God and of Divine Truth because the saints are no better than they should be. I remember what So-and-So did once—he was a deacon! And I know the inconsistencies of Mr. Zealous, and he is one of the parsons.” Ah, when they get hold of a few inconsistencies of professors, how they daub their wall with them! Truly they eat the sin of God’s people as men eat bread!

Then they say in their assemblies, “These men talk about Divine Truth, but they are all liars! They speak to us religiously but they are moved by selfish motives, and in private they are as bad as we are.” So by bespattering others they comfort themselves. Like hyenas and wolves they delight to dwell among the desolations of former splendor. Behold these men— they pull down the characters of others and then, piling the stones one upon another—they shelter behind the wall which they have constructed! If they would let their reason speak, they would know that if everybody else should be hypocrites, that will make Hell none the cooler to them when they are condemned to lie there! And that if others should be inconsistent with their religion, that should be no excuse to them for neglecting it, but rather a warning to them, that they, at least, should be honest in their seeking unto God.

Yet any filth, especially such filth as this, will do to make untempered mortar with which to daub the bowing walls behind which the sinner’s conscience skulks in hopeless hope of rest. These poor creatures can make bricks without straw, and frame confidences out of vanities. Alas for them! They who will be deceived shall be given over to delusion. A numerous body of daubers gather at the sign of the “Sneerer,” in Atheist Street— and with their doubts, or their supposed doubts of inspiration and biblical authenticity—are ready to daub and plaster any amount of wall an inch thick. What a splendid barrow-load of untempered mortar that Bishop of Natal brought us from the Zulus! And then the “Essays and Reviews,” like industrious hood-men, brought a fine heap of the same precious commodity!

Many skeptics almost screamed with delight when they discovered that now, now, now, there was some excuse for not obeying God—some reason for being in rebellion against Him—because certain figures did not seem to tally and arithmetic was arrayed against Revelation! Years before that they ground up the rocks and tried to make a cement out of them, but the business did not answer. Now they revive old infidelities, like old Babylonian bricks made of chopped straw, and pass them off as new productions of the infernal brickfield. The stock doubts are those which were used 200 years ago, new faced, but still the same.

Certain men will treasure up worn-out sophisms and produce them with remarkable dexterity, just when a man’s mind is beginning to be aroused, and so manage to send him to sleep again! How strangely ready are men to make Biblical difficulties into excuses for impenitence! Did I hear a man say, “I will not believe in Jesus because I cannot see how the Israelites could have multiplied so quickly in Egypt”? If so, I reply, “You fool! Will that make your doom any lighter when you will be called for judgment before God’s great bar? Or will that be any reason for your sinning against the light you already have, because you do not happen to comprehend everything which is recorded in Sacred Writ?” Perhaps God never meant you should comprehend all His Word. What would it improve you if you solve all mysteries? Would that soften your heart?

If our salvation depended upon our answering all the difficulties of the Bible, it might be a fair excuse for us if we did not understand it. But as our salvation depends upon our believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and submitting ourselves to the Divine will, there can be no excuse for us, whatever our merely critical doubts and difficulties may be—for there is no doubt about the existence of God in the mind of a reasonable man— and there should be no doubt about the Deity of Christ in any man’s mind who has once read the four Evangelists. If hearing the Divine command to come to Christ and live, you do not come to Christ and live—you may daub your wall with untempered mortar, but it will not stand in the day when God shall let loose the messengers of His justice and bid them beat upon your defenseless head.

If the wall is built of ceremonies, how many are busy daubing that! What multitudes of books are streaming from the press, books of ability, too—all going to show that salvation is infallibly connected with a mechanical process, conducted by specified officials—and not a spiritual work independent of all outward performances! And if you choose to give yourselves up to the fiction that salvation is by forms and ceremonies, you have only to lay the foundation and there will be many who will compliment and applaud you—and take pleasure in daubing the wall with their little daub of untempered mortar.

The priests will bespatter you with arguments from tradition and quotations from the fathers! Their votaries will daub you with soft speeches upon your zeal and discretion. The most impotent of all falsehoods is, by the deep cunning of its friends, made to go upon its belly like a serpent and to deceive men and women as the old serpent deceived our mother Eve. I shall not, however, tarry upon this. It is sufficiently plain that if you will but build a wall of that sort, there will be plenty who will help to daub it.

III. But now, in the next place, THE WORD OF GOD DECLARES THAT THIS WALL WILL NOT STAND. “It shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.” You had an illustration of this last Friday. First there came a heavy deluge of rain. Then huge hailstones descended with enormous force and a terrific tempest swept over the face of the earth. The wall to which Ezekiel alludes is one of the cob walls in the East, daubed with bad mortar which had not been well tempered, that is to say, not well mixed with the straw which they use in place of the hair which we use in England.

When the rain comes it softens the whole structure of such a wall, melts it, and washes it quite away. Such a deluge as that is coming before long to try and test every human hope. It comes to some men when they enter upon times of spiritual trial. It is a blessed thing to have this test in this life, for although the trial is dreadfully severe, and although the true and the false seem to be in confusion, yet it may lead to a blessed result! I would not give a farthing for your religion if you have never doubted about it! If you have never had a shaking to and fro in your soul till it seemed that every bone and muscle in your mental anatomy was strained, you never will believe thoroughly.

When these times come, all the daubing with untempered mortar will be swept away by the overflowing shower and the hailstones which come down upon it! But blessed shall he be whose work shall endure! But if the test comes not thus it will usually come at death. Oh how many, when dying, have been alarmed with the things which cheered them most before! How have their joys changed to miseries! And their hopes that once were like angels, cast off their masks and stood as devils before them beckoning them to destruction! Men have counted themselves rich, but as in the miser’s dream the gold he clutches dissolves into thin air—so has their spiritual wealth all passed away. They reckoned that they were saved and near to Heaven, when lo, their vessel struck upon the awful rock and was dashed to pieces, and they themselves were cast away even at the harbor’s mouth!

O Soul, if you do not believe in Jesus—if your heart has never repented of sin, if you have never clung to a bleeding Savior—I tell you death will go hard with you! Those foaming billows of the river Jordan will not deceive you. Death will play no merry tune in your ears and sing you no siren song. That skeleton will be honest with you—will pull off the visors, and take up the glass and make you see yourself a rotten hypocrite! If you have been resting upon anything but Christ, death will make you quiver! And if death does not do it—for some men die like lambs, and, like sheep are they laid in the grave (but the worm shall still feed upon them)—if death does not do it, the judgment shall!

There is a judgment which comes to all men at the moment when the spirit leaves the body. Ah, you who despise God, you will think of Divine Truth in another way in that hour when your naked spirits shiver in the balances of Justice and God weighs you finally to decide your fate forever! Right or wrong you will find it no child’s play, then! Nor will it be child’s play when, after you have suffered for awhile, the dreadful trumpet sounds! The trumpet which earth and Heaven wait to hear, when the graves yield up their dead, and death and Hell yield up the dead that are in them—when your spirit comes back to the body in which it once lived, and sinned, and died.

Alas for your vain confidence in that tremendous hour! O Sirs, then the walls which are not based upon the Rock of Ages will stand you in but sorry stead. You will flee away from your good works then, and from your ceremonies, and from all those indulgences and unbelief in which you once found comfort. You may flee from them, but you shall not flee from Him who sits upon the Throne! From His hands shall flash the thunderbolts! From His Heaven shall you fall, O you great hailstones, and down to the nethermost depths your condemned, despairing spirit, must descend! This is God’s Word—this is God’s Truth! Reject it not. Accept it! Fly to the refuge which the Gospel provides, and may the Holy Spirit save you evermore.

IV. And now my last point—and I shall not keep you any longer—is this: ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, IF WE SHALL BE FOUND LOST AT THE LAST, IT WILL BE AN EVERLASTING REPROACH TO US THAT WE ONCE ACCEPTED THE FALSE HELPS OF OUR FRIENDS. “Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?”

And who will say this? Imagine, but for a moment, a spirit cast away into the land of darkness and everlasting nightshade! There it dwells with kindred souls and a voice is heard falling on its ear—“Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?” That voice may proceed from many lips. It may come from the lips of Jesus. “I said to you, ‘Come unto Me and live,’ but you would not come. You refused the refuge which I presented to you. You chose your own works, and rested in ceremonies of your own devising—and now where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? Where are your good works and your prayers now? Lost Soul, you would not have My blood—where are your good works and your selfrighteousness now? You would not come and trust in Me alone—where are your christenings and your confirmations and all your inventions? Now that you are cast away without hope, what do you think of them? Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?”

I could imagine such a voice as that coming from a faithful minister, or other Christian laborer who may have honestly pointed out to you the one and only way of salvation. You shall hear ringing through those halls of woe the voice that addressed you tonight! If you perish, your memory shall make you remember the very tones I use! I told you you would perish if you did not trust in Christ, but you sought salvation somewhere else, and you shall hear me saying, then, to you, “Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?” Some of you young women may hear the voice of that dear mother in Israel who has sought to bring you to Christ, whose loving tenderness you have made so light of. Some of you shall listen to a father’s voice, whose earnest warnings you have despised.

Each one educated within the Gospel’s pale shall hear the voice ringing from the servants of God who sought your good—“Where, after all, are your hopes? Where are your delusions and your false trusts?” “Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?” And there shall come another voice, with quite another tone—a hoarse and horrible voice—a voice full of malice and of grim laughter which shall say, “Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?” You shall understand it to be the voice of him who once deceived you—the fallen spirit—Satan! Ah, how he will rejoice! How he will make merry with you when he shall have led you away from the Cross to the crucifix! How he will rejoice when he shall have enticed you from Christ to the parish priest!

How he will rejoice when he shall have allured you from the Bible to the traditions of men! How he will rejoice when he shall have charmed you away from the heavenly Messenger to defile yourself with the pleasures and frivolities of this world. He who was your deceiver here shall become your tormentor hereafter, and he will say, “Your Church attendance and your Chapel attendance, your baptism, your “Sacrament”-taking, your readings of the Bible—where are these now? Your hearts were not right in the sight of God any more than mine, and you are damned as I am.”

Ah, I pray you escape for your lives, lest the arrows of Satanic malice pierce you through and through when the walls of your false hope are overthrown! There shall be heard amidst that thick darkness and horrid gloom, that never shall be broken by a ray of light, another voice which once you knew. Perhaps the husband shall hear the voice of the wife who shall say, “Ah, where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? You would not let me go to the House of God! You laughed me out of my religion! I was once a young unmarried woman who cared for the things of God in some respects. You courted me and enticed me away from my father’s God, and then you laughed me out of my prayers and Sunday worship. You have laughed me into Hell, but you cannot laugh me out of it again.”

There will be one railing upon the other, the friend upon the friend, and those who have sinned together, grossly sinned, piercing each other through and through with bitter recollections, and taunting jeers. “Ah,” says one, “you took me to the beer house. I came a young man fresh from the country to work in that carpenter’s shop and you were the man who introduced me to that ungodly club, and laughed the nonsense out of me, as you said, but now where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? You said Tom Paine understood the whole matter and that you could prove as easily as that twice two make four that there was no truth in the Bible—but where, now, is the daubing with which you have daubed it? Find me now but a drop of cold water to cool me upon this bed of flame! Come here, now, and stop this palpitating heart, you loud-voiced jester whose wit was liable to set the table on a roar! Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?”

Recriminations will be exchanged among the lost and will occasion much of that weeping and gnashing of teeth which is their portion. This is probably the reason why the rich man would not have his brothers come into the place of torment. Ah, how terrible the meeting of the betrayer and the betrayed—the seducer and his victim—the priest and his dupe! How pitiful the vicious and their pupils! Unbelievers and their followers! As glowing ashes heaped together increase the heat, so will companies of sinners inflame each others miseries. “Bind them up in bundles to burn them” is a sentence terrible, indeed! O my Hearers, tempt not your own destruction! Be warned to escape before your false refuges shall be your shame and scorn eternally!

And then, last of all, your own conscience, from which you never can escape, which is, perhaps, the worm that never dies—and the flame which kindles the fire of remorse that never shall be quenched—your conscience will say to you, “Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?” A man cannot have a worse tormentor than a guilty conscience. This, like a bloodhound, follows at his heels remorselessly. Its deep baying is not to be silenced and its ferocity cannot be appeased. To be sick at heart forever! Forever a disappointed man! Forever self-accused and selfcondemned! O that men were wise enough to dread such a fate! I pray you, unconverted Friends, do not commit spiritual suicide! Do not murder your own souls! Condemn not yourselves to despair and remorse, but by God’s good Grace turn unto Him and live!

I am afraid of some for you good people who come here regularly and are not converted. Perhaps you think you are Christians while you are not. Or perhaps you even profess to be Christians but the life of God is not in you. Be you not deceived! Members of this Church, take heed that you are not deceived! Yes, I say to myself, be sure, Preacher, that you take heed lest you yourself become a castaway!

Brothers and Sisters, we must be right here! We cannot bear to have any question in this matter! We must, since this has to do with eternity, and with an immortal soul, make sure work here. Down with these rotten walls! With one mighty heave let every man lend a shoulder and hurl them over! Down with every false confidence, and then come to the foundation which Christ has laid and build upon it and say*—*

*“You, O Christ, are all I need,  
More than all in You I find.”*

If we build there we shall build well, but if we build elsewhere, the great hailstones, and the overflowing shower and the total destruction will overwhelm us! As you remember this, may God help you to escape from ruin, for Jesus’ sake.

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A DELUSION DISPELLED  
NO. 1651

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

**“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”  
Ezekiel 14:20.**

WE are told in the opening verse of this chapter that certain of the elders of Israel came to the Prophet and sat before him. You need not ask who these elders were, or form where they came because it is evident enough they were not a deputation from the Jews who were left in Judah and Jerusalem. They were individuals of distinction from among the exiles of Chebar. That they came to enquire of the Prophet of the Lord, we gather from the answer that came to them by the Word of the Lord. And we might, also, infer from the matter of the terrible denunciations that were uttered, something, at least, of the manner of enquiry they proposed. The men were downright hypocrites—they were followers of the false prophets who are exposed in the previous chapter as seeing vanity and divination— and then saying, “Jehovah says,” though Jehovah had not sent them!

Now they come, these elders, to interview the true Prophet of the Lord, and before they have time to state their errand, the Word of the Lord confronts them with a life-like portrait of their own characters. “These men have set up their idols in their heart, and put up the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?” For persons who were idolaters at heart to ask counsel of the living God, as if they would learn His will, though they defied His Law, was a most insulting mockery! The thought which seems to have nestled in their breasts and prompted their visit was, after all, the exposure that Ezekiel has made of the wickedness of the land and of its inhabitants—may it not still be consistent with the mercy of the Lord to spare the city, as He would have spared the city of Sodom at the intercession of Abraham, for the sake of the few righteous men that remained in it?

The answer, as you are aware, was an emphatic “No.” A reference to the 26th chapter of Leviticus and a rehearsal of the four judgments which should work the desolation, stand associated with the protest which is repeated again and again, each time, it seems to us, with more vehement force—“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”

Now, my main objective this evening will be to assert, to illustrate and to enforce this one distinct feature in the moral government of God. In all the procedures of Divine judgment, the principle of individual responsibility can never be relaxed. Hence the need of personal piety—the absolute necessity that men and women should pray for themselves—that each one should repent for himself, that each one should believe for himself and that each one should, in his own proper person, be born again by the effectual operation of the Spirit of God.

No proxy in these matters is possible! Sponsors in religion are a wicked superstition—their use degrades the minds of men and profanes the worship of God—they ought to be forever done away with! I charge you, as you love God and your own souls, and the souls of others—sooner die than stand sponsor for child or man, for it is a sin, a mockery, an offense before high Heaven! Every man must take heed to his own soul. “Let each man prove his own work for each man shall bear his own burden,” and every one of us must give an account for himself at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Among the various shifts and schemes for taking comfort without a satisfactory title, or a plausible reason, the idea adopted by some that the righteousness of their friends may be of some use to them, is not the least pernicious!

“They are the children of eminently gracious people. Surely,” they say, “they cannot be lost!” They are connected with those whose name is known and whose memory is fragrant in Christian society. They were born and brought up in a house dedicated by family prayer! They have been cradled and nurtured in the midst of godliness. They readily believe that those who live in the back slums and have grown up to be wanton and willful, depraved and dishonest, will certainly perish—but can it be that those who have walked in the paths of morality and observed the ordinances of outward religion should be cast away? They scarcely think that it could be consistent with propriety to resist their claims to some discriminating consideration! Though they do not say as much in words, yet they secretly flatter themselves with the idea that the godliness of their ancestry and the scrupulous integrity of their parents will avail to shelter them from responsibility.

There are others, to mark a lighter shade in self-deception, who indulge a hope that the prayers of their dear ones will be heard for them, although they never pray for themselves. They fall back in time of need upon the belief that, surely their mother’s prayers will be answered on their behalf, or their wife’s petitions will bring down a blessing upon them! They do not embody the notion in words—I wish they did—for if people were to place such thoughts in black and white, they would never like to acknowledge them! Their folly would be too palpable. They entertain a hazy notion that because they have been so often prayed for, a blessing must come to them sooner or later! They will not awaken themselves to seek the mercy of the Lord, or quit their sins and lay hold on Christ to obtain the promise of pardon and peace—they vainly dream that something mysterious will happen to them one of these days in answer to good people’s prayers. In fact, some of them eagerly ask the prayers of the godly, though they never pray to God for themselves!

My text is a stern rebuke for any who have taken themselves to either of these refuges of lies! I want to sound an alarm and drive them out of their hiding places. Oh, that God may be pleased to make His own Word effectual to this end! “Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” Now, it cannot be denied that there is great power in godliness and a mighty prevalence in the intercessions of godly people to bring down rich blessings upon men. You are perfectly right in seeking the prayers of Christian friends! Why, even the Apostle Paul said, in the name of all the sacred ministry, “Brethren, pray for us.”

You can hardly ask for a choicer favor from the servants of God than that they should pray for you. But certain circumstances may entirely neutralize the prayers of the godly. Such circumstances were present in the case of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in Jeremiah’s day. They went on so far in idolatry and all manner of vice that God said that He would not hear Moses and Samuel, though they stood before Him to plead on their behalf! He told Jeremiah that He might as well cease to weep and pray, for He would never hear Him for that people. And here, by Ezekiel, He declares that if so wonderful a trio as Noah, Daniel and Job should join in intercession—He would not regard, even, them. And just so it is at this hour—if men continue in their sin—if, after hearing the Gospel, they refuse it.

If they persist in rejecting it; if they stifle conscience; if they silence the voice within. If they perniciously resolve to indulge their lusts and will not repent and turn to God, then the excellence of their friends will rather aggravate, than make amends for their guilt—and the prayers of their friends will be so utterly nullified and made of no effect, that nothing but the dread sentence will avail them—they must perish! They have not personally believed in Christ and accepted Him as their Mediator, therefore they must perish. They have dissipated the last vestige of hope by rejecting the only way of salvation and they must perish! Though they come of a line of saints and in their veins there runs the blood of the faithful, they must perish! Though they have the tradition of a sound faith handed down from generation to generation, and though the escutcheon that has descended to them from holy ancestors is free from blot—if they refuse Christ they must perish!

And though they have been born and bred, cradled and cared for where holy hymns make up their lullaby, yet if they give not their own hearts to Christ, but set up idols in their hearts—they must perish—perish miserably with their own iniquity upon their heads. Was not Ishmael the son of Abraham? Yet he came not into the Covenant! Was not Esau the child of Isaac? Yet he obtained not the inheritance! Birth, blood and family count for nothing in this matter. Thus there are two propositions, which, as God shall help me, I will endeavor to set plainly before your eyes. First, the righteousness of the most godly cannot be of use for the ungodly. And, secondly, the prayers of the greatest intercessors cannot help if men persist in their unbelief.

I. First, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE MOST GODLY CANNOT AVAIL FOR THE UNGODLY. We have to prove this and we do so, first, by referring you to our text, and asking you to read it for yourselves. Mark how the anger of the Lord kindles and how the words are launched forth like hot thunderbolts from the lips of the Most High. The statement is clear; the supposition is startling, but the oath that seals the Oracle of Heaven appalls us. A coincidence that was not likely to occur is imagined to put the utmost strain on the delineation and to give language a stress that cannot be surpassed. As a matter of fact, we are told that if Noah, Daniel and Job were in the midst of Jerusalem, yet their conjoined virtues would not be of any use to save any but themselves!

I wish I could help you to realize the picture as it must have flashed before the vision of the Seer. Three saints who were not contemporaries, for their lives on earth were passed in distant centuries and different circumstances, meet together in a season of terrible emergency. The sacred annals of those days knew no names more illustrious, no stars that shone more brightly, than Noah, Daniel and Job. Their sympathies are all excited, their hearts are in unison and their prayers blend together as they bow before the Altar. You look, you listen in trembling suspense, as you cast a glance at the miserable inhabitants of the doomed city and consider the fate of those captives who are languishing in a land far away. With what measure of acceptance will those passionate appeals for mercy be heard?

Listen, the verdict comes from the Throne of God! They deliver their own souls by their righteousness and no more! Not one of them saves so much as his own son or his own daughter by his supplications! What a wail comes up as the inexorable decree is pronounced! But the echo that lingers longest in my ears is that awful oath— “As I live, says the Lord God.” Next to this, I am going to ask you to inspect more narrowly the portraits of these men of God who are presumed to have stood counsel for the defendants—and to have occasioned so much astonishment because with all their special pleading they signally lost their case!

Noah is the very pattern of godly fear! A model of that “fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom,” just as Abraham was a model of faith and the father of the faithful. Moved with fear, he built an ark for the saving of his house. Heedless of the ridicule of the many about him, he built a huge ship on dry land. He became a preacher of righteousness, and though few, if any, were converted by that preaching, he persevered for 120 years, obediently doing what God commanded him, for a testimony against the ungodly. Scarcely can we find a better man than this second father of the human race from whom we have all sprung.

Next to him we have mention made of Daniel. He was alive at the time when Ezekiel wrote—a young man, I suppose, of about 30 years of age. It is very singular that he should be sandwiched in, as it were, between Noah and Job—two men of the olden world. He must have been highly esteemed in his own generation. Ezekiel, moved by the Holy Spirit, groups him with those whom history had canonized. He was a man greatly beloved of God and, no doubt, by his contemporaries, he was very much appreciated. Sterling virtue and an elevation of character above the common standard of a good man would be indispensable to his taking rank as one of so remarkable a triumvirate. And when you think of him—of his integrity in youth when he would not defile himself with the king’s meat. When you think of his steadfastness in prayer in riper years, when, with his window open toward Jerusalem, he prayed as he had done before, even though by a statute of the realm, the penalty of making supplication to the God of the Hebrews was death—what a model of thorough manliness he is!

There is a majesty about Daniel. He is the John of the Old Testament. He is the Seer who saw visions of God like the chosen one of Patmos. The combination of qualities that are embodied in such a man is worth your study. So chivalrous was his sense of duty that he is honored by kings! So holy is he in his conscience, as well as in his habits, that the King of kings reveals to him the secrets of His government! There is none like Daniel! “Yet,” says God, “though in addition to Noah, Daniel stood before Me, his righteousness would suffice only for himself and could not be of the least profit to anyone else.”

To complete the trio, there is Job, to whom we have Infallible testimony that he was perfect and upright. Satan, himself, could find no fault with his character, though with fiendish malice he insinuated a sinister motive for Job’s scrupulous integrity. “Does Job serve God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has? You have blessed the work of his hands and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.” You remember that he did not curse God, but he blessed Him and his faith triumphed over his fretfulness even on the dunghill of his poverty, when he was covered with sores and filled with anguish! Surely Job is a model of excellence. “You have heard of the patience of Job.” “My servant Job,” was the honorable designation that the Almighty gave him. Moreover, He bestowed on him high praise and a double blessing at the end of his trial.

Now, if we had any one of these three men to plead for us, we should look upon him as putting a great weight in the scale. If we had for our next door neighbor, or brother, or father, either of these—if there were any transference of righteousness from one man to another—we should hope to shade ourselves under the wings of Noah, or Daniel, or Job! But here the Lord declares that if the whole three were put together, they should not save son or daughter. No, dear Friends, “You must be born again.” You must be made righteous, each one for himself, or else if you had all these friends at court, which you have not, they would be unable to avert the course of justice, or obtain for you the slightest favor! The text puts it plainly—“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”

This Truth of God may be further substantiated by observing the course of Providence as regards the things of this life. Could the merits of friends and parents secure the salvation of their relatives or children, we must expect to see “the son or the daughter” of a righteous man screened from the full punishment of his own misdeeds. But we have evidence that such is not the case. Let me give you Scriptural illustrations. Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant. He had a brother, Aaron, not so great a man as himself, but still an eminently holy man. Listen, you that are the sons of gracious men. Aaron had two sons and the father’s dignity rested upon them—and they became priests of the Most High God. But, do you know what became of them? Drinking too much wine—alas, what a snare is that!—they entered into the Holy Place of God with strange fire and the fire of God consumed Nadab and Abihu, though they were the sons of Aaron! And what did Aaron say about them? We read this, “And Aaron held his peace.”

He could say nothing. He had to bow his head before God. He knew that it must be—that if even a child of God’s High Priest pollutes the Holy Place, the fire of the Lord must come forth against him. Thus you see that Aaron could not overshadow his own sons and save them in the day of the Lord’s anger. Take another case equally sad. David had a favorite son who became the cruel adversary of his own father. In open rebellion Absalom attempted to usurp his throne. Yet even in the tumult of battle, the king would have spread the aegis of protection over his own child. “Beware,” he said to his generals, “that none touch the young man Absalom.” You remember how he fled from the fray, but fled in vain—a just retribution overtook him. The locks of his hair in which he gloried were caught in the low branches of an oak and there he hung. Then, as you hear David cry, “O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for you!” you see that the righteousness of David could not deliver his son Absalom even as to this life.

If you needed other proofs, I would give the instance of Judas, which is greatly to the point, not in the matter of relationship, but in the matter of association. Judas consorted with 11 of the princes of the Church of God, for such I call them, now that they have gone up to their thrones. No, more, Judas consorted with the Master Himself and dipped in the same dish with our Redeemer! Yet, you see, the righteousness of 11 Apostles could not cover Judas. And because he did not believe in Jesus, neither did the righteousness of his Master cover him! And so this man perished in his own iniquity. These examples I have given you from the Bible. Were I to try and turn over the pages of my recollection, I could give you many miserable proofs that the father’s righteousness does not cover the son. I am afraid I shall touch a very tender string with friends here present who, in their own sons, have sad proof that it is so.

I have seen the preacher of the Gospel whose son was committed to prison. I have known the father to be a minister of Christ and his son a ringleader in infidelity, or a chief actor in things too filthy and profane to be mentioned here. Full many a child of godly parents has, in this life, brought himself to beggary, to disgrace, to disease, to death. It is a sad fact, but it is so. There may have been, perhaps, grave fault at home. That I cannot tell—God knows—but so it has been that men who, to the best of our judgment, were not only godly, but eminently so, have, nevertheless, had the wretched lot to see their sons and daughters given up to work iniquity with both hands greedily. God save you from such a sorrow, but the recurrence of these facts goes to show that the most godly man’s righteousness cannot be of use, even, for son or daughter. What need is there, however, that I multiply proofs?

The scales of justice must be poised with an equal hand. Partiality is out of the question. God is no respecter of persons. Were it otherwise, personal obedience to the will of God could be dispensed with! There would be in this world a number of chartered libertines who would plead a mother’s godliness or a father’s Christian character as a setoff for their own indifference or profanity—as if they had a special license to live as they like because their parents were godly. Would you have it so if you could? I would not. I should think it a most dangerous institution. Thank God, His Divine justice has never given immunity to any vice. If a man eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. A spendthrift shall rue the course he has run and shall beg bread, even though his father were a saint of the innermost sanctuary.

If a man indulges foul passions, he shall suffer for it in his own body, let his father be as gracious as he may. If a man puts his finger into the fire, it will burn him. If he tempts the flood in time of danger, it will drown him. You may groan to think he was the child of so good a man, but the laws of Nature are not to be trifled with. If you act contrary to them, they will be contrary to you. Relationship, which is but an accidental circumstance, is not to be confused with religion. That the righteousness of one man could compensate for the recklessness of another man is a monstrous conceit. What if I am, as I thank God I am, the son of His handmaid? I dare not to presume on that! What if my father is a minister of the Gospel? What if my grandfather preached the Gospel? I thank God that such Grace was given to them, but there is nothing in that upon which I dare presume! I think the meanest pride in all the world is the pride of ancestry, for how on earth can a man have any credit due to him for a contingency which never could be at his own disposal? It must be a matter of God’s own dispensation and if he has received it, why does he glory as though he had not received it?

To suppose that Grace comes with ancestry would be a supposition exactly opposite to the declaration of the Spirit of God by John, where he says of the godly, “which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” There must be a birth by the Spirit of God, or the first birth will be nothing whatever to our advantage. However well-born at first, you must be born again! If the righteousness of one man could excuse the unrighteousness of another man, then the great principle of responsibility would be reversed. You and I, who were born in the midst of Christian associations, are responsible for the Light of God which we receive. If we sin, we cannot sin so cheaply as others. If a man transgresses against the holy example of parents, he scores seven for every sin to what another would have done who had been trained up under vicious surroundings. Assuredly he is not a less sinner, but a greater sinner who, being born in the midst of godliness, ventures to depart from the good way, transgress the sacred precepts, and refuse the Savior!

That is the principle of Scripture—to whom much is given, of him much shall be required—and we have to say daily to you children of the godly, that if you fall, your exaltation by your privileges will cause you a more awful fall than the fall of others. We say to such as you, “Woe unto you, Bethsaida; woe unto you, Chorazin; woe unto you, Capernaum! You have seen the mighty works of Christ, which, if others had seen, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, and if you repent not, woe unto you!” Such is the teaching of the Word of God. But the opposite hypothesis that the goodness of one individual can compensate for the badness of another is utterly hollow, not to say grossly vicious! Painful though it is, dear Friends, I must carry the assertion a step further.

The righteousness of good men has not availed to save their relatives from the terrors of the world to come. Instances of this come uncalled for to our recollection. Begin at the beginning. There is Cain. Who is his brother? Abel. Abel is a man whose faith is acceptable with God. Does that save Cain? No, he was of that Wicked One and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous. Cain, where are you tonight? Are you sitting here and do you dream that your brother, Abel, now with God, can, by any means, bless you? That must not be. Dispel the delusion! The opening chapter of history refutes it. The first two sons that were born to Adam depart from earth in different directions.

Look, again, at Ishmael. His father, Abraham, the father of the faithful, said, “O that Ishmael might live before You!” Yet Ishmael becomes the very type of the children of nature who do not inherit the blessing that belongs to the children of promise! Look at Esau, born at the same birth with Jacob, children of a godly father, yet we read of Esau that he was a profane person. The godliness of holy Isaac does not save Esau! Look at Hophni and Phinehas, priests of God by office, but sons of Belial by character! Their father Eli, with all his faults, was a man who feared God. Yet as for these sons of his, they died in their sins, from which no sacrifice nor offering could purge them! Look at Jehoram—his father, Jehoshaphat, was a truly gracious man—though, alas, he turned aside, joined with Ahab and married his son to the daughter of that woman, Jezebel!

And, ah me, how many a young man is ruined by some such perilous alliance! For money, for business, or for social position they are wedded to the ungodly. Some of you sell your daughters to the devil that they may make a respectable match, when you know that this unequal yoking is forbidden by Gospel precept! I am ashamed of Christian people who lend their countenance to this breach of the Lord’s Commandment! In this world there is a blight on such unions and in the world to come—well, over that you would wish to draw the veil. The life of Jehoram was evil. His death was painful and premature. His end was without hope, yet he was a son of Jehoshaphat who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord!

How tenaciously men will cling to the idea that godly ancestors can help them is illustrated from that parable of our Lord in which He tells us of the rich man who lifted up his eyes in Hell and cried, “Father Abraham.” As a descendant of Abraham, he looked for pity and relief, even in the place of torment! Ah, but he failed to obtain a drop of water to cool his tongue by that plea. Take the warning to yourselves, Sirs, I beseech you! It does not matter of whom you may be descendants—they cannot relieve the pains of Hell for you! Unless you, yourselves, have personal faith and a personal renewal of heart, though you had Noah, Daniel and Job to take your part—“As I live, says the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”

II. Now I come to our second proposition. THE PRAYERS OF THE GREATEST INTERCESSORS CANNOT AVAIL IF MEN PERSIST IN THEIR UNBELIEF. God forbid that I should discourage any of you from praying for your parents, your children and your friends. Let us never leave off praying for them. But if any man in this place is sitting comfortably in his seat, saying, “My wife prays for me; my mother prays for me; my children pray for me. It will be all right with me—their prayers will suffice for me— without any penitence or faith on my part,” I should like to touch him on the shoulder and whisper in his ear these words, “Though Noah, Daniel and Job were the intercessors, they could deliver none but their own souls.”

Noah was undoubtedly a man of prayer. Still, there was not a single person saved by Noah’s prayers except those that went into the ark. And if God would give to us, His people, everything that we ask for, yet we would not ask Him to save you if you will not believe in Christ. If you set up your idols in your heart and keep the stumbling block of your lust before your eyes, we cannot, we dare not pray for you that you may be saved contrary to the Gospel! Daniel was mighty in prayer, but all that his prayers ever did could not save Israel from the fatal results of the follies to which they clung. Jerusalem was destroyed, notwithstanding the prayers of Daniel, and the Jews are scattered among all lands, notwithstanding that the holy Prophet pleaded for the prosperity of Zion. We can only pray according to the will of God and our prayers must be that you may be saved in the Lord’s own appointed way—we cannot ask Him to change His way for you.

Job prayed for his friends and his friends were forgiven. But, note it well, not without a sacrifice. They had to bring seven bullocks and seven rams and offer up for themselves a burnt offering before the prayer of Job on their behalf was heard. If you will bring a sacrifice for yourselves—if you will present Christ as your Sacrifice—then will our prayers go with yours and you shall be blessed. Had they offered no sacrifice, Job’s prayers could not have availed for them. You must believe in Jesus with a faith distinctly your own. Were the whole Church on earth to lift up one continuous prayer and persevere in it from generation to generation, it could not save one unbelieving man! While he remains in unbelief, the wrath of God abides on him. If you buoy yourself up with a deceitful hope that it is different, you will presently sink down in blank despair.

What a man of prayer Moses was when he held back God’s hand till the Lord cried, “Let Me alone, that I may destroy them.” But Moses besought the Lord God with urgent prayer and he prevailed. Yet even Moses did not avert the sentence pronounced on the generation which he had brought out of Egypt. Their carcasses all fell in the wilderness, save Joshua and Caleb. Nor could these two righteous men preserve one single person beyond themselves. All the intercession of Moses could not save an unbelieving generation. Because they believed not, they all died. As for Samuel, you will remember how he mourned for Saul, whom God had put away, till God said to him, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?” He had to give it up and go and anoint David. The prayers of the devout Prophet could not save the disobedient king!

Oh, how this should take any of you off from a vain confidence in the prayers of others and lead you to pray for yourselves! And look to Christ for yourselves! A parent’s prayers are a sad pretext for a child’s presumption. Striving together in prayer, saint with saint, there is a mighty power. But what a strife is that when the soul we seek is struggling to be free from all restraint only to plunge deeper into sin! Remember, beloved Friends, that all the prayers of godly men put together cannot alter the rule of the Kingdom of God. And what is the rule of the Kingdom of God? Here is one of the rules, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” Suppose Noah and Daniel and Job, and Moses and Samuel and Jeremiah—those six— should pray God to let a man go to Heaven without being born from above and renewed by the Spirit of God? Would that be of any use? Do you think the constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven would be altered for their asking? Oh no! The will of God is not affected by the whims of men.

Well, here is another rule of the kingdom, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.” Now if Noah, Job and Daniel were all to pray that this statute might be repealed and a resolution more consonant with the caprice of mortal men should be substituted in its place, do you think the appeal would be allowed? Surely our cries to God must not be complaints of His decrees! Our petitions must be submissive to His Word, not subversive of His wisdom! He will not change the ordinances of His Kingdom because men are stubborn! Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, His decrees can never be altered! They stand fast forever and they exclude forever from Heaven those who abide in unbelief.

No, Sirs, if you are not reconciled to God, you cannot have fellowship with Him! If you are not made meet to be partakers of the inheritance, you cannot enter into the enjoyment of it! In the atmosphere of Heaven you could not breathe, for without holiness no man can see God! If you believe not in Jesus Christ, you must die in your sins! Remember that all the prayers of godly men cannot alter the nature of sin and if they cannot alter the nature of sin, then they that continue in it must perish! If we were to hold a Prayer Meeting to prevent a person from being burnt who would put his hand into the fire, would that be of any use? If a man who cannot swim will persist in leaping into the river, what is the use of my asking you all to pray God to preserve his life? If a man puts a bottle of acid to his lips and drinks it, what is the use of our coming together to pray that his life may be spared when the deadly poison is destroying it? If he drives a dagger into his heart, he must die, unless God is pleased to reverse that order, which, according to the poet, “is Heaven’s first law.”

There is a way of salvation—“Believe in Jesus Christ and live”—if you will not have that, where are you, my Friend? Are you such a fool as to sit there and say, “I shall be saved by my wife’s prayers”? Your wife’s prayers will rather seal your doom! They will rise up in judgment against you! That you were so much prayed for implies that you were admonished and entreated at a most loving rate. You will not be able to say, “No man cares for my soul.” A mother’s prayers will ring in your ears and excite remorse when repentance is no more possible. The cries of the lost will be more terrible than the recollection of her tears and agony for you. Oh, remember this! Sin is fire and it must burn! Sin is Hell and it must torment the man who continues in it! There is no help for it. Pray as much as ever we like, if you do not get out of sin, you cannot get out of destruction! If you do not find pardon through our Lord Jesus you must be punished!

Moreover, the prayers of good men cannot alter the conditions of the eternal future, so long as the present abides the same. This must be palpable to any sane judgment. The palace of luxury and time prison of penal servitude are but faint pictures of Heaven and Hell. What is Heaven? The abode of perfect spirits washed in the blood of the Lamb. The right of admission, how can it be obtained? There are qualifications that cannot be dispensed with. And there are disqualifications that cannot be denied. As British subjects, we have a right of petition to our Queen. But of what use would that be, if with a required number of signatures, we could ask her Majesty to confer the Victoria Cross on a burglar? Or how can you suppose that God will receive a rebel amongst His loyal courtiers? It cannot be!

And what is the meaning or purpose of Hell but this—that he that will have sin must have sorrow? He that will hate God must be miserable. There is no law more immutable than, “to be good is to be happy,” and to be bad is sooner or later to be wretched. It must be so. Trust not, therefore, to the prayers of others, but come to Christ for yourselves, that you may be cleansed from sin and made right for Heaven. Perhaps you say, “Sir, I did not think prayer would suffice to effect a change in my circumstances without a corresponding change in myself, but I thought that, somehow, by prayer, I should be compelled to believe and to repent.”

Compelled to believe and to repent? Well, Man, what sort of repentance and faith must that be which comes of compulsion? Surely that man’s heart is not sincere who says, “I hope to go to Heaven, though it is against my own inclination.” You would gladly be made to hate sin against your will? That is strange! Are you to be made to love righteousness against your own liking? I have heard of fathers saying that their daughters should marry So-and-So, but I defy them to make them love those with whom they have no feeling. No, these matters are far too delicate to be managed by coercion. It cannot be!

Neither does the Holy Spirit, Himself, employ force to compel those who are unwilling. He has a power that is quite congruous with the freedom of the will by which He sweetly turns the mind and will by blessed argument and illumination. By enlightening the understanding, He controls the will. But, believe me, you will never be lugged into Heaven by your ears! You will never be strapped down and carried to Heaven as we see drunken women carried to the stationhouse on a stretcher. Have you ever fancied that such would be the case? Has such an absurd idea ever entered into your head, that somehow or other, without your ever seeking it, you will be taken up by some celestial surgery and chloroformed into Glory?

It will not be so. Turn to this Book and see. How did the prodigal get to his father’s house? Did his father asphyxiate him and make him insensible and then strap him down and carry him there? Not at all. But first he was hungry and he tried to fill his belly with the husks, but he could not. And he became more hungry, still, and then he said, “I will arise, and go unto my father,” and he went to his father. Yes, it was all of Grace, but still he arose and came unto his father. It was all of eternal love, but he did leave the swine and seek his home. It was of infinite pity, but he did think and he did will to go! And, what is more, he did go to his father’s house. He did all that and then, when he was a great way off, his father met him!

Now, believe me, though I always preach free, rich, Sovereign Grace with all my heart, I never understood and never shall understand that God treats us like logs of wood and blocks of marble, and cleaves or chips us about as if we had no life, or will, or intelligence! It is not so and only fools think in such a fashion! You are men, not dumb driven cattle! You will not be saved like asses, but like men! You will not be saved like horses and mules and cats, but like men and women who can think! You will have to think and you will have to hate your sin—and you will have to cry for mercy and you will have to believe in Christ—and if you do not, you will perish! All the prayers that have ever been poured out can be of no use to save you except through your being brought to trust your Savior, hate your sin and become obedient to His will.

Do you believe this, dear Friends? It may be that out of this large congregation there are only a few to whom these statements are particularly appropriate, but I thought that I would leave the 99 sheep in the wilderness—there are plenty of sweet grasses for you in the quiet places of the Word of God—and I would go after some that have gone astray in this direction, for I long to find you. Oh that the blessed Spirit would convince you of your sin and lead you to say, “I have played the fool. I have been trusting to a privilege which I ought to have used for another purpose. Now, I will seek God and I will yield to the blessed Gospel and put my trust in Jesus.” Remember, there is a righteousness which you can have— the righteousness of Jesus Christ which can cover you. Though Noah and Daniel and Job cannot deliver you, Jesus can!

There an intercession that can be heard for you—the intercession of One that lives and was dead—and now makes intercession for men and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. Come unto God by Him and His intercession is yours and shall be your health! And His righteousness is yours and shall be your covering! God grant it for the dear Redeemer’s sake. Amen and amen.

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THE FRUITLESS VINE  
NO. 125

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”  
Ezekiel 15:1, 2.**

THE Jewish nation had arrogant ideas of themselves. When they sinned against God, they supposed that on account of the superior sanctity of their forefathers, or by reason of some special sanctity in themselves, they would be delivered—sin as they pleased! In consequence of the Infinite Mercy of Jehovah, which He had displayed towards them in delivering them out of so many distresses, they gradually came to imagine that they were the favorite children of Providence and that God could by no means ever cast them away! God, therefore, in order to humble their pride, tells them that they, in themselves, were nothing more than any other nation. He asks them what there was about them to recommend them—“I have often called you a vine. I have planted you and nurtured you in a very fruitful hill, but now you bring forth no fruit. What is there in you why I should continue you in My favor? If you imagine there is anything about you more than about any other nation, you are mightily mistaken.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

Let us remember that these things might be said without implying that God in the least degree alters His eternal purpose towards any chosen vessel of mercy. The Israelite nation was not chosen to eternal salvation as a nation, but chosen to special privileges—a type and shadow of that eternal personal election, which Christ has given to His Church. From His own elect Church, God will never withdraw His love. But from the outward and visible Church, He sometimes may. From His own people, He will never take away His affection—but from professors, from those who merely stand in His people’s external condition and are not His children—He may. Yes, and He will withdraw every token of His favor. God humbles Israel by reminding them that they had nothing which other nations had not—that in fact they were a contemptible nation, not worthy to be set side by side with the cedar of Lebanon, or with the oak of Samaria. They were of no use—they were “worthless, unless they brought forth fruit to Him.” He checks their pride and humbles them with the parable we have here before us.

Beloved, we shall, by God’s help, use this parable for ourselves and learn two lessons from it. The first shall be a lesson of humility for saints. And the second, a lesson of searching for all who are professors.

I. First, here is A LESSON OF HUMILITY for all you who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

In looking upon all the various trees, we observe that the vine is distinguished among them—so that in the old parable of Jotham, the trees waited upon the vine tree and said unto it, “Come and reign over us.” But merely looking at the vine, without regard to its fruitfulness, we would not see any kingship in it over other trees. In size, form, beauty, or utility, it has not the slightest advantage. We can do nothing with the wood of the vine. “Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men make a pin of it to hang a vessel thereon?” It is a useless plant apart from its fruitfulness. We sometimes see it in beauty, trained up by the side of our walls and in the east it might be seen in all its luxuriance as great care is bestowed in its training. But leave the vine to itself and consider it apart from its fruitfulness—it is the most insignificant and despicable of all things that bear the name of trees!

Now, Beloved, this is for the humbling of God’s people. They are called God’s vine. But what are they by nature more than others? Others are as good as they. Yes, others are even greater and better than they. They, by God’s goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil. The Lord has trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary and they bring forth fruit to His Glory. But what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit begetting fruitfulness in them? Are they not the least among the sons of men and the most to be despised of those that have been brought forth of women? Look upon this, Believer—

*“What was there in you to merit esteem,*

*Or give the Creator delight?”*  
Yes, look upon yourself as you are now. Does not your conscience reproach you? Do not your thousand wanderings stand before you and tell you that you are unworthy to be called His son? Does not the weakness of your mental power, the frailty of your moral power, your continual unbelief and your perpetual backsliding from God tell you that you are less than the least of all saints? And if He has made you anything, are you not thereby taught that it is Grace, free Sovereign Grace, which has made you to differ? Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of Grace and have not yet learned the Gospel! If ever they had known the Gospel they would, on the other hand, confess that they were less than the least—the offscouring of all things—unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving and Hell-deserving! They would ascribe it all to distinguishing Grace which has made them to differ and to discriminating Love which has chosen them out from the rest of the world! Great Christian, you would have been a great sinner if God had not made you to differ! Oh, you who are valiant for the Truth of God—you would have been as valiant for the devil if Grace had not laid hold upon you! A seat in Heaven shall one day be yours but a chain in Hell would have been yours if Grace had not changed you. You can now sing His love, but a licentious song might have been on your lips if Grace had not washed you in the blood of Jesus! You are now sanctified. You are quickened. You are justified. But what would you have been tonight if it had not been for the interposition of the Divine hand? There is not a crime you might not have committed! There is not a folly into which you might not have run!

Even murder, itself, you might have committed if Grace had not kept you. You shall be like the angels. But you would have been like the devil if you had not been changed by Divine Grace. Therefore, never be proud. All your garments you have from above—rags were your only heritage. Be not proud though you have a large estate, a wide domain of Grace. You had not, once, a single thing to call your own except your sin and misery! You are now wrapped in the golden righteousness of the Savior and accepted in the garments of the Beloved, but you would have been buried under the black mountain of sin and clothed with the filthy rags of unrighteousness if He had not changed you! And are you proud? Do you exalt yourself? Oh, strange mystery, that you, who have borrowed everything, should exalt yourself! That you, who have nothing of your own, but still have to draw upon Grace, should be proud! A poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of your Savior and yet proud? One who has a life which can only live by fresh streams of life from Jesus and yet proud! Go hang your pride upon the gallows, as high as Haman—hang it there to rot and stand beneath it and denounce it to all eternity, for surely of all things most to be cursed and despised, is the pride of a Christian! He of all men has ten thousand times more reason than any other to be humble and walk lowly with his God and kindly and humbly towards his fellow creatures. Let this, then, humble you, Christian, that the vine tree is nothing more than any other tree, save only for the fruitfulness which God has given it!

II. But now here comes A LESSON OF SEARCH. As the vine without its fruit is useless and worthless—so, too, the professor, without fruit, is useless and worthless. Yes, he is the most useless thing in the whole wide world!

Now, let us dwell upon this point— a fruitless profession. And while I am preaching on it, let the words go round to each one and let the minister and let his deacons and let his hearers all try their hearts and search their reins and see whether they have a fruitless profession!

1. First, a fruitless professor. How do we know him? What is his character? Secondly, What is the reason he is fruitless? Thirdly, What is the estimation God holds him in? He is good for nothing at all! And then, fourthly, What will be his end? He is to be burned with fire!

First, Where are we to find fruitless professors? Everywhere, dear Friends, everywhere—down here, up there, everywhere! In pulpits and in pews. False professors are to be found in every Church. Let us leave other denominations alone, then. They are to be found in this Church. They are to be found in this present assembly. To whatever denomination you may belong, there are some false and fruitless professors in it. How do you know that you may not belong to those who bring forth no fruit? There are fruitless professors to be found in every position of the Church and in every part of society. You may find the false professor among the rich. He has much wealth and he is hailed with gladness by the Church. God has given him much of this world’s goods and, therefore, the Church, forgetful that God has chosen the poor, gives him honor and what does she get from him? She gets but little help—her poor are still neglected and her means not in the least recruited by his riches! Or if she gain a portion of his riches, yet she gets none of his prayers. Nor is she in the least supported by his holy living. He that has riches often lives in sin and rolls in uncleanness. He wears his profession as a uniform, wherewith to cover his guilt! Rich men have sometimes been false professors and they are to be found among poor men, too. Full many a poor man has entered into the Church and been cordially received. He has been poor and they have thought it a good thing that poverty and Grace should go together—that Grace should cheer his hovel and make his poverty-stricken home a glad one. But then, this poor man has turned aside to follies and has degraded himself with drunkenness, has sworn and by unworthy conduct dishonored his God. Or, if not, he has been idle and sat still and been of little service to the Church. And so he has been false and fruitless in his profession!

False professors are to be found in the men that lead the vanguard of God’s army. The men who preach eloquently, whose opinion is law, who speak like prophets and whose language seems to be inspired! They have brought forth the fruit of popularity—yes, and the fruit of philanthropy, too—but their heart has not been right with God and, therefore, the fruit, good in itself, was not fruit unto holiness! The moral benefit of their labors does not extend to everlasting life. They have not brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, seeing that they were not living branches of the living vine. Then there have been false professors in obscurity—modest people who have said nothing and seldom been heard of. They have glided into their pews on the Sunday morning, taken their seats, gone out and satisfied themselves that by their presence they had fulfilled a religious duty! They have been silent, quiet and retired. Lazy fellows, doing nothing. You may think that all the fruitless trees grow in the hedge outside of the garden. No they don’t. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it, in the very center of it! There are some false professors to be found in obscurity as well as in publicity. Some among the poor as well as among the rich!

And there are false professors to be found among men that doubt a great deal. They are always afraid they do not love Jesus and always saying, “Ah, if I did but know I were His I—

*“Tis a point I long to know*

*Oft it causes anxious thought.’”*  
Yes, and it ought to cause them anxious thought, too, if they are bringing forth no fruit and giving no “diligence to make their calling and election sure.” Fruitless professors are to be found, on the other hand, among the confident men, who say, without a blush, “I know whom I have believed. I know I am a Christian, let who will, doubt. I am sure and certain my sins cannot destroy me and my righteousness cannot save me. I may do what I like, I know I am one of the Lord’s.” Ah, fruitless professor again— just as fruitless as the other man—who had all doubts and no faith and did nothing for his Master!

And then there is the fruitless professor, who, when he is asked to pray at the Prayer Meeting, never does so. And who neglects family prayer. We will not say anything about private devotion—no doubt he neglects that, too—he is a fruitless one. Ah, but there may be another who stands up and prays such an eloquent prayer for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, just as fruitless a professor as the silent one! He has plenty of words but no realities—many leaves but no fruits—great gifts of utterance but no gifts of consistency. He is able to talk well but not to walk well—to speak piously but not to walk humbly with his God and serve Him with gladness. I do not know your individual characters tonight. But I know enough of you to say that your position, however honorable in the Church, and your character, however fair before men, is not enough to warrant any of you in concluding at once that you are not a fruitless professor! For fruitless professors are of every character and every rank—from the highest to the lowest—from the most talented to the most illiterate, from the richest to the poorest, from the most retiring to the most conspicuous! There are fruitless professors in every part of the Church.

Now, shall I tell you who is a fruitless professor? The man who neglects private prayer and does not walk with his God in public. That man whose carriage and conversation before God are hypocritical—who cheats in trade and robs in business, yet wraps it up and comes out with a fair face, like the hypocrite with a widow’s house sticking in his throat and says, “Lord, I thank You I am not as other men are!” There is a man for you, who brings forth no fruit to perfection! Another one is he who lives right morally and excellently and depends upon his works and hopes to be saved by his righteousness. He comes before God and asks for pardon with a lie in his right hand, for he has brought his own selfrighteousness with him. Such a man is a fruitless professor. He has brought forth no fruit. That man, again, is a fruitless professor who talks big words about high Doctrine and likes sound Truth but he does not like sound living—his pretensions are high but not his practice! He can bear to hear it said—

*“Once in Christ, in Christ forever”*  
but as for himself, he never was in Christ at all, for he neither loves nor serves his Master but lives in sin that Grace may abound. There is another fruitless vine for you!

But why need I stop to pick you out? May the Lord find you out tonight. There are many of you here, concerning whom the curse of Meroz might be uttered, “Curse you, Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof. Because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Many of you are content to eat the fat and drink the sweet and bring forth no fruit to God. Nor do you serve Him—lazy Issachars—crouching down like a strong ass between two burdens. You neither speak for Christ, nor pray for Christ, nor give to Christ, nor live to Christ. But having a name to live, while you are dead, wrapping yourselves up in a profession, while you are not living to Christ, nor consecrating your being to Him! Judge what I say. If you were put into the sieve this night, how many of you would come out clean in this matter? Are there not many high-flying professors here, who fly high but who do nothing? Who can talk fast but live as slowly as you like? Who, perhaps, delight in hearing the Truth but who never practice the Truth in serving their God, nor living to His honor? Such as you, Sirs, are the most useless and worthless of all creatures in the world! For, like the vine, you would be honorable if you were fruitful. But without fruit, as the vine is despicable, so are you good for nothing but to be cast out and burned!

2. And now I come to the second question—Why is it that these men are fruitless and must be cast away? The reason is because they have no roots. Many, many professors have not roots. Fine professors they are, beautiful to look at but they have no roots whatever. Don’t you remember your childhood—when you had a little garden of your own, when you plucked some flowers and put them in the ground and said that was your garden? And when you went the next day you found that all the flowers were withered and dead? Such are many professors—pretty flowers, plucked off without roots, having no adherence to the soil, drawing no sap and no nourishment from it. And therefore it is they die and bring forth no fruit! You come to us and say, “I wish to join the Church.” We question you as far as we are able. You solemnly tell us that your hearts are right with God. We baptize you, receive you into our number. But then there was no root in many of you and, after a while you die. When the sun has risen with a burning heat you perish. Or if you maintain a tolerably fair profession there is never any fruit upon you, because you did not first get the root. You got the notion first and then thought you would get the root afterwards. I tremble for many young people in my Church—I will not exclude my own Church. They get an idea into their heads that they are converted—the work was not true, not genuine, not real. It was an excitement—it was a stir in the conscience for a while and it will not last. But the worst of it is that though it does not last, they last as professors! When they have been received into the Church, they say, “I am sure enough!” Preach about them as long as you please, you cannot get at them. They are Church members, they are baptized persons, they have passed the Rubicon. What more do they need? You can do little for them. I tremble for these—my most hard-hearted hearers I weep before God! But for these people I need to have four eyes to weep with, for who can make an impression upon them when they are firmly persuaded that they are right? They have had the seal of the Church that they are right—though notwithstanding that they are deceiving themselves and others and are still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

My young Friends, I do not want to prevent any of you from joining a Church. But I do say to you, make sure work of it before you make a profession! I would say to as many of you as love the Lord, come forward and unite with God’s people but, I beseech you, be sure to “search your hearts and try your reins.” Many have thought themselves converted when they were not. Hundreds of thousands have had an impression—a kind of conversion, not real—which for a while endured, but afterwards it passed away as a summer’s dream! It was but a little while ago that I had in my house a gentleman, an excellent man and I believe a true child of God. He told me he had been brought seriously under conviction, on account of sin, through hearing a sermon of late. “But,” he said, “I was baptized in my childhood. When I was but young there was a revival in our village, in New England. Mine was the hardest heart in the village, but I was found out at last. There was scarcely a boy or girl that did not join the Church and I was at last brought under deep conviction. I used to weep before God and pray to Him. I went to the minister and told him I was converted, deceived him and was baptized.” And then he went on to tell me that he had dived into the blackest crimes and gone far away, even from the profession of religion. After going to College, he had been struck off the Church roll on account of wickedness and that up to this time he had been an infidel and had not so much as thought of the things of the Kingdom! Take heed, many of you, that you do not get a sham religion! Many jump into godliness as they would into a job. But they are very glad to jump out of it, too, when they find the world pays them better! And many there are who will just come and say they are the Lord’s and they think they are but there is no root in them. Therefore, by-andby, their impressions pass away. Oh, we have many fruitless professors in our midst because they did not look well to their beginnings! They did not take heed at their starting point. They did not watch well the first dawn—they thought the little farthing daylight of their own hopes was the dawning of the sun of righteousness! They thought the bleeding of their own conscience was a killing by the hand of God! Whereas it was a deeper and better and surer and more entire work that they needed, than that which they received. Let us take heed, my Brothers and Sisters, that we do not put too much trust in our experiences, while it is not yet proved in our beginnings! Let us often go back and begin again! Let us often go to Christ with the old cry—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*  
For remember that these bad beginnings have had a great effect in making a man fruitless!

3. And again, thirdly, what is God’s estimation of fruitless professors? I shall not ask you their own. For there are many men who are professors of religion with whom you might make your fortune very speedily if you could buy them at your price and sell them at their own! There are many, too, that have a very good opinion of themselves which they have gained from the Church. The minister thinks well of them; the Church thinks well of them; they are respectable people. It is so nice to have them come, it helps the cause, so, to see such respectable persons sitting in the pews! Really, I think he would do for a deacon! Everybody thinks well of him, everybody praises him. Now we have nothing to do with this kind of opinion, tonight—our business is with God’s opinion of such a man! And God’s opinion of a man who makes a profession without being sincere is this—that he is the most useless thing in the world! And now let me try to prove it. Is there anyone who will prove that this man is any use at all? I will ask the Church—Here is a man who brings forth no fruit and has only a profession. Members of the Church, what is the use of this man? Will he comfort any of you in your distress? Will he hold up the pastor’s hands in prayer when he is weary? Will he lead the troops to battle? Will he be of any service to you? I see you unanimously lift up your hands and say, “The man is of no use to us whatever if he brings forth no fruit! If his life is not consistent with his profession, strike his name off the Church roll! Let him go, he is of no use.” Where has he gone? He has gone to the world. Bring the worldlings up! What do you think of this man? He makes a profession of religion. Is he of any use to you? “No,” they say, “we do not need such a fellow as that. The man is Jack-of-bothsides. He is sometimes a professor of religion and sometimes a sinner in the world—we will have nothing to do with him. Turn him out of our company.”

Where shall we send him, then? How shall we dispose of him? He seems to be of no use either to the Church or the world. Is he of any use to his family? Ask his eldest son. “John, is your father any good to you?” “No, Sir. None at all. He used to pray the Lord to save us with seeming earnestness and rise from his knees to give vent to his temper. Many a violent blow has he given me without any reasonable provocation. He was always a passionate man. He used to go to Chapel on Sunday and take us with him. But then we knew what he used to do on Monday. He would get drunk, or swear. He was never any use to me! He made me an infidel, Sir!” Ask his wife. “Well, what do you think of this good husband of yours? He has long made a profession of religion.” “Ah, Sir, it is not for me to say a word about my husband but he has made me a miserable woman! I think I would have joined your Church long ago if it had not been for his miserable inconsistencies. But really, he has grieved my heart, he has always been a stumbling block to me. And what to do with him, I do not know.” Well, Jane, we will have you out of the kitchen. “What think you of your master? He makes a profession of religion, yet does not live a right life. What do you think of him?” “Well, I did think that Christians were a good sort of people and that I should like to live with them, but if this is Christianity, Sir, I will take five pounds a year less to work for a worldly man! That’s all I can say.” Well, what is the use of him? I suppose he does something in business. He is a grand professor. He keeps a shop. Everybody thinks him a most respectable man. Has he not given a hundred pounds just now to the building of a new Church? Is he not always known to subscribe liberally to ragged schools? We will ask his men. What do you think of your master? “What do we think of him? Why, we would think a great deal more of him if he would give us a half-crown a week more wages, for he is the worst paymaster in the parish.” “Perhaps that is nothing—what do you think of him?” “Why, that he is an unutterable cant! Some of us did go to a place of worship but we are honest and we would rather stay away than go with such a miserable hypocrite.”

I am describing real cases and not fictions. I need not to go farther than between this and London Bridge to knock at the door and wake them up, some of them! What is the good of such professors? If they would speak fairly out and say, “I am not a Christian,” there would be some sense in it. For if Baal is God, let Baal be served. And if the world is worth serving, let a man serve it outright! But if God is God and a man lives in sin and talks about Divine Grace, then of what use is he? God Himself will disown him! Ask Him if this man has been of any use and He replies, “No, of no use whatever.” The vine is of no use unless it brings forth fruit—and this man, making a profession, is worse than worthless—because he does not live up to it. My dear Friends, I would not say an extravagant thing, but I will say this very coolly—if any of you who make a profession of religion are deceiving others by not living up to it, I do request you—and I say it advisedly—I do request you to give up your profession unless God gives you Grace to live up to it! Do not, I beseech you, halt between two opinions. If God is God, serve Him and do it thoroughly. Do not tell lies about it. If Baal is God, if he is a nice master, if you would like to serve him and win his wages, serve him! But do not mix the two together. Be one thing, or else the other. Renounce your profession and serve the devil thoroughly, or else keep your profession and serve God with all your heart—one thing, or else the other. I solemnly exhort you to choose which you will have, but never think that you can keep both, for “no man can serve two masters.” “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

4. And now let me close up by mentioning what is to become of this fruitless tree. We are told it is to be devoured in the fire. When an old vine is pulled off the wall, after having brought forth no fruit, what becomes of it? You know there are a lot of weeds raked up in a corner of the garden and the gardener, without taking any notice of it, just throws the vine on the heap of weeds and it is burned up. If it were any other kind of tree, he would at least reserve it for chopping up to make a fire within the master’s house. But this is such an ignominious thing, he throws it away in the corner and burns it up with the weeds! If it were a stout old oak, it might have the funeral of the Yule log, with honor in its burning and brightness in its flame. But the fruitless vine is treated with contempt and left to smolder with the weeds, the refuse and the rubbish. It is a miserable thing. Just so with professors. All men who love not God must perish. But those who profess to love Him and do not, shall perish with singular ignominy! “They shall not come into the sepulchers of the kings.” Something like that ancient king of whom it was said, “He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” The damnation of a professor will be the most horrible and ignominious sight that ever Hell itself has seen! When Satan fell from Heaven with his black Satanic malice against God, there was a kind of grandeur in his devilry. There was an awful, terrific sublimity in his damnation. And when a great blasphemer and a hard swearer shall be sent, at last, to Perdition, there shall be something of sublimity in it— because he has been consistent with his profession. But when a professor of religion finds himself in Hell, it shall be the most miserable, contemptible and yet terrible mode of damnation wherewith men were ever damned!

I think I see honest blasphemers lifting themselves from their chains of fire and hissing between their teeth at the minister who comes there, after having been a deceiver—“Aha! Aha! Aha! Are you here with us? You did warn us of our drunkenness and tell us of our curses! Ah, are you come into the drunkard’s Hell, yourself!” “Pshaw!” says another, “that is your strict Pharisee. Ah, I remember how he told me one night that I would perish unless I made a profession of religion. Take that, Sir!” And he spits upon him. “You are a loathsome thing! I perished but I served my master well. You—you pretended to serve God and yet you are a sneaking hypocrite!” Says another, yelling from the corner of the pit, “Let us have a Methodist hymn, Sir—quote a promise from the Bible! Tell us about Election. Let us have a little of your fine preaching now.” And round Hell there goes the hiss and the, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” And the yell of spitefulness and scorn upon the man who professed to be a Christian but became a castaway because his heart was not right in the matter. I confess I should dread above all things the unutterable Hell of hells of hypocritical apostates—of men that stand in the ranks, profess to love God, prate of godliness, sit in the pews and uphold Christianity! They take the Sacrament and speak about communion, stand up to pray and talk about being heard for their faith—who are all the while committing abominations and under cover of their profession are cheating the poor, robbing the fatherless and doing all kinds of iniquity!

I confess I as much dread the excess of their damnation above the damnation of others, as I dread to be damned at all! It is as if in Hell another Hell had been made to damn those that sin above others—to damn them after being damned—for hypocrites, for men who have been with us and not of us, who professed to be Christ’s and yet have been mean deceivers, after all! Oh, Sirs, if you would not make your chains more heavy, if you would not stir the fire to a more furious heat, if you would not make your yells more hideous—quit your professions this night—if you are not worthy of them! Go out of this place and send in your resignation to the Church. Or else, Sirs, be honest and bend your knee before God and ask Him to search you and try you and make you sincere and upright before Him. Be one thing, or else the other. Do not cloak yourselves in the robes of sanctity to hide the corruptions that all the while fester beneath! Stand out boldly, brave sinners, and do not be mean, sneaking sinners that wear the masks of saints! “What is the vine more than any other tree?” Without fruit it is worse than any other! It must perish more dolefully, more horribly than any other if there is no fruit brought to perfection on it. Does not that shake us? Ah, it will shake you, very likely, that do not want the shaking but the men that need awakening will stay just as they were. It will go into the hearts of some of you, like the cry, “Howl, Moab, howl, Moab!” But alas, Moab will not howl. You will weep for Kirhareseth but Kirhareseth will not weep for herself. You will weep for your hypocritical friends, but they will rub their eyes and say, “A strong sermon. But it has nothing to do with me.” And they will go out with cool presumption—sin with one hand and take the sacramental cup with the other—sing the lascivious song one night and then sing—

*“Jesus, lover of my soul,”*  
the day after. They will meet Christ here, and take the devil yonder and bid him God speed in all his freaks of devilry! Ah, Sirs, Sirs, Sirs! Take heed, take heed, I beseech you, of this matter! Let us each search our hearts lest we should have been deceived. And may God bring us to a right understanding in this matter that we may be clear before Him. “Search me, O God and know my ways, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there are any wicked ways in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.”

And now I must not send you away until I have had a word with my Friend in the aisle there. He says, “I like that, I like that. I am no professor, I am not, I am all right. No one can call me a hypocrite.” Well, my dear Friend, I am very glad you are not, because you say you are no Christian! But let me tell you, you must not expect to be better off for that. Suppose two men are brought up before the Lord Mayor and one says, “Your worship, I am an honest man and not guilty.” And he blushes that an imputation should be cast on his character. Well he is proved to be guilty and gets committed to prison for three months. Up comes the other one and says, “Your worship, I am a guilty man. I always was a rogue and I always shall be. I don’t make any profession at all.” “I think I must give you six months,” says his Worship, “for really, I think you must be the more determined rascal of the two.” So if any of you say, “I do not make a profession, I shall be all right,” let me tell you that to make a lying profession is a very fearful thing, but for you to think of getting off because you make no profession at all is equally bad! Take heed you do not deceive yourselves! It must be the new heart and the right spirit with God, or else profession or no profession, we must perish! Oh, that God would give us Grace to go to our houses and cry to Him for mercy and would help us to repent of our sins and bring us to put our trust simply and wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ! So should we be saved now and saved forever! Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #323 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

VILE INGRATITUDE!  
NO. 323

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 27, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL SOUTHWARK.

**“Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.”  
Ezekiel 16:1-2.**

AND how do you think the Prophet proceed in order to accomplish the solemn commission which had been thus entrusted to him? Did he begin by reminding the people of the Law which was delivered to Moses on the top of Sinai? Did he picture to them the exceeding fearfulness and quaking of the leader of Israel’s host when he received that stony Law in the midst of thunders and lightning? Or did he, do you think, proceed to point out to them the doom which must inevitably befall them, because they had broken the Divine Law and violated God’s holy statutes?

No, my Brethren. If he had been about to show to the then unprivileged gentiles their iniquity, he might have proceeded on legal grounds. He was now, however, about to deal with Jerusalem, the highly-favored city and here he does not bring to their mind the Law. He does not begin dealing out law-thunders to them at all. He fetches obligations as his arguments to convince them of sin from the Grace of God, rather than from the Law of God.

And, my Brethren, as I am about this evening to address you who profess to be followers of the Son of God and who by faith have “fled for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel”—as my business is to convince you of sin, I shall not begin by taking you to Sinai. I shall not attempt to show you what the Law is and what that penalty is which devolves upon every man that breaks it. But, feeling that you are not under the Law, but under Grace, I shall draw arguments from the Grace of God—from His Gospel—from the favor which He has shown you— arguments more powerful than any which can be fetched from the Law— to show you the greatness of your sin and the abomination of any iniquity which you have committed against the Lord your God.

I shall take Ezekiel’s method as my model and proceed to copy it thus— first, let us consider the abomination of our sin, aggravated as it is by the remembrance of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us. Secondly, let us see our sins in another light—in the light of what the Lord has made us since those happy days. And then, let us proceed to notice

what our sins have themselves been. And we shall have, I think, three great lamps which may cast a terrible light on the great wickedness of our sins.

I. First, then, let us consider our iniquities—I mean those committed since conversion, those committed yesterday and the day before and today. Let us see their sinfulness in the light of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us. In the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, observe what was our “birth and our nativity.” He says of us, “Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan. Your father was an Amorite and your mother an Hittite.” Now, Canaan, as you know, was a cursed one and the land of Canaan here meant refers to the cursed people whom God utterly gave up to be destroyed with the sword, that not one of them might escape.

Mark it, our nativity and our birth were of the land of the curse. “Your father was an Amorite and your mother an Hittite.” When the Lord is speaking of His people as they are in covenant with Him, He tells them that their father was Abraham, whom He did choose and their mother was Sarah whom He loved. Yet when He speaks of their natural estate, He compares their parentage to that mixed offspring of an Amorite father and a Hittite mother. Yes, and what was our parentage, Brothers and Sisters? Let us look back and wonder. Surely our father Adam’s wickedness was in us. Our early childhood began to discover the latent sparks of our sin. Scarcely do we remember the time when they were sparks, so early were they fanned into a flame.

When any of you look back to your father’s house, to the place from which God called you, you may be constrained to wonder. I know there are many members of this Church here present who are the only ones out of a family who were ever called to know the Lord. Your father, perhaps, lived and died a drunkard. You can look back to the two or three that you remember of your ancestors and they have been “without God and without hope, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel.” Then what was there in you or in your father’s house that God should set His love on you? Indeed, as for those of us who have been blessed with pious parents, we have nothing to boast of our ancestry, for we all were “born in sin and shaped in iniquity.”

Has the Lord loved us, though there was nothing in our birth or parentage to invite regard, or merit esteem? Then surely every sin that we commit now is aggravated by that sovereign choice, that infinite compassion that coated us, though our birth was vile and our original base. Did You take me from the dunghill, O my God, and do I sin against You? Did you take the beggar in his rags and lift him up to make him sit among Your sons and daughters, the very blood-royal of Heaven? And has that beggar afterward become a rebel against You? Oh Sin, you are an accursed thing indeed! When I think of that grace which has thus honored the dishonorable, exalted the mean things of this world and saved creatures that were the offscouring of creation, how I blush for the ingratitude that can forget such tender obligations and do despite to such extraordinary unmerited goodness!

Further, the Prophet goes on to say that not only their parentage was base, but their condition was dangerous in the extreme. That which was absolutely necessary for the life of an infant had in this case been utterly neglected. The babe had been cast away as though it were useless and its life unworthy of preservation. Offspring deserted—having none to tend it or care for its welfare—may perhaps awaken the lowest, the most contemptuous kind of pity.

Was not that just our condition when the Lord looked upon us? We had not been severed from the old natural stock of Adam. There had been no water used to wash us from our natural pollution, or to make our conscience supple, our neck pliant, or our knees bend before the power of God’s grace. We had not been swaddled or cared for. There was everything in our condition that would tend to destruction, but nothing in us that would tend upwards towards God. There we were, dying, no—we were dead, rotten, corrupt—so abominable that it might well be said, “Bury this dead one out of my sight” when Jehovah passed by and He said unto us, “live.”

Oh, some of you can remember how you were steeped up to the very neck in lust. Pardon me, Brethren, when I allude to these things that you may be led to see your present sins in the light of the mercy which has blotted out your past iniquities. It is not long since some of your conversations were larded with oaths daily—you could scarcely speak without blasphemy. As for others of us who were never in open sin, how base were we! The recollection of our youthful iniquity crushes us to the very earth. When we think how we despised the training we received, could laugh at a mother’s prayers and contemn all the earnest tender exhortations which a godly parent’s heart afforded to us—we could hide ourselves in dust and ashes and never indulge another thought of self-satisfaction.

Yet, though Sovereign Mercy has put all these sins away—though love has covered all these iniquities, and though everlasting kindness has washed away all this filth—we have gone on to sin. We have gone on to sin—thank God not to sin as we did before, not so greedily, not as the ox drinks down water—still we have transgressed and that in the light of mercy. Mercy which has “blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud,” your sins—our sins—since redemption was revealed to our souls, are abominations indeed! If I had known, O my

Brethren, in that hour when Christ took away my sin—if I had known what an untoward disposition I had then to show and what broken vows I should have now to reflect upon, I do not think I could have borne the revelation.

If some of us who are here present, rejoicing in covenant love and mercy, could have a clear view of all the sins we have committed since conversion—of all the sins we shall commit till we land in Heaven—I question whether our senses might not reel under the terrible discovery of what base things we are. I am sure if any man had told me that my heart would ever grow cold, that I should ever forget my Lord and Master and get worldly—if an angel from Heaven had told me these things, in the day when I first saw my Master’s face and looked and loved and lived, I should have said, “Is your servant a dog that I should do this thing?”

When I sat down and viewed the flowing of His precious blood and knew that my sins were put away, I thought I should never sin against Him any more. I dreamed and was it only a dream, that I should spend and be spent in His service? That no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great? And here we find ourselves flinching and drawing back and finding excuses for leaving His service. No, worse than that, smiting the face of our best Friend and grieving His Holy Spirit and often causing Him to hide His face from us by reason of our sin. Well might Moses say, “I beseech You, O Lord, show me not my wretchedness.”

One thing else appears designed to represent our sins as blacker still. It appears from the fifth verse, that this child, this Jewish nation, when God loved it, had none other to love it. “None eye pitied you, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion on you. But you were cast out in the open field to the loathing of your person in the day that you were born.” Do any of you know what it is to be cast out to the loathing of your persons? We will not say that our character had become such that we were loathed by others, but well we remember the time when we loathed ourselves—when we could say with John Bunyan that we wished we had been a dog or a toad sooner than have been a man, because we felt ourselves so vile in having sinned against God.

Oh, I can remember the season when my fondest wish was that I had never been born, because I so sinned against God. The sight of my iniquity was such—that horror took hold of me and amazement of soul overwhelmed me. I was indeed cast out to my own loathing if not to the loathing of others. And indeed, it is no wonder if a man, when he has his eyes opened, loathes himself. There is nothing so loathsome as an unregenerate heart—a heart that is like a den of unclean birds full of all manner of filthiness and ravenousness. The greatest abomination that ever existed physically is not to be compared with the moral abominations that dwell in the unrenewed heart. It is a miniature Hell, it is pandemonium in embryo. You have but to let it grow and the vileness which is in the human heart by nature would soon make a Hell if there were no Hell.

And yet, my Brethren, when we were loathed, when even our person was loathed, he loved us. Great God! How could You love that which we ourselves hated? Oh, it is God’s Grace, it is God’s Grace, it is God’s Grace indeed! Where is free will, my Brethren? Where is free will? There is no such thing. “Nomen est sine re,” said Martin Luther—it is a name for nothing. When we think of what we were, the thought of merit vanishes. It at once refutes itself the moment we look it in the face. It was God’s Grace—free, rich, unconstrained, Sovereign Grace which looked on us. I am sure if there are any who think there was some good thing in them that invited God’s attention, or led Him to look upon them, I can only say I know there was nothing of the sort in me.

There was everything to hate, nothing to desire—everything to detest, nothing to delight in. Much that He might spend his hatred on, but nothing which could command His affection or His love. Still He loved us, still He loved us, and yet—O you heavens be astonished—yet we have sinned against Him since then! We have forgotten Him, we have doubted Him, we have grown cold towards Him. We have loved self at times better than we have loved our Redeemer and have sacrificed to our own idols and made gods of our own flesh and self-conceit, instead of giving Him all the glory and the honor forever and forever.

This is putting sin in a Gospel light. I pray you, Brethren, if my speech is feeble and I cannot make the light shine on these things, spend a little season, as you can, in retirement when you are at home. Look at your sins in the light of the mercy which looked on you when you were thus dead and lost and hopelessly ruined. And surely the blush will mantle on your cheek and you will bow your knee with many a tear and cry, “Lord have mercy upon me! O my Father, cast not away Your child! Forgive a child that spurned his Father’s love! Forgive a wife who has played the harlot against a Divine Husband! Pardon a soul that has been traitorous to its own Lord—to Him who is its life, its joy, its all!”

II. We must now pass on to another point. We have to think of what the Lord has done for us since the time He first loved us. I have made a mistake, Brothers and Sisters. I have made a mistake. “The time when He first loved us,” did I say? Why, before all time—when there was no day but the uprising, upsetting day of eternity—beginning that knew no beginning—days that had no date—He loved His people then. I meant to refer rather to THE TIME WHEN HE BEGAN TO MANIFEST HIS LOVE TO US PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY.

Well then, observe that one of the chief things He did to us was to spread His garment over us and cover our nakedness. He washed us with the water of regeneration. Yes, and truly washed away the stain of our natural sanguinity. Oh, that day, that day of days, as the days of Heaven upon earth, when our eyes looked to Christ and were lightened—when the burden rolled from off our back! Oh, that hour, that earliest of all our gracious remembrances, that first of all dates—when we began to live, when we stepped down into that bath of atoning blood and came out of it fairer than any queen, more glorious than the daughters of men, white as alabaster, pure as crystal, like the driven snow without spot or blemish!

That day we never can forget, for it always rises to our recollection the moment we begin to speak about pardon—the day of our own pardon, of our own forgiveness. The galley-slave may forget the hour when he ceased to tug the oar. The poor chattel of his master may forget the time when he escaped from the accursed slaveholder’s grasp and became a free man. The sick man may forget the day when, after being long worn with pain till he was emaciated and at the gates of death, the blood began to leap in his veins and the glow of health began to invigorate his frame. The culprit who lay shivering beneath the executioner’s axe may forget the hour when suddenly his pardon was granted and his life was spared.

But if all these should consign to oblivion their surprising joys, the pardoned soul can never, never, never forget. Unless reason should lose her seat, the quickened soul can never cease to remember the time when Jesus said to it, “Live.” Oh and has Jesus pardoned all our sins and have we sinned still? Has He washed me and have I defiled myself again? Did He shed His blood to cleanse me and have I returned again to my natural depravity? Oh, these are abominations, indeed! I have heard some say that the sins of Believers are but trifles. Ah, my Brethren, I do think, if there is any difference, the sins of disciples of Christ are a thousand times worse than the sins of unbelievers, because they sin against a Gospel of love, a Covenant of mercy—against sweet experience and against precious promises. The sinner may kick against the pricks, that is bad enough. But to kick against the wounds of Christ, is worse still. Yet that is what you and I have done. We have sinned since the dear hour that cleansed our guilt away.

Nor did the gracious things we have mentioned exhaust the loving kindness of the Lord. When He had washed us, according to the ninth verse, He anointed us with oil. Yes. And that has been repeated many and many a time. “You have anointed my head with oil.” He gave us the oil of His Grace. Our faces were like priests and we went up to His tabernacle rejoicing. Have you received the Spirit, my Brethren? Oh, think how great an honor that God should dwell in man! The centurion said he was not worthy that Christ should come under the roof of his house and yet the Holy Spirit has not merely come under your roof but has come into your hearts. There He dwells and there He reigns.

Yet, my dear Brethren, yet you have sinned. With God’s oil on your head you have sinned. With the Holy Spirit in your heart you have sinned. Ah, if any man carried God within him, would he go and sin? Shall the body that is the temple of the Holy Spirit be desecrated? Yet that has been the case with us. We have had God within us and yet we have sinned. Marvel of marvels! He that would defile the house in which the king lived would certainly be guilty of high insult. But he who defiles the temple in which the Holy Spirit resides—what shall be said of him? This is what we have done. O Lord, have mercy upon Your people! Now we see our abomination in this clear light, we beseech You pardon it, for Jesus’ sake!

But further, we find that He not only washed us, He not only anointed us with oil, but He clothed us and clothed us sumptuously. The rich man in the parable of Jesus was clothed in scarlet, but we are better robed than he, for we are clothed in embroidered work. “Jesus spent His life to work my robe of righteousness.” His sufferings were so many stitches when He made the embroidered work of my righteousness. “I clothed you also with embroidered work and shod you with badgers’ skin.” Our shoes have been as iron and brass and as our day, so has our strength been. We have had always grace up to now sufficient for us. “And I girded you about with fine linen”—the righteousness of saints.

He has given to us the virtues of the Holy Spirit, the robe of sanctification. And then He has covered us with silk, even with that all-glorious robe of righteousness “woven from the top throughout without seam,” in which all His people stand arrayed. There never was anyone dressed so well as God’s people. Outwardly they may wear fustian and calico. They may come up to the House of God dressed in the garb of poverty, but they have robes which men cannot see, though angels can see and admire. A saint’s wardrobe would be a matchless thing to look at if we could but see it with the eyes of our understanding illuminated.

Have you ever been taken to see the wardrobes of some great personages—their multiplied garments—the robes which they wore in state? You have wondered at their lavish expenditure. But see your own, see those shoes—that girding of fine linen—and that covering of silk. Why, all the wealth of mankind could not buy an thread of that stuff. They could not procure a hem, much less the entire robe with which the righteous are adorned and made glorious. And yet they have turned aside and sinned.

What should you think of a bishop in his lawn sleeves defiling himself with outcasts in the street? What would think you of a king with a crown on his head going to break the laws of his kingdom? What would you think if a monarch should invest us with all the insignia of nobility and

we should afterwards violate the high orders conferred upon us while adorned with the robes of State? This is just what you and I have done. We have had all these costly robes and glorious garments and then we have gone and sinned against our God. O ingratitude of the vilest sort! Where are there words to denounce it! What language can fully express it?

We have but time to notice each one of these briefly. We have not only received clothing, but ornaments. “I have decked you also with ornaments and put bracelets upon your hands and a chain on your neck and I put a jewel on your forehead and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head.” Just like a loving husband, not content with giving his wife an ornament, he gives her many.

And the Lord, you see, gives to His Church all the ornaments she can possibly desire. There are ornaments for her ears, a crown for her head, bracelets for her hands and a chain for her neck. We cannot be more glorious. Christ has given the Church so much, she could not have more. He could not bestow upon her that which is more beautiful, more precious, or more costly. She has all she can receive. The Lord Jesus has bestowed all His wealth and all Heaven’s wealth upon His Church. You and I are the inheritors and wearers of these precious ornaments. He has given to us jewels in our ears—a hearing ear—He has given us the jewel in our forehead—a holy courage for His name. He has given us a crown upon our head—a garland crown of loving kindness and tender mercy. He has given us bracelets upon our hands, that whatever we touch may be graced, that our conduct may be beautiful and lovely, an ornament to the profession which we have espoused. And He has been pleased to put a chain about our neck, that we may ever be known to be right noble personages—noble of rank, exalted of station. Nevertheless, in the face of all these, we have sinned against Him.

Dear friends, it may seem like repetition when I go over the list of these mercies, but I cannot help it! I should like every one of these to be as a trumpet in your ear to wake you up to look at your sin. As a dagger in the heart of your pride to stab it and make it die. By these mercies of God, I adjure you, hate your sins. By these loving kindnesses, these favors immense, innumerable, unsearchable—by these covenant gifts, every one of them more precious than a world of diamonds—I beseech you hate the sins that have grieved your gracious Lord, and made His Spirit mourn. To see my sins in the lurid light of Sinai were bad enough, but to see them in the mellow radiance of His countenance and in the light that is shed from the Cross of my dying Master—this is to see sin in all its blackness and all its heinousness.

Dear Brethren, do not tamper with sin. Never have anything to do with those who think sin is little because grace is great. Shun, I beseech you, any man who comforts his heart with the hope that the crimes of God’s children are mere trifles. No! Though there is precious blood to wash it all away, yet sin is an awful thing. Though there are Covenant promises to keep the Believer secure, yet sin is a damning thing. Though there is eternal love which will not execute the Divine anger upon us—yet sin is a thrice-cursed thing. In fact, I would strain language to find an epithet for that sin which dares to nestle in the heart of a man whom God has loved and chosen.

I know that there is a tendency among some ministers—I will not say to whom I allude, you may readily guess—who preach a Gospel which does seem as if it tolerated iniquity. Oh, come not into their secret, I pray you. Better for you, though it were one of the worst things that could be, if you were to endorse Arminianism rather than Antinomianism. Of the two devils, I think the white devil is the least devilish. As Rowland Hill said—“The one is a white devil and the other a black one.”

They are both devils, I doubt not, but still one is more tearful in its character than the other. Have nothing to do with that horrible spirit which has done more to destroy sound doctrine in our Churches than anything else. Arguments will never break Antinomianism down. We are not afraid to meet our antagonists in fair and open battle. The ill lives of some who call themselves Calvinists, and are no more Calvinists than they are Jews, have brought that doctrine into great disrepute. We often have flung in our faces the wickedness of some professors and the rash, not to say wicked, teaching of some of our preachers, as a reason why our Brethren should be accounted worthy of all scorn. The more gracious God is, the more holy you should be. The more love He manifests to you, the more love should you reflect to Him.

III. And now, I shall close by noticing in the third place, WHAT OUR SINS REALLY HAVE BEEN. We will not enter into particulars. We have each one, a different way. It were idle, therefore, for me to think of describing the sins of such an assembly as here present. The germs, the vileness, the essence of our own sin, has lain in this—that we have given to sin, and to idols, things that belong unto God. “You have also taken your fair jewels of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you and made to yourself images of men and did commit whoredom with them and took your embroidered garments and covered them and you have set My oil and My incense before them. My meat also which I gave you, fine flour and oil and honey, wherewith I fed you, you have even set it before them for a sweet savor.”  
I have done this—let me make confession for myself and then I admonish you each one apply the case to yourselves. It has been a happy Sabbath day, my soul has enjoyed personal fellowship with Christ—I have gone up in the pulpit and had liberty of speech and power has attended the words. There has been manifestly the Holy Spirit in the midst of His Church. I have gone home, had access to God in prayer and enjoyed again communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. I go forth once more to unfold the things of the Gospel and with delight to my own soul, have I heard afterwards of saints who have been refreshed and sinners converted.

This was like “fine flour, and honey, and oil” that God had given to me. Why did He give it to me? Why, that I might offer it to Him and give Him all the glory. And do you know, I have caught myself saying, “Ah, you have done well today. You are growing in grace and living near to God.” What? Am I offering God’s blessings before the shrine of my abominable pride? Am I making an offering to Moloch and bringing the very gifts and lovetokens of my Father, to be laid upon the altar of my own pride? This is abominable indeed! This is so vile that no language can execrate it sufficiently. To offer my own work is bad enough, but to offer God’s Grace to idols, to spend His mercies in the gratification of my flesh—to look upon my own self as having done it, to sacrifice to my own conceit, to make an ablution to self of that which God has given me—this is atrocious enough to make a man fall very humbly before God, to feel the bitterness of his sin and ask for pardon.

You have transgressed in like manner, I dare say. When you pray at a Prayer Meeting, the devil insinuates the thought and you entertain it, “What a fine fellow I am!” You may detect yourself, when you are talking to a friend, of some good things God has done. Or when you go home and tell your wife lovingly the tale of your labor, there is a little demon of pride at the bottom of your heart. You like to take credit to yourself for the good things you have done. I am speaking of you all. There is no exception here. Does not a little bit of the old man creep out, just as when Jehu said, “Come see my zeal for the Lord”?

Now what is that but taking God’s fine meal and oil and honey and offering them to yourselves? If there should be an innocent man, one who pleads a not guilty upon this matter, he can get up and go out if he likes. But I am sure you will all sit still, at least, all who know your own hearts. Your own experience will require you to say—“I must confess it before God.” But have you not noticed that there are other ways besides this? Sometimes a man has another god besides pride. That god may be his sloth. He does not want to do much. He reads in the Bible that there is a finished righteousness, that the Covenant of Grace is complete. Have you ever detected yourself, when inclined to be dilatory in spiritual things, leaning on the oar of the Covenant, instead of pulling at it and saying, “Well, these things are true, so there is no great need for me to stir myself”?

Ah, you have been quietly nestling down to sleep, even under the influence of the sweet wine of the Covenant of Grace. It is sad that it should be so. It would be bad enough if we had picked up an excuse from our own logic. But instead of that, we have gone to God’s Book to feign apologies for our idleness. Was not that taking His mercies and sacrificing them to false deities? Sometimes it is even worse. God gives to His people riches and they offer them before the shrine of their covetousness. He gives them talent and they prostitute it to the service of their ambition. He gives them judgment and they pander to their own advancement and seek not the interest of His kingdom. He gives them influence. That influence they use for their own aggrandizement and not for His honor.

What is this but parallel to taking His gold and His jewels and hanging them upon the neck of Ashtaroth. Ah, let us take care when we think of our sins—that we set them in this light. It is taking God’s mercies to lavish them upon His enemies. Now, if you were to make me a present of some token of your regard, I think it would be the meanest and most ungracious thing in the world I could do to take it over to your enemy and say, “There, I come to pay my respects.” To pay my respects to your foe with that which had been the token of your favor!

There are two kings at enmity with one another—two powers that have been at battle and one of them has a rebellious subject, who is caught in the very act of treason and condemned to die. The king very graciously pardons him and then munificently endows him. “There,” says he, “I give you a thousand crown-pieces.” Can that man take the bounty and devote it to increasing the resources of the king’s enemies? Now, that were a treason and baseness too vile to be committed by worldly men. Alas then! That is what you have done. You have bestowed on God’s enemies what God gave to you as a love-token.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us bow ourselves in dust and ashes before God. Let us turn pride out tonight, if we can. But it will be hard work. Let us try, in the strength of the Spirit, that we may at least put our foot on its neck and as we come to the Lord’s Table, may we have a joy for pardoned guilt. But may we mourn that we have pierced the Lord and mourn most that we continue to pierce Him still and sometimes put Him to an open shame by our disregard for His laws.

The Lord bless this to His people. And as for those who are unconverted, let them remember that if the righteous have cause to weep and if the sins of the saint are abominable, what must be the iniquity of that man who goes on still in his sins and repents not! The Lord grant to

such grace to repent and pardon, for Jesus’ sake.  
MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I ought to have written to you long before this, but I have been traveling very fast and I did not feel at all in an industrious state when I arrived at an hotel late at night. We have had the very best of weather and the journey has surpassed all my expectations—we are now in lovely Venice. At Geneva I had a noble time. Only think of the Baptist in a Cathedral—an unpolluted High Church pulpit wherein never stood Dissenter before. I wore the Calvinistic gown and bands for the first time and I fancied that my figure was unsightly. Nevertheless the Word was joyfully received and I felt glad. I have been into Churches innumerable and have seen sights which will never be forgotten by me. And really I cannot get the Popery enough out of my mind to attempt any poetical description of rock, river, or mountain. I shall be more glad to return than to have come here, which is saying very much, since it has been one of the gems of my life.

There are no buildings like the Tabernacle, no songs like ours, no people like my Church, no days like Sabbath-Days at home. My journey has refreshed my mind, instructed my soul, fired my imagination and rejoiced my spirit. Thank God for all his mercies. I trust there will be some enquirers when I return and those not a few, to show that the labors of my Brethren have been blessed in my absence. With kindest regards to all dear Friends and love to all the saints, I am, yours very truly in the Gospel of Christ,  
Venice Hotel de la Ville,  
July 21st, 1860.

*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
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EZEKIEL’S DESERTED INFANT  
NO. 468

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“None eye pitied you, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion upon you. But you were cast out into the open field to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live.”  
Ezekiel 16:5, 6.**

Doubtless the Lord here describes the Jewish people when they began to multiply in the land of Egypt and were grievously oppressed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh had commanded them to cast out the male children that they might perish. Hence, the figure of an infant deserted, cast out into the open field to perish by wild beasts, by starvation, or exposure, was a very apt portrait of the youthful state of Israel, when God looked upon her in love, and brought her out of Egypt to set her in a goodly land.

But all the best Divines and expositors concur in the belief that we have here also a most extraordinarily apt and significant description of the human race by nature, and of the way in which God in Divine mercy passes by the sinner when utterly lost and helpless and by the power of the Spirit, bids him “Live.” At any rate, we intend to consider it so this morning.

Without any preface, for we need none, we shall, first of all, bid you look at the misery of man’s estate as set before us in the present verses. Then, next, we shall search for motives which could urge the Lord to have pity upon this miserable one. And then, thirdly, we shall pause a little while to listen to the Divine mandate by which this unhappy being is delivered from his lost estate. “I said unto you, Live; yes, I said unto you, Live.”

I. At the outset, I shall direct your contemplations to a survey of THE MISERY OF MAN’S ESTATE.  
The verse presents to us an infant exposed to die. All the common offices that were necessary for its life and health have been forgotten. Its heartless parents have laid it out in the open field, having no regard whatever for it. There it lies before our eyes, covered with blood, exposed to wild beasts, famishing, ready to perish. Among many heathen nations there existed the barbarous custom of leaving deformed children to perish in the woods or fields. Among the Spartans it was an established regulation to abandon their weaker offspring to perish at the foot of Mount Taygetus.  
And in these times there are dark places of the earth which are full of this unnatural cruelty. The Jews were certainly free from this sin but it was a practice of their near neighbors and therefore well known to them. And moreover, the remembrance of Egypt and their great lawgiver among the crocodiles of the Nile and all the males murdered by royal decree, would make the metaphor very simple to them.  
1. At the very first glance, we remark, here is an early ruin. It is an infant. A thousand sorrows that one so young should be so deeply taught in misery’s school! It is an infant. It has not yet tasted joy, but yet it knows pain and sorrow to the fullest. How early are you blasted, O sweet flower! How soon are your young dawnings quenched in darkness, O rising sun! A ruin so terrible and so early has fallen upon each of us. Let proud man kick against the doctrine as he may, Scripture tells us assuredly that we are “born in sin and shapen in iniquity.”  
We came not into this world as Adam came into the garden, without flaw, without condemnation, without evil propensities. But lo, by one man’s offense we are all made sinners and through his desperate fall our blood is tainted and our nature is corrupt. From the very birth we go astray, speaking lies and in the very birth we lie under the condemnation of the Law of God. It is not mine to defend this doctrine, to answer objections to it, or to bring arguments for it. I simply announce what God has Himself revealed by the mouth of His servant David and also more fully by the tongue of the Apostle Paul.  
Man, unless God has mercy on you, you are lost and lost from your very beginning! You did not come into this world as one who might stand or fall, you were fallen already. An original and birth-sin had seized upon you in the womb, and you were even then as an infant cast out to perish and to die. There is hardly any doctrine more humbling than that of natural depravity or original sin. It has been the main point of attack for all those who hate the Gospel. And it must be maintained and valiantly vindicated by those who would exalt Christ, since the greatness and glory of His salvation lies mainly in the desperateness of the ruin from which He has redeemed us.  
Man, think not to save yourself by your works. Boast not of the excellence of your character and of your nature. You are a traitor’s son, you are a felon’s child! An act of dishonor was passed upon your father’s house and you were born under the Law and under the curse— obnoxious to Divine Wrath in the very moment when your first breath was drawn. Sad heritage of sin! Miserable estate of sorrow! How deep the ruin of the Fall! Oh, to Divine Grace what debtors we are, that out of this ruin it can lift us up to heights of glory!  
2. The next very apparent teaching of the text is utter inability. It is an infant—what can it do for itself? If it were a child of some few years it might be able, with tottering feet, to find its way to some shelter. If it had the gift of articulate speech, it might sob out its wants and tell to the passerby what it needed. But it is an infant—it cannot speak. It knows sin but it has not mind enough to know why the pain is there. It is ignorant, and although conscious of its ills, its untutored, undeveloped intellect can neither describe the evil, nor prescribe the remedy.  
Though it may cast its little eyes around, even if help were there, it were not in its power to avail itself of the offered aid. It is impotent, helpless, utterly powerless. If anything is to be done for it, it must all be done by another’s hand. Not even clay on the potter’s wheel is more helpless than this infant as it now lies cast out in the open field. Such is human nature. It can by no means help towards its own restoration. “Dead,” says our Apostle, “dead in trespasses and sins,” and what shall the dead in their graves do towards resurrection? Shall the worm become mother of life, or shall corruption be the father of immortality?  
No, trumpet of God, there is no life in the dull, cold ear of death and no hearing in the hollow skull of the skeleton. If the graves open, a Divine hand must break the seal, heave up the mold and uplift the moldering corpse. If there is resurrection, it must come from God and from God alone. It must be a miracle in the beginning and a miracle even to the end. My Hearers, I am not the author of this doctrine, but simply the declarer of what God reveals. You are so lost that you cannot by the most desperate efforts of your own save yourselves! No—worse—so lost that by nature you have no wish to be saved and will not make the efforts or desire to make them.  
You hate God. It is a cutting accusation, but it is true, and may God the Holy Spirit make you feel its truth. Naturally, I say, you hate the Lord. By nature you love vanity and not God’s Truth. You love sin and do not wish to be delivered from it. Holiness you choose not—God’s commandments you abhor. Your nature has become so evil that the Ethiopian may sooner change his skin and the leopard his spots, than you of yourself learn to do well.  
But, mark you—and this is a thought that may crush our boasts and make us hang our heads like a bulrush evermore—this inability is our own sin. This is laid at our door—not as an excuse for our sinfulness but as a frightful aggravation of our guilt—that we have become so bad that we cannot make ourselves good. Our nature is now so desperately evil, both by its native depravity, and by our continual practice of sin, that iniquity has become our nature. It is as natural to us to sin as for water to descend, or sparks to fly upward—

*“Where vice has held its empire long,  
It will not endure the least control.  
None but a power divinely strong  
Can turn the current of the soul.”*

You cannot, Souls, you cannot save yourselves. You are as helpless as the infant cast out. Your inability is utter and entire.

3. Apparent, too, is yet a third misfortune—we are utterly friendless. “None eye pitied you to do any of these things unto you.” We have no friend in Heaven or in earth that can do anything for us, unless God shall interpose. Grant you that a tender parent may pity, but no parent can change his child’s nature or cleanse away the sin of his offspring. Let it be granted that there are ministers of Christ whose tearful eyes would woo you to Christ, but the most earnest Evangelist cannot quicken your soul.

The most thundering of all God’s Boanerges cannot awake the dead. Let it be considered that angels are anxious for your conversion, that were you saved they would clap their wings with joy and make glad holiday in Heaven. But an angel’s power cannot snatch you from the grave of your sin, nor could the whole host of seraphs, with their kindred cherubs combined, do anything to deliver you from the ruin into which by Adam’s sin and your own, you have been brought. Your kinsfolk may weep and lament for you, but no lamentation can make an atonement for your sin, no human tears can cleanse your filthiness, no Christian zeal can clothe you with righteousness, no yearning love can sanctify your nature.

Friendless, helpless and ruined from our earliest state—good God, what creatures are men! Sinai thunders at us. The Law condemns us. Justice bares its sword. Holiness is incensed and truth is sworn to destroy. Where, where shall we fly, if You refuse us, O God!

4. Furthermore, our text very clearly reveals to us that we are by nature in a sad state of exposure. Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goes about, seeking whom he may devour—such is the estate of human nature—unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers. Little do any of us know how exposed by nature we are to sloth, to drunkenness, to lust, and pride and unbelief—to all those young lions which hunt in company with the great lion of the pit who seeks whom he may devour.

O Lord God, You alone know the awful dangers which prowl around an unregenerate man. What mischiefs waylay him! What crimes beset him! What follies haunt him! As God only knows the fullness of the guilt of even one sin, so His infinite mind, alone, can grasp the number of those tremendous temptations which are planted like snares of death in the path of an unconverted soul. Death is after you, O you helpless one! Hell yawns for you, sin longs to devour you! Friend, you have none but foes and they are many. Armed and mighty are those who would destroy you, and you have no power nor will to resist them. You are as a helpless infant in a tiger’s jaws. Fascinated by the serpent eyes of sin, you are paralyzed by its witcheries and so rendered an easy prey for the Destroyer.

5. It seems that this child, besides being in this exposed state, was loathsome. “You were cast out to the loathing of your person.” It was in such a condition that the sight of it was disgusting and its person was so destitute of all comeliness that it was absolutely loathed. Such is man by nature, but he will not believe it. He still flatters himself that he is comely as the curtains of Solomon, while he is black as the tents of Kedar. We think ourselves angels, when we are nearest akin to devils. But when we get akin to angels, then we mourn the devil that still is within us.

I know this, that when God the Holy Spirit gives a man a view of himself, he is utterly loathsome in his own esteem. One of the cardinals of the olden times—when cardinals were sometimes saints—happened to pass by a meadow where he saw a shepherd leaning on his crook, weeping. He stopped to ask the lad what made him weep. The lad replied by pointing to the ground, for just at his feet there was a toad. I was weeping,” said he, “to think that God should have made me, a creature so infinitely superior to this loathsome reptile at my feet, and that I should have made myself such a creature that this loathsome thing is superior to me, because it has never sinned.”

As the cardinal went his way, he said, “Verily, has it happened, that the foolish and unlearned enter into the kingdom of Heaven before us, for this peasant has found out the Truth of God.” Vipers nor toads are more venomous or more loathsome to men than man must be to God, or would be to himself if he could see himself with the eyes of truth and if the veil of pride were once lifted from his eyes. The image of God in man is all obliterated. We have ashes for beauty, shame for glory, rottenness for health and Hell for Heaven.

6. We close this fearful description by observing the certain ruin to which this infant was exposed, as setting forth the sure destruction of every man if Divine Grace prevent not. It is not a question whether man will be lost or not. As to whether man shall enter into the flames of Hell or not, is no query—man MUST perish unless God saves. Every one of us must be lost to all eternity, unless the strong arm of the Divine One interferes. There is no one else to nurture this helpless infant. This infant cannot rescue itself. Lost, lost, lost! Howl its requiem, you lost ones who have gone before, for help or hope there is none, unless the Eternal One shall interpose.

I would, dear Hearers, that this strong language, as you may think it, might be felt to be pertinent to your own case, if you are unconverted. I am not selecting special characters and impeaching certain offenders who have been outrageously wicked. I am not now describing only the harlot, or the burglar, or the murderer—I am speaking of everyone of you by nature, of everyone of you who have not been born again. This is not complimentary language but it ill becomes God’s minister to compliment any man. We must tell you plainly the Truth of God.

You may have been moral, sober, generous, honest—philanthropy may have been as the air you breathe. There may be many good traits in your character that render you amiable to your relatives and friends—but by nature you are not one whit better than the vilest of the vile. And were your nature permitted to show itself in all its foulness, the black fountain is in your heart as much as in those who are banished from their country for their country’s good. It is only Providence, or the check of society, that keeps it under. You are as much lost and ruined as they.

I know I address many of you who have never fled to Christ for refuge but are on very good terms with yourselves, because in comparison with others, your character is blameless. Let me entreat you by the living God that searches all hearts, to look at yourselves, this morning, in your fallen state. If you live and die as you now are, there can be nothing for your portion but the flames of Hell. God grant that you may be snatched from so terrible a doom. But I see not how this can be unless first you are led to see that you deserve this doom and are made to tremble at the evil of sin and the wrath of the Lord.

No doubt, Noah, when he told men they would all be drowned unless they fled to the ark, was thought to be very uncharitable. But it was the true charity which made him warn them. You must perish unless you find shelter in Jesus Christ. Your state is so terrible and damnable, that lost you must be unless you fly to God’s plan of salvation which He has laid down for lost, ruined, helpless sinners. “Micaiah, spoke not good but evil,” said the king, but he learned afterwards that Micaiah’s hardness and boldness came of God, while the smooth things of the false Prophets came from the devil. I do again, then, beseech and entreat you to lay these things to heart.

Ruined Souls, you are self-destroyed, ready to perish, without help, without power! You are cast out and exposed to evils of which you, as yet, are not aware but certain ultimately to make your bed in Hell unless God delivers you. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Confess your sins before Him with broken hearts, weep before Him the tears of penitence, and He can, yes, He will deliver and bring up His chosen from the depths of destruction and His elect ones from the jaws of Hell. Thus mournfully have we rehearsed the story of human ruin. Let us bless God that we do not end here.

II. We are now to search for MOTIVES FOR GOD’S GRACE. Brethren, we have a very difficult search before us when we look to this infant which is cast out. Its loathsomeness and its being covered with its own blood forbid us at once to hope that there can be anything in it which can merit the esteem of the Merciful One. Let us think of some of the motives which may urge men to assist the undeserving.

1. One of the first would be, necessity. Some men, I do not doubt, are generous from necessity. That is to say they feel it necessary to maintain their reputation, and therefore they are generous before men. Or they gain so much self-esteem—and there is a necessity in man’s nature to make him seek after that—that they are willing to be kind that they may be approved within. Not a few are placed in such a position that they could not well refuse to give their help when it is asked of them. But no necessity can ever effect the Most High. The first of all causes must be absolutely independent of every other cause. He acts voluntarily. It belongs to God to say absolutely, “I will.”

Man may say, “I will,” but it must always be with bated breath, for the sovereign fiat of God may contradict him. But God is under no necessity. Has He a superior? Who is king over Him? Who dictates counsel to the Most High? Who sits at His bar and gives Him advice and warning and makes Him do according to his pleasure? Nor had God any necessity in order to make Himself happy or to increase His glory. The praises of angels were enough for Him. No, even the praise of angels is as nothing in His awful sight. His joy is in Himself.

He finds within His own infinite essence a sufficiency of delight. He needs go abroad for nothing, for He fills all things and He is All in All. If it had been God’s will to leave the human race to perish, He might have done it, and there was none to say to Him, “What are You doing?” And when He does save man, it is not because there is any compulsion— either moral, physical, or spiritual upon Him. He has done as He wills in this great matter of the redemption and salvation of men. O Soul, God is not bound to save you! Man, you are lost and there is nothing that can compel the Almighty to deliver you! If He does it, it must be according to His own good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

2. In this case, there was nothing in the birth of this child, in its original parentage, that could move the passerby. We are told in some former verses, “your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother an Hittite,” both of them belonging to an accursed race. Look unto the hole of the pit from where you are dug. There was nothing in your birth or mine why He should have pity on us. Kings, princes, mighty men boast much of their pedigrees, but the Lord knows nothing of the glory of these family trees and ancestries. No, rather, He leaves the mighty man in the dust, cutting down the high tree, that He may cause the low tree to flourish.

He pours contempt upon princes and knows no respect of persons. All spring from the common race of man, and what is there in our corrupt nature, what is there in us to move the heart of God? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Young man, it is not because your father was godly, that God should be constrained to save you. It is not because your mother was a lady of rank, that the Almighty should stretch out His arm to you. You were conceived in sin, and stained in your very birth. There is, therefore, nothing here that could move the heart of deity.

3. Nor was there anything in this child’s beauty, for it was loathsome. Men are often affected by beauty. Doubtless Pharaoh’s daughter preserved Moses because he was a comely child. We know that Ahasuerus chose Esther because of her beauty. And there have been many that have been exalted in the world for their personal attractions. But it was not so with man in God’s sight. “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.”

We are not only sinners, but sin itself. How then can sin attract the regard and love of a perfectly holy God? There may be much in us that can make our fellow creatures esteem us—there can be nothing in us as fallen, condemned, ungodly—that can make God esteem us. I know that you who are spiritually taught, will join with me in singing—

*“What was there in us to merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?  
It was even so, Father, we ever must sing, For so it seemed good in Your sight.”*

See then, Sinner, you are without form or comeliness, and you have no beauty that He should desire you. What can there be in a worm to gratify the Almighty? The heavens are not pure in His sight and He charged His angels with folly. How much less, then, should there be any beauty in man, that is but a worm, or in the son of man, that is crushed before the moth? Think not that He needs your beauty to excite His love. He can love you though deformed, and love you till He has made you comely by His comeliness, which He shall put upon you.

4. Furthermore, as we have found no motive yet, either in necessity or the child’s birth or beauty, so we find none in any entreaties that were uttered by this child. It does not seem that it pleaded with the passerby to save it, for it could not as yet speak. So, though sinners do pray, yet when a sinner prays, it is because God has begun to save him. A sinner’s prayers can never be the cause of his salvation, for, mark you, the Truth of God is that no man ever seeks God first—God has first sought him and began a good work in his soul, before he ever turns to God.

In some cases, this is very extraordinarily proved. The old writers used to quote the instance of a man who went into a wood, having been an outrageous sinner, with the determination of destroying himself. While he adjusted the rope, some passerby, hearing a sound, came and expostulated with him and the words were blessed to his salvation. Is there any preparation or preparatory process in a man who has come to such a pitch of sin, that he is about to take away his own life, to wash his hands in his own blood? Surely this was Divine Grace.

There were one or two cases in Whitfield’s history, of men who came into places where he was preaching, with stones in their pockets to pelt him with but who became themselves converted. Was there anything there for the Grace of God to get a hold of, anything to foster, to favor, to nourish the Grace, the Sovereign Grace of the Most High? No, rather, while they were yet without anything whatever that could have cried after God, He was found of them that sought Him not. He called them a people that were not a people, and her Beloved that was not Beloved.

I know some think that the sinner takes the first step but we know better. If he did, it were like the old Romish miracle of St. Dennis, where we are told that after his head was cut off, he picked it up and walked two thousand miles with it in his hand! Whereupon, some wit observed that he did not see any wonder in the man’s walking two thousand miles—for all the difficulty lay in the first step. Just so, I see no difficulty in a man’s getting all the way to Heaven, if he can but take the first step. For all the miracle lies in that first step, the making the dead soul live, the melting of the adamantine heart, the thawing of the northern ice, the bringing down of the proud look. This is the work, this is the difficulty. And if man can do that himself, verily, he can do the whole work.

But when God looks upon men to save them, it is not because they cry to Him, for they never do and never will cry until the work of salvation is begun. They are unwilling and unable to use any entreaty or persuasion that could be cogent to the heart of God. Rather, they abhor the mercy. They run away from the Divine Grace which is offered to them. They reject the Gospel when it is preached. They will not come to Christ that they may have life, but they willfully and wickedly turn their backs upon the Most High. Until He by His strong hand brings them to Christ, saved they will never be. O Divine Grace, O Divine Grace, how wide Your sphere! How glorious are You in meeting the degradation and the sin of man! You show the splendor of Your power in beginning, carrying on, and finishing the work.

5. Yet, further, Brethren—it does not appear that the pity of the passerby was shown upon this child because of any future service which was expected of it. This child, it seems, was nourished, clothed, luxuriously decorated, and yet, after all that, if you read the chapter through, you will find it went astray from Him who had set His heart upon it. The Lord foresaw this and yet loved that child notwithstanding. God knew that you and I, though He loved us when there was nothing good in us, after we were saved should still rebel. He knew that we had backsliding hearts. He knew that we should be unbelieving even to the end—but He loved us notwithstanding all this.

He did not love you because He foresaw you would be a preacher. Nor you because He knew you would be a tract distributor. Nor you because He knew that you would be an indefatigable Sunday school teacher. He loved you although He knew that you would be as you are today, ungrateful and unkind to Him—cold in your soul, worldly in your spirit. You can today, rehearse experimentally, our last Sunday’s text, “I was as a beast before you: nevertheless I am continually with you.”

There was, then, no motive of future service why this child should be blessed, or why God should save man. I do not know—I want to say what I cannot say this morning. I want to exhibit to you man, standing as a criminal at the bar, guilty, proved to be guilty even to his very face, yet proudly saying that he is not guilty. A traitor at heart, a base rebel, an ungrateful wretch! I want you to think of him as one upon whom pity seems as if it would be thrown away—not an object for mercy. One of whom the universe cries, “Away with him, away with him, it is not fit that he should live!”

And then, I want to show you God in the sovereignty of His Divine Grace, saying, “I will spare that traitor. He deserves to die but I will spare him. I have no motive for it, except such as is in My own will. There is nothing in him, no reason in him why I should spare him, but I will spare him. I will prove that I am king forever and ever and the God and Lord of mercy. The only answer that we can give to the question, “Why then, does God spare this outcast infant?” is this, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy.”

How is Jehovah exalted in our midst this morning! My spirit trembles while it labors to exalt the Lord alone. The Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah! Bow your heads, both Saints and Sinners, and adore Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Ask not questions, for He gives no account of His matters. Quarrel not with His dominion, for His answer is to you, “No but, O Man, who are you that reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus?” Impeach not His justice, or His justice you shall feel in smiting you. Entreat His mercy, but entreat it as those that have no claim upon Him. Ask Him for it as knowing that if he gives it to you He has a right to give it or to withhold it if He will.

Sinners, behold yourselves this morning, in the hand of an angry God. There you lie before God, like a moth beneath your own fingers. It is as He wills—to save or to destroy you. Are you at ease? Will you mock Him? Will you boast and glorify yourselves? Rather, as creatures that are now absolutely under His control and deservedly subject to His rod, bow your heads and cry, “God, be merciful to us, sinners! You can save, do it for Your own will and glory’s sake, that Your mercy may be magnified and Your sovereignty may be clearly seen.”

We have found no motive in the creature, and therefore, we refrain from further search, believing that the fountain and wellspring of mercy is in God Himself. Into His reasons we cannot search, lest like Job, we should hear the rebuke of the Lord, “Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depth?”

III. But now, we turn to consider THE MANDATE OF HIS MERCY. “I said unto you, Live.”  
First, I want you to notice that this fiat of God is majestic. “I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live.” Darkness was upon the face of the earth and thus the Almighty spoke, “Let there be light!” And light was. Sublime because simple. Without any oratorical embellishments, magnificently stern—God speaks and it is done. So, in our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath. But the Majestic One passes by—He is making a tour of His dominions, splendidly arrayed, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels at His beck and call.  
He looks, and there lies an infant, loathsome, in its blood. He stops and He pronounces the word, the royal word, “Live.” There speaks a God. Who but He could venture thus to deal with life and dispense it with a single syllable? It is majestic, it is Divine! And mark you, Brothers and Sisters, though the word preached by us may be very rough and rugged—as we confess to you it is—though we know but little of the graces of oratory, yet when God speaks by a minister, there is nothing more Divine under Heaven, nor in Heaven, than the Gospel. When the Lord speaks, even though it is by the unlettered and the ignorant, when through the Gospel He says, “Live,” to a sinner—not even the angels who bow before the Throne of God ever heard a more Divine sound. Thus says the Lord, you dead sinner, “Live!”  
Again, this fiat is manifold as well as majestic. When He says, “Live,” it includes many things. Here is judicial life. The sinner is ready to be condemned and executed—his neck is on the block and the axe is gleaming in the sunlight—but the Mighty One says, “Live,” and he rises pardoned and absolved. The execution is not only stayed, that were but respite— the crime is forgiven—the man is to live for years!  
It is, moreover, spiritual life. The man knew nothing of God, his eyes could not see Christ, his ears could not hear His voice. Jehovah said, “Live,” and spiritual life was given and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. “I said unto you, Live.” And that word rolls on through all the years of life till death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord’s voice is still heard, “I say unto you, Live!” In the morning of the resurrection it is that same voice which is echoed by the archangel, “Live,” and as the spirits rise to Heaven to be blessed forever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same voice, “I say unto you, Live.”  
Note again, that it is an irresistible voice. When God says to a sinner, “Live,” all the devils in Hell cannot keep him in the grave. If the Lord should say to a blasphemer here today, “Live,” that blasphemer must become a saint. Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A strong hand might seize the bridle of his charger and throw him to the ground. But Saul is not to be stopped like that. He will rise from the ground the same Saul, to go to Damascus as blood-thirsty as ever. But see what Divine Grace can do! A voice from Heaven and a light brighter than the brightness of the sun and Saul is crying out, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Within three days he is baptized. He becomes a preacher. And Saul that was called Paul becomes a leader in the hosts of the Most High. My Master can do the same today. Mighty to save is He—  
*“Tell what His arm has done,  
What spoils from death He won,  
Praise His dear name alone.  
Worthy the Lamb.”*

We remark again, that it is allsufficient. “Live,” do you say, great God? Why, the man is dead! There is no life in him, but in the Voice that bids him live. “Live,” do you say? “By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days!” There is power—not in his corruption but in the Voice that cries, “Come forth!” When we preach to sinners and tell them to believe in Christ, do not fancy it is because we think we have any power. No, but because when in God’s name we say, “Believe,” the power is in the mandate as it comes from our lips, uttered by the Most High. If a minister is not filled with God’s Spirit, then His ministry is an empty dream. But if a minister is, as I conceive him to be, a man who speaks in God’s name, and for the time being is the very mouth of God to men’s soul’s, then there is power in the Gospel as it is preached, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, to do for the sinner what he can by no means do for himself.

I cry today in my Master’s name “Thus says the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall live.” Trust my Master bleeding on the tree and you shall be delivered. Rest on the merit of His blood and of His glorious righteousness! Trust in the power of His intercession before the Throne, and despite your lost estate, you shall be this morning saved forever and ever!

We close when we shall have repeated ourselves once more by saying—this mandate was a mandate of Free Grace. I want to lay that down again, and again, and again—that there was nothing in this infant, nothing but loathsomeness, nothing therefore, to merit esteem. Nothing in the infant but inability. Nothing therefore, by which it could help itself. Nothing in it but infancy. Nothing therefore, by which it could plead for itself and yet Divine Grace said, “Live”—freely, without any bribe, without any entreaty, said—“Live.” And so when sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God Wills to do it, to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought Divine Grace.

Surely this is a subject which will suit some here, though it will not please others. Proud Pharisees will turn on their heels. “That is very high Calvinistic doctrine,” says one. My dear Friends, I do not care what it is. I know it is written in the Word of God. I preach very often sermons which get me the title of Arminian and just as often I am charged with Hyperism. I am simply one who seeks honestly to tell you what he believes to be in Scripture and what he believes to be true. And therefore, whether it IS high or low is nothing to me. Is it true? I know the proud Pharisee will say, “No.” “Why,” says he, “there must be some merit in what we do! Surely we do something! Perseverance in well-doing and so on, surely this will effect much?”

You are under the Law and not under Grace. You have not yet learned the A B C of the Gospel. You want to be a saint by the merit of what you do, and you will be lost as sure as you are a man unless you look at things in a different light. But I know that the doctrine will be acceptable to those condemned ones here this morning, who have written their own sentence out, who say, “I must perish, I have nothing to bring you, O Lord. I have not even a tender heart, I have not even such a sense of need as I want. Lord, I am empty, except that I am full of evil and full of sin, I have nothing that I could put before Your eyes, except that which would excite Your wrath and Your disgust. Great God, if You should not save me I cannot blame You. I lay hold of nothing in myself. But You have said, ‘He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, has everlasting life.’ Lord, I venture to believe on Him. You will be true, You will save even me.”

Soul, Soul, you may go out of this house light of heart and foot, for “your sins, which are many, are forgiven you!” In God’s name I pronounce the sentence of absolution on you, if you have thus come to Christ and trusted in the Lord Jesus. There is not a sentence left in God’s Book against you. By His Grace, you are no more dead but you live—no more accursed but beloved. You are no more loathsome but beautiful—covered with Christ’s righteousness and filled with the Spirit of the living God.

What shall I say to you who are Christians but this—for the sake of this Divine Grace—show your gratitude—live more like your Master and live more in God’s service. Seek to spend and be spent in Him. Nothing can make a man work for Christ like Free Grace. And those who believe the doctrine of Free Grace and yet are idle, you must surely hold the Truth of God in unrighteousness, for there is no principle so active, so

impulsive as this— *“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I’d burn.  
Chosen of You before time began,  
I’d choose You in return.”*

Finally, Christian, never give up any sinner. Never think that any man is beyond salvation. I charge you by the solemn thought that God looks for nothing in man, and saves only according to the sweet counsels of His own will, bring every man you meet with before God in prayer, plead with every man, preach Christ to every man, tell every man that Christ can save, tell that sinner that whatever there is not in him, Christ’s power is still the same, that His arm is not shortened, neither is His ear heavy. And spread the glad news that it is not of the will of man, nor of his blood, nor birth—but by the power of the Spirit of God according to the will of the Most High—that men are saved. May the Lord add His blessing and do some of His mighty works this morning through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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“TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS”  
NO. 2438

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30, 1887.

**“Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine.”  
Ezekiel 16:8.**

DURING this last summer I took a little journey into the country, as I had an opportunity of preaching and visiting in the region where I lived as a little child and where I afterwards spent some of my school-boy days. Everything was very vividly interesting to me, much more so than it could have been to anybody who was a stranger to the district. Now I want some of you, especially you who love the Lord, to go back in thought to your early days when you were children in Grace. Yes, go back even further than that—to the time of your spiritual birth—those first hours when your love to your Lord was true and fervent, and everything round about you was fresh and bright and joyous.

Biographies are generally interesting if they are biographies, that is to say, if the events of the person’s life are truly told. But I think that the most interesting biography to any man is his own life. Take that book down from the shelf and look into it. You say that you have not kept a diary? Well, perhaps not, but you have one in your memory. You may have read Pepys’ Diary, or Evelyn’s Diary—they are interesting—but I want to get you to read your own! Turn over the pages of the book of memory and think of those first times when you sought and found the Savior, when you repented, when you believed, when you yielded yourself up to Jesus—when He took you to be His and you took Him to be yours! I am sure that this exercise will awaken many happy thoughts and I feel equally certain that it will suggest many regrets. But the happiness will be good for you if it excites your gratitude—and the regrets will be good for you if they deepen your penitence.

I want you, then, to go back for a little time and think of what God did for you, then, and of what He has done for you since. You are called to this retrospect by such a chapter as the one before us, which is God’s own statement of how He dealt with the chosen nation. It is also, in a parable, the Lord’s declaration of how He has dealt with us. He remembers it and He would have us remember it and, in the words of our text, He reminds us of the Covenant He made with us—“Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine.”

Beloved, the time of our conversion, the time when we joyously realized that we were saved, was a covenanting time! The Covenant, itself, as to God’s part in it, was made with Christ on our behalf before the earth was! It is older than the hills, it is as ancient as God, Himself! But, as far as we are concerned, the Covenant comes into practical, experimental context with ourselves when we believe in the Lord Jesus, rely upon His atoning Sacrifice and depend upon His promises of Grace. I repeat that converting times are covenanting times. We made a Covenant with God then. We said—

*“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done! I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.  
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear,  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear!”*

The Covenant was also on God’s part, for He has promised to save all those who trust Him. And that promise became ours when we trusted His dear Son. All the promises of the Covenant of Grace became promises made particularly to ourselves when we received the seal of the Covenant by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ!

It is a somewhat singular thing that in this chapter God does not say anything about Israel’s part of the Covenant. He seems to pass that over as though it were never worth mentioning. The nation had so entirely forgotten it and had been so altogether untrue to it, that the whole stress of the chapter seems to lie on what God did, how God kept the Covenant. Though the sin of the people is brought to their remembrance, yet the Lord does not say to them, “You entered into Covenant with Me,” but He says, “I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine.” So, at this time, I shall not say much about the Covenant that you made with God—do not you forget it—and do not forget that you have often forgotten it. You covenanted with God that you would be His and you meant it when you made the promise. You know how far you have been true to it, but what I want to remember, myself, and for you to remember, too, is God’s Covenant with us—what He promised to do for us and what He has done for us! Let this thought dwell in our minds, that it may renew our love to our Lord and make us continually to realize that we are truly His because He has made a Covenant with us.

Here, then, is our text—“Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine.” My remarks upon it will be, first, that it was a Covenant freely made. Secondly, it was a Covenant entirely of love. Thirdly, it was a most sure Covenant

and, in closing, I will try to show you that this Covenant involves very gracious consequences.  
I. In the first place, IT WAS A COVENANT FREELY MADE.  
The context tells us that this child, with whom God entered into Covenant, was one who could not have had any claim upon Him. It was a Covenant which He made at His own suggestion, out of the greatness of His own love, for the nation of Israel, of which He speaks, had nothing in its pedigree to suggest it. The Lord says, “Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite.” Yet Jehovah entered into Covenant with that people. And now, if you look back upon your pedigree—  
*“What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?”*  
There are some who do not believe in the depravity of human nature. I must believe in it if I am, myself, a fair specimen of human nature. And every man who has watched his own heart and has any idea of the sin which dwells within him will know that his origin is tainted, that from the very first there is a tendency to evil and only evil and, therefore, that there is nothing in him as to his birth that can command or deserve the favor of God. If God enters into Covenant with unfallen man, man is so insignificant a creature that it must be an act of gracious condescension on the Lord’s part! But if God enters into Covenant with sinful man, he is then so offensive a creature that it must be, on God’s part, an act of pure, free, rich, Sovereign Grace! When the Lord entered into Covenant with me, I am sure that it was all of Grace—nothing else but Grace—and I think that all of you who know what that Covenant means and can claim an interest in it, will say, “In my case, at any rate, it was of Grace and of Grace, alone.” It was a Covenant freely entered into by Divine Grace, for our pedigree did not suggest it.  
There was also nothing in our condition to commend it. This poor child had never been washed or clothed. It was left in all its filthiness to die— there was nothing about it to commend it to the attention of the passerby. And what were we by nature? Oh, dear Friends, let us think, with shame and confusion of face, of what we used to be before we knew the Lord—  
*“Backward with humble shame we look  
On our original!  
How is our nature dashed and broke  
In our first father’s fall!”*  
We were, not all of us, open, profligate sinners—some were, however. If I speak of drunks, swearers, fornicators and the like, I may add with the Apostle, “And such were some of you; but you are washed.” And others of us, who were not suffered to run in those evil ways, yet with our hearts, with our thoughts, with our tempers and with our spirit we sinned grievously in the sight of God. When I remember what a den of unclean beasts and birds my heart was, how strong was my unrenewed will and how obstinate and rebellious against the Sovereignty of the Divine rule, I always feel inclined to take the very lowest room in my Father’s house. And when I enter Heaven, it will be to go among the less than the least of all saints and with the chief of sinners.  
Yes, dear Friends, it is only too true there was nothing in our condition to commend us to God, or to induce Him to enter into Covenant with us! It was just because He would do it, because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy—because when He is showing the greatness of His mercy He feels that He may as well show it where it is most needed! So He looks, not for merit, but for misery! Not for deserving, but for undeserving! According to the riches of His Grace, He abounds in mercy towards the very worst of us, pardoning our sin, passing by our transgression and blotting out our iniquity.  
It was, then, a Covenant freely entered into because there was nothing in our condition to commend it.  
It was also a Covenant freely made because there was nothing in our beauty to warrant it. Indeed, there was a total absence from us of everything that might be reckoned comely and beautiful. Are you now penitent? Yet, then your heart was harder than adamant stone! Are you now believing? Then you were an unbeliever! Are you now zealous for God? Then you were rather zealous against Him, or if not, you were quite indifferent to Divine things! Is there any virtue, is there any praise, is there anything of good repute in you? It was not there when God entered into a Covenant with you! If there was any beauty in the wife who is mentioned in this parable, it was after the marriage. But before she was cast out, she was not grown. Whatever there was there was undeveloped and, still worse, unclean! And in that day when Jesus took us to Himself and we took Him to be our Savior, there was nothing as yet apparent of that which His Grace has now worked in us—it was totally absent. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us praise and magnify that Free Grace that entered into Covenant with you and with me!  
That is the first point. It was a Covenant most freely made.  
II. But we cannot linger long on any one part of our glorious subject, so we notice, in the next place, that IT WAS A COVENANT ENTIRELY OF LOVE.  
Taking our text in its context, we learn that this Covenant was a marriage Covenant. It is a very wonderful thing that God should enter into a marriage Covenant with His people, but He has done so. The Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself our Nature and has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, so that, when Paul is speaking of marriage, he says, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” And then he adds, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church,” which means that Christ has joined Himself to His people and become one in Nature with His chosen henceforth and forever! The Lord Jesus Christ has taken His people to be henceforth as joined unto Him as the wife is joined to her husband! They become one and so does Christ make His people one with Himself. This is a very easy thing to say, but it is an almost impossible thing to compass and understand! Can it really be so, my Soul, that you are wedded to the Son of God? Is it really so that He says, “Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you,” and that Covenant is a Covenant of marriage by which He has joined with Him all His people unto His own heart, world without end? Catch that thought if you can, and enjoy all the comfort of it—but give God the glory for such wonderful condescension—  
*“On such love, my Soul, still ponder,  
Love so great, so rich, so free!  
Say, while lost in holy wonder,  
Why, O Lord, such love to me?  
Hallelujah!  
Grace shall reign eternally!”*  
That it was a Covenant, which was meant to be entirely of love is proved by the way in which it was carried out. See how it is said, “Then I washed you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you, also, with broidered work, and shod you with badgers’ skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you, also, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head.” And so on. This is a Covenant all of love, for these are all love tokens, love-gifts to the beloved one!  
Now, will you go back in thought and recollect when you used to receive those gifts from the Lord? You remember when your ears were hung with earrings. Oh, what hearing that was! You did not grumble at the preacher, then—you enjoyed listening to him whenever you could! You would be up early and work hard so as to get a half-holiday, that you might go and hear the Gospel. Your ears were hung with earrings then! And, oh, how you rejoiced in God as He gave you humility, patience, zeal, love and all the precious jewels out of the Divine case! You hardly thought you had them, but other people could see them, and they told you that they were there. And they would sometimes say, “How beautiful God has made you by His Grace!” Do you remember that? You cannot have forgotten, I hope, those happy times when love tokens came to you so fresh and frequent! Those evening meditations, how delightful! That sitting up in bed at midnight, enjoying the Presence of your Lord— those morning prayers, those quiet walks! Oh, how precious were many texts of Scripture! How delighted you often were with the visits of the Spirit of God when He brought home this and that great Truth to your soul with overwhelming comfort!  
I am only reminding you what the Lord has done for you. As for myself, He has been all love, goodness, kindness and nothing else to me. Truly, a blessed Husband have You been unto my soul, O Jehovah! I cannot find fault with You! Neither am I able to find words with which to sufficiently praise You for all the love and kindness You have made to pass before me. Do you not say the same? I think you do. As we sang, just now—  
*“Do You ask me who I am?  
Ah, my Lord, You know my name.  
Yet the question gives a plea  
To support my suit with Thee.  
You did once a wretch behold,  
In rebellion blindly bold  
Scorn Your Grace, Your power defy—  
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.  
Once a sinner near despair  
Sought Your Mercy Seat by prayer.  
Mercy heard and set him free  
Lord, that mercy came to me.  
Many days have passed since then,  
Many changes I have seen.  
Yet have been upheld till now—  
Who could hold me up but Thou?”*  
Let us praise the name of the Lord for the Covenant which, in the way it has been carried out, has proved to be a Covenant all of the Love of God!  
And, dear Friends, I would not have you forget that it must be a Covenant all of Love which God has made with such creatures as we are, because it could bring the Lord no profit. What benefit could He get from us? He may well say, “If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.” What glory can we bring to Omnipotence? What tribute can we render to Him who is Possessor of Heaven and earth?—  
*“Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,”*  
of what use would they be to Him? No, if the Lord enters into Covenant with us, it

cannot be for any gain to Himself! It must be only out of a desire to benefit us. Therefore, let us bow in reverent adoration of the unselfish, self-created love of God to us which we have known since that dear hour which brought us to His feet and He entered into Covenant with us and we became His own! Surely I have said enough upon this topic to suggest many a grateful thought within the minds of all God’s people.  
III. But now I want to carry you with me to another point. That is, thirdly, IT WAS A MOST SURE COVENANT—“I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you.”  
The Covenant which God makes with Believers is intended to remain forever. It is not something which may be broken in a few hours, like a child’s toys—it is an everlasting Covenant. Read that 60th verse— “Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant.” How I love to get among the everlasting things! You know, in Canada, they build palaces of ice in the winter time and very beautiful things they are. But then, when spring comes, where are those palaces? And in summer, the very foundation upon which they were built has melted back into the St. Lawrence. God does not make with His believing people Covenants like those ice palaces—His Covenant stands secure, though earth’s old columns bow. If God has promised to save you—as He has done if you believe in Jesus—He will save you in the teeth of death and Hell! Rest you sure of this, and say with David, “He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Here is something to rest upon—“I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you.” He intended it to remain!  
And in proof that He intended it to remain, He ratified it by an oath. Even among men, where there is an oath, there should be an end of all question. And if Jehovah lifts His hand to Heaven and swears, who shall, after that, dare to suggest that a question is possible? In the day in which we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, He did, as it were, swear unto us—“Surely, blessing, I will bless you.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” We needed nothing more than the promises of Jehovah to rest upon, but, “God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the Immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two Immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” My Soul, be you full of comfort, for the God who entered into Covenant with you has ratified that Covenant by an oath—  
*“His oath, His Covenant and His blood  
Support me in the sinking flood!  
When all around my soul gives way  
He, then, is all my hope and stay!  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand—  
All other ground is sinking sand.”*  
To make a Covenant even surer than by an oath, men were accustomed to seal it by a sacrifice. They struck hands and then they said, “Let us kill a bullock, let us slay a lamb—and the blood shall be the token that this covenant is made between us.” Now, Beloved, you who believe have the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, to confirm the Covenant of Grace. God cannot break it! If you believe in Jesus, He must save you, by the pledges of His own Son’s life and death! If you truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you believe that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. If you are trusting in Him, alone, He cannot, He will not cast you away, for the Sacrifice of His Son makes the Eternal Covenant sure. Is not the blood of Jesus called, “the blood of the Everlasting Covenant”? And herein we see the Covenant most surely established.  
I would have you notice, in our text, that the Covenant is remembered by God. It is He who says, “I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you.” He does not forget it. He does not want to forget it. He does not intend to forget it. He says, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.” The Lord remembers what He did when He swore that He would save His people and when He gave Christ to make the Covenant sure!  
Yet once more, this Covenant will be remembered by Him forever. I will read again that 60th verse—“Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant.” And then the 62nd verse—“And I will establish my Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” He made a Covenant with Noah that He would not again destroy the earth with a flood. And He promised to hang His rainbow in the cloud as a token of that Covenant—and He has done so to this day. He has not destroyed the earth with a flood and His Covenant, which He has made with the greater Noah, who is our true Rest, stands fast, and shall still stand fast when Heaven and earth have passed away!  
I want you to think with deepest gratitude of this wondrous condescension, that God should ever have entered into such a Covenant with you and with me. Why, if I believed what some preach about the temporary, trumpery salvation which only lasts for a time, I would scarcely be at all grateful for it! But when I know that those whom God saves, He saves with an everlasting salvation. When I know that He gives to them an everlasting righteousness. When I know that He settles them on an everlasting foundation of everlasting love and that He will bring them to His everlasting Kingdom, oh, then I do wonder and I am astonished! Such a blessing as this to be given to you and given to me!— *“Pause, my Soul! Adore, and wonder!  
Ask, ‘Oh, why such love to me?’”*  
Sit still and meditate till your hearts burn within you because of this amazing love!  
IV. I finish by noticing that THIS COVENANT INVOLVES VERY GRACIOUS CONSEQUENCES. Let me read the text again—“Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine.” Read those last three words again—“You became Mine.”  
Beloved, if God has entered into Covenant with us, we have become the Lord’s. Whose were you before? The world’s? Your own? The devil’s? Well, we will not dispute with the many claimants, but now you can truly say, “O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name.”  
“You became Mine.” Do you recollect the spot—perhaps it was your own little room—where, as a youth you sat, after having long prayed and wept? And at last you felt that Jesus was yours and you sat still, and you said to yourself, “Yes, I am His, every bit of me. He has bought me with His blood, I am His.” Do you remember those first few days in which you felt half afraid to do anything lest you should grieve that dear Lover of your soul? Then you wanted to do everything that you might please Him whose servant you had become. I remember a verse of Scripture, which, as a young Believer, I often used to repeat, for it was very dear to me. I daresay you love it too. It is this—“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” We felt, then, that we were wholly Christ’s! Do we feel it as much now? “You became Mine.” To come back to the marriage Covenant of which the Lord speaks—when the husband put the ring upon his bride’s finger, he said to her, “you have become mine.” Do you remember when you felt upon your finger the ring of infinite, everlasting, Covenant love that Christ put there? “You became Mine.” Oh, it was a joyful day, a blessed day! Happy day, happy day, when His choice was known to me, and fixed my choice on Him!  
Now, Beloved, we ought to be the Lord’s more and more. Ever since we became His, we have been the objects of His love and mercy. He has done everything for us. I cannot tell you what He has done, nor can I tell you what He has not done, for everything that could be desired and wished for, Christ has done for you and for me! This long list which He gives, here, of how His spouse was clothed, and shod, and adorned, and crowned, reminds me of that verse in the 103rd Psalm where the list of benefits reaches its climax—“Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.” Well now, after having experienced the blessings of this Covenant, we ought to love our Lord Jesus Christ more than ever, and we ought to feel that we are more and more completely His than we ever were in our lives!  
If that is our feeling, it will lead us to practically renew the bond of the Covenant. “You became Mine.” After all that the Lord has done for us, let us become His, again! Let us come and yield ourselves up to Him once more. If any of you have backslidden, or grown cold towards your Lord, come and renew your vows unto the Most High. Say, with me, “My Savior, I repent not of having yielded myself to You; but I repent that I have not more fully carried out my resolve to be wholly Yours. If I had never trusted and loved You before, I would desire to begin to trust You and love You now, for You are unutterably lovely, You are unspeakably worthy of the confidence of every redeemed man and woman!” Let us each come and lay our hands, once more, on that dear head which was bowed with the burden of our sins—and look up into that dear face which has brightened our life so often with its love-glances. And let us now surrender ourselves fully, perfectly, joyfully, over, again, unto Him whose we are and whom we serve. God help you to do it!  
And you who have never done so, may you come to Jesus this very moment! Your only hope lies in Him. God says by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, “Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” There is no Covenant between God and man except in Jesus Christ! Come, then, and take Christ as your Savior, and God has sworn to you, and entered into a Covenant with you, that He will never cast you away, but you shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels. God grant it, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**EZEKIEL 16:1-3, 6-16; 60-63.**

In this very remarkable chapter, God describes His ancient people, Israel, under the figure of an infant which had been cast away, but which He had cared for and tended and upon which He had lavished much love, making it the object of His choice, on which His very heart was set. Yet this specially favored one had gone astray and committed all manner of wickedness. But for all that, the love of God had not been withdrawn. The whole chapter is a graphic picture of the way in which Israel and Judah went after false gods and forsook the only living and true God.

Verses 1, 2. Again the Word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations. This is a very necessary command, for unless men know their disease, they will not apply to the great Physician. Only he who knows that he is poor will be willing to accept alms. It is, therefore, a necessary part of the duty of God’s servants to make sinners know their evil ways—“Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.”

3, 4. And say, Thus says the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem. Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite. Abraham, the father of the nation, came from beyond the flood. But here, because of the sin of the people, God attributes their birth to the place of their settlement rather than to that chosen and noble man. They had lived so long in Canaan that they had grown to be Canaanites. Their habits were so evil that there was little difference between the Israelites and the Amorites and Hittites whom God had smitten in His wrath. So the Lord says, “Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite.” Then, in the fifth verse, He describes the condition of the nation when it was in Egypt, when nobody cared for it.

5. No eye pitied you, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion upon you; but you were cast out in the open field, to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born. You remember that Pharaoh tried to destroy all the male children of the captive Israelites. No mortal eye had any pity upon the downtrodden race in the house of bondage! But God looked down from Heaven in love, pity and Grace.

6, 7. And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live. I have caused you to multiply as the bud of the field. Israel came out of Egypt exceedingly multiplied, a great people! And when they settled down in Canaan, they still increased till they became a numerous and powerful nation. Remember that all this description applies to us spiritually. There was a day when we seemed polluted, cast away and left to perish—but God, in great mercy passed by and said unto us, “Live.”

8, 9. Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread My skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became Mine. Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. How wondrously the Lord did all this for us! Our washing and our anointing, we can never forget.

10. I clothed you, also, with broidered work, and shod you with badgers’ skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. All that God could do for Israel, He did. That poor poverty-stricken nation increased and multiplied till, in the days of David and Solomon, it was of high repute among the nations and exceedingly rich and wealthy! Even so has God dealt with us—He “has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” We who, a little while ago, were cast out as helpless and worthless, He has greatly enriched with heavenly treasure!

11-13. I decked you, also, with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel upon your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work. The work of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit have made marvelously glorious “broidered work” for our spiritual adornment! Well does good Dr. Watts sing—

*“How far the heavenly robe exceeds  
What earthly princes wear!  
These ornaments, how bright they shine! How white the garments are!  
Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed  
By the great Sacred Three!  
In sweetest harmony of praise  
Let all your powers agree.”*

13, 14. You did eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord GOD. Doubtless, these words apply to Israel, but they are still more appropriate to us when we are covered with the righteousness of Christ and made beautiful in His beauty!

15, 16. But you did trust in your own beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on everyone that passed by; his it was. And of your garments you did take, and decked your high places with divers colors, and played the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. As soon as the Israelites grew rich and powerful, they began to build altars to the false gods! The very treasures that God had given them, they desecrated to the making of idols! God calls this a spiritual harlotry, turning aside from the one true God, who was the Husband of the nation, to follow after false gods. It is an evil sign in any of us when God’s blessings are, themselves, made into idols. If you begin to worship your wealth, your health, your children, your learning, or anything that God has given you, this is exceedingly provoking to the Most High! It is a breach of the marriage Covenant between your soul and God!

The rest of the chapter is rather for private reading than for the public assembly. It gives a truly awful picture of the sin of Israel and heaps up most dreadful descriptions of the way in which the people turned aside from God. I confess that after reading to the end of this chapter, I am astonished to think that it should close as it does. It is an amazing instance of the immutable love of God, Turn to the 60th verse.

60. Nevertheless—Blessed “nevertheless”!  
60, 61. Nevertheless I will remember my Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant. Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed. Infinite mercy makes men ashamed of their sinfulness. Great pardon produces both humility and holiness. The ungodly think that for God to forgive great sin will be to give a license to it, but the Lord knows that it is not so. He understands that the greatness of His forgiving love will be the cause of the pardoned sinner’s hatred of sin—“Then you shall remember your ways and be ashamed.”  
61-63. When you shall receive your sisters, your elder and your younger: and I will give them unto you for daughters, but not by your covenant. And I will establish My Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the LORD: that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, says the Lord GOD. Pardon from God for great sin is a silencer to all our pride. We never dare open our mouths, again, because of our shame. Yet the blessed silence of a grateful heart makes true music before the Throne of God—and when the Lord opens our lips—then our mouth shall show forth His praise.

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THE PRIVILEGED MAN  
NO. 813

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 31, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered work, and shod you with badgers’ skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I adorned you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver;**

**and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; you did eat fine flour,  
and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty for it was perfect**

**through your comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 16:9-14.**

THE root of Israel’s nation was originally a lone man whose family and dependants formed a small Bedouin tribe wandering throughout the plains of Canaan. God separated and selected Abraham, who was in no way distinct from others in his parentage, and declared that in him and in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. When the tribe had somewhat multiplied, God found them in Egypt, a herd of slaves helplessly crushed beneath the foot of Pharaoh. They were sorely burdened with labors for which they received no reward. They were without spirit to resent the oppressions of their taskmasters and without power to succeed had the energy been there.

Yet God brought them out of Egypt. He led them through the wilderness, chased out powerful nations before them, settled them in the most fertile country and there multiplied them at such an extraordinary rate, and enriched and endowed them with such power that the little kingdom of Israel became famous among the nations of the earth! And in the days of Solomon its scepter was respected far and wide. The nations of the earth stood still and wondered how so small a monarchy had come to be so exceedingly rich and great. It was entirely through the favor of Jehovah that these great blessings had been received.

He had a favor to Abraham’s race. He revealed Himself to them and not to others. He chose them to be His people and made them the custodians of His Law. His worship was kept up among them and while they were faithful to Him they were a happy and a prosperous people whose renown went forth to Tarshish and the isles—and the excellence of whose laws and government was respected and admired even by such distant nations as those which were governed by the queen of the South.

The beauty of the nation consisted entirely in what God had done for it—its comeliness was a comeliness which Jehovah had put upon it. It was a nation wealthy, intelligent, free and upon the whole, pure and happy so long as it remained faithful to its God. Our business, this morning, is not with that nation, but ourselves. Our meditations, to be profitable, must be personal. Vainly do we blame departed nations—usefully may we judge ourselves. Children of God, I shall address myself to you. God has done great things for us of which we are glad. All that God did for His Israel was but a type and shadow of what He has done for His own beloved and redeemed ones whom He has distinguished beyond all men that dwell upon the face of the earth.

I shall ask you, O you sons of God, to contemplate the bounties of the Lord towards His people. And then, secondly, for a short time to draw reflections from your contemplations.

I. Let us, each man for himself, sitting in this house before the Lord, REVIEW THE LORD’S LOVING KINDNESS and contemplate the amazing bounties which have come to us from the blessed fount of His Grace. To help your meditations, let me remind you where you were when Divine loving kindness pitched upon you effectually and you knew its power experimentally in your own consciences. You were, as others are, lovers of sin, having no desires towards righteousness and salvation. You had sinned and you continued in sin and found delight in sin.

You were defiled, depraved, condemned and ready to perish. Like the infant whom Ezekiel has described—you lay cast out and forsaken, polluted in your own blood. You had no power to cleanse yourself, neither were there to be found any friends through whom cleansing might possibly come to you. You were both loathsome and helpless. As the loathsomeness necessarily would have involved your eternal ruin, so your helplessness took away from you all hope of eternal safety.

Some of you had plunged into open sin. Others who had been kept from that yet had a den of unclean birds within their hearts. Our past lives will not do to look at—our state before conversion is something to be blushed over—we should repent of it in dust and ashes. And yet the eye of Jehovah had fixed itself upon us from before the foundations of the world! And when He saw us ruined, first by Adam’s Fall, and afterwards by our own practical iniquity, He did not take away that eye of regard nor did His heart change towards us. He loved us, loved us still, loved us when there was nothing in us to love—nothing to evoke His complacency, nothing even that could call forth His benevolence—for our sin was such a counter power against our misery that if our misery might have made Jehovah pity us, our sin must have made Him hate us!

His love was utterly causeless by anything within us, but it sprang up spontaneously from the mysterious wellhead of His infinite goodness. Blessed be God, that when we were lost, and lost forever, Sovereign mercy interposed! Let us consider the list of the favors received in the order in which we find them set forth in the text. According to the Prophet, one of the first gifts of the Divine favor is washing. “Then I washed you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you.” Now, remember, you who have been immersed in the—

*“Fountain filled with blood,*

*Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,”*  
remember when you were washed, and thoroughly washed, and sing aloud*—*

*“ ‘Tis from the mercy of our God  
That all our hopes begin;  
‘Tis by the water and the blood  
Our souls are washed from sin.”*

“But,” says the Apostle, and what a blessed “but” it is, and what a weight of meaning there is in it, “But you are washed.” He had been giving a very fearful description of what some of the saints had been, “Such were some of you,” and then he puts this in at the end of it, “But you are washed,” as if the being washed had taken away whatever defilement might have been there. Remember, Beloved, when you were first washed? Recall the hour when, believing in Jesus Christ, you felt in a moment that you were saved? What bliss was crowded into that hour! Your acceptance in the Beloved was sealed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit! You enjoyed a peace with God which passed all understanding—the result of pardoned sin! Remember that day of blessing, and be grateful!

But I want you to remember that you are washed this morning. You are now in the sight of God as a Believer without a spot, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Do not look upon your cleansing as a thing of the past, to be forgotten! You are at this present moment “clean every whit” in the sight of God through Jesus’ blood! There is no sin in God’s book recorded against the Believer. “Who is he that condemns, now that Christ has died?” Oh, perfect justification! How shall I prize you enough? Oh, perfect pardon! What shall I compare with you? These two things put together are enough to make a Heaven upon earth even to the most disconsolate and afflicted of the sons of men. “Then washed I you with water.”

In this respect we may say that we have been washed twice—first with the blood by which the guilt of sin is removed—and then by the energetic power of the Holy Spirit. We have been washed from the impurity and power of sin so that we are clean in a double sense before God. And here is the beauty of it, it is done thoroughly, “Yea, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you.” Your depravity is not gone, your old nature is not removed—it shall be before long—but your old guilt is completely gone and your present criminality is utterly blotted out—

*“In your Surety you are free,  
His dear hands were pierced for you;  
With His spotless vesture on,  
Holy as the Holy One.  
Oh, the heights and depths of Grace!  
Shining with meridian blaze;  
Here the sacred records show  
Sinners black, but comely, too.”*

The sins of 20 years ago are drowned beneath the billows of the Red Sea of Jesus’ atoning blood! The sins of yesterday have shared the same fate, and the sins of today the same. “I thoroughly washed your blood from you.” Now, Believer, let not the devil rob you, this morning, of a sense of your complete cleansing. Remember what you were, but at the same time remember you are not now what you once were. “Old things have passed away. All things have become new.” Jesus Christ has said, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities.” I say Jesus has said it, said it to you by His Holy Spirit bearing witness in your heart. Come afresh to the Cross and look up, and as you see those dear wounds, sweet fountains of immaculate perfection, rejoice that it is written, “Yes, I washed you with water, I thoroughly purged your blood from you.”

The next mercy is anointing. Observe in the text, “I anointed you with oil.” So soon as a man is cleansed he becomes fit for the Lord’s service. One of the first instincts of a forgiven sinner is to become a servant in the house of his pardoning God. Listen to David in the 51st Psalm: “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” Forgiven himself, he desires to be a preacher to others. But before we can serve God we must be anointed to the service. God will have no unanointed priest in His temple. His Holy Spirit is the anointing which He bestows upon every one of the pardoned. Not to me as the preacher, alone, is this anointing given, though I desire to have it more and more for your sakes, but for every one of you is this unction appointed.

“You have an anointing from the Holy One.” Your eyes are anointed with eye salve that you may see and discern the mystery of fellowship with God. Your hands have been anointed that you may be laborers together with God and you have been anointed in heart, in body, soul, and spirit that your entire man, filled with the indwelling Deity, may be consecrated to noblest ends! I pray God to give His children to feel this anointing more and more. We believe in no priest-craft, no setting apart of any set of men who are to minister in holy things as substitutes for their brethren—but all you who are saints are alike kings and priests unto God.

Though by nature sinners who would have been in Hell but for Divine Grace, you are now made priests to God today to minister before His Throne. There, amidst the fires of Gehennam, would have been your everlasting portion, but there, within the veil where the Glory which excels reveals its radiance, is your proper position today by the rights which Sovereign Grace has bestowed upon you. “I washed you with water and I anointed you with oil.” Dear Brothers in Christ, I want you to realize these privileges now. As I said about cleansing so, yes, I say again—do not let Satan make you think it to be a myth or that it does not belong to you at this precise instant of time. The reality and present character of Divine blessings is a point never to be forgotten.

Today you are justified. You are altogether without a blot in God’s sight as He sees you in His dear Son. You are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing as you stand in Jesus. And then at this hour you are anointed to priesthood by the Holy Spirit. Let not Satan tell you that you are not so called and qualified, for as a child of God you are, indeed, a partaker of the Holy Spirit. Go to your knees in prayer as an anointed priest. Go to your Sunday school this afternoon, or street preaching, or whatever else may be your form of ministry—go to it as having an unction from God, an anointing to do the work which the Lord has appointed you to do. In the double blessedness of cleansing as a washed sinner and qualification as an anointed one, rejoice in the Lord your God!

But, my dear Brethren, our heavenly Father stops nowhere when He once begins to lavish forth His mercy! He abounds in His loving kindnesses, and therefore I ask your attention to the next covenant mercy—He clothes His people. The Holy Spirit in this passage seems to have exhausted human imagery in order to set forth the sumptuous apparel in which God has been pleased to clothe His people. Four modes of description are used. First, it is said, “I clothed you also with embroidered work.” This was the work which was worked by the needles of the well-skilled women of Israel—most delicate and cunning work.

Garments intended for glory and beauty, such as the priests’ vestments, were made by dexterous fingers long accustomed to the needle. Now, when I read that God clothes His people with embroidered work, it teaches me that the righteousness with which God covers His people is a work of labor, of skill, of care, of thought—not merely labor (though our Lord Jesus Christ labored well, a very Hercules was He in toil), not rough labor, thoughtless, and unskilled—not the labor of the hammer, but of the needle in a fair and well-trained hand. The wisdom of our God was exercised about the way of justifying a sinner! Great thoughts of Jehovah went out about the methods of making unrighteous ones righteous, and causing the unjust to become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Each stitch of embroidery demands its thought. Each motion of the needle is a matter of care and anxiety. So in every part of the Covenant of Grace, Divine thoughts were abundantly exercised. See how resplendently God’s attributes are all seen in the way of justification! In the robe with which Christ has covered us it is impossible to say which of the Divine attributes are most to be seen. There is His justice, for all that the Law demands it receives in the sacrifice of Jesus. His mercy is equally manifest, for He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin. There is His power sustaining the Savior, while, at the same time He smites Him. There is His wrath boiling forth against iniquity, and His love resplendent like a fair jewel in the midst of it all.

It is an embroidered work. Stitch within stitch, with many a cunning twist and wise device and dainty piece of curious work. Angels have looked at it and they never saw such embroidered work before! And you and I regard it and we glory that it is matchless! In Heaven as we shall examine it, thread by thread and stitch by stitch, we shall burst forth into fresh songs of adoring praise and say, “Indeed, most gracious God, You have clothed us with embroidered work! What sumptuous apparel! What skill! What wisdom! What power! What Grace are blended in the robe of righteousness with which God has covered His people!

Child of God, you are wearing it today, and if Jacob puts on Joseph a garment of many colors because he loved him better than his brothers, stand up and think what a garment your heavenly Father has put on you because He loves you so much! A garment of embroidered work has He put upon you this day because He loves you more than angels, and more than archangels—for unto none of these did He ever say—

*“ ‘Yes, I clothed you with embroidered work.’ How far the heavenly robe exceeds,  
What earthly princes wear!  
These ornaments, how bright they shine!  
How white the garments are!  
Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed  
By the great Sacred Three!  
In sweetest harmony of praise  
Let all your powers agree.”*

Then comes the next thought, “and shod you with badgers’ skin.” It would be impossible, at this remote period, to guess what animal is referred to here—certainly not the animal we call a badger, but some creature found, I suppose, abundantly in the wilderness. It probably had spotted skin, which skin was afterwards dyed a deep purple and used for leather. Badgers’ skins were used, whatever they were, for the covering of the ark and tabernacle in the wilderness. I suppose the leather made of these skins to have been the softest, best, and most durable to be found, and that the meaning of the passage is just this—“I shod you with the best that was to be had.”

We know that the Jewish women were accustomed to wear shoes made with very delicate leather dyed with a deep purple color. This, of course, was for daintiness and luxury and it is mentioned to show the great riches of the Jewish people, and the luxuries with which God had endowed them. I use the term spiritually thus, today, and bid you mark the riches of the Lord’s people. Moreover, behold the durability of that righteousness which God has given to us. We have to pass through a wilderness of briers and thorns and our shoes are fit for it. Our Jesus has not given us an embroidered robe for show only, but He has provided us garments which will bear the wear and toil of the pilgrimage to the skies. He has shod us right well.

Sometimes He tells us that our shoes shall be as iron and brass and that as our days are, so shall our strength be. Paul tells us of the preparation of the Gospel of peace with which our feet are to be shod, and now here, the text says, “I shod you with badgers’ skin.” Believer, you have the best Grace, the best righteousness, the best assistance that you can possibly imagine in order to bring you safely to the right hand of God at the last! Jesus’ righteousness is such that, let you tread the desert through, up to the remotest age, still that righteousness shall not be worn out for it is an everlasting righteousness—

*“This spotless robe the same appears  
When ruined nature sinks in years.  
Nor age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new.”*

The figure, then, changes again. The text says, “I girded you about with fine linen.” May I stop a moment and say to every Believer to try to feel, now by the exercise of faith, that you have this embroidered robe upon you at this moment and that these shoes are on your feet at this instant. Believe in the gifts which the Covenant of Grace secures you, and in Jesus Christ who is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. But to return to the word itself, “I girded you with fine linen.” That is to set forth the purity of the righteousness which God gives to us—linen, white and fair—fine linen, the best and most expensive fabric such as was worn by the priests alone.

Child of God, you have on at this very moment, in the sight of God, the righteousness which is of God by faith and this is so pure that God Himself sees no spot in it! It is so precious that if Heaven and earth were sold, such a dress as you wear could not be bought with the price. You are this day arrayed as a priest—you are a priest to offer prayer and praise, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Now, do not forget this, or treat it as if I were talking mere poetry or fiction. It is so. I speak a sober fact most true and sure to faith. You do at this moment wear the priestly apparel, for you are made of God a priest and a king.

Then the last figure is, “I covered you with silk.” One scarcely knows what the Prophet here refers to, as silk does not appear to have been used in his time, but something as near to our modern silk, I suppose, as possible. And this was a royal fabric, soft and delicate, but rarely seen and only found in imperial courts. “I covered you with silk.” This may represent the splendor of the saints when they appear in the robes of Christ. An angel, I suppose, must be a glorious sight. But though you would be dazzled at the sight of an angel, you would not be half so much surprised as an angel would at the sight of you as you stand arrayed in the righteousness of Christ!

I have never read that God is admired in the angels, but I do read that Jesus Christ is to be admired in all them that believe. The glory of the Believer is to be such that even angels, who have been used to supernal splendor, shall be amazed as they look upon the redeemed when covered with the righteousness of Christ! If you but spell this word Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness! If you are but to be robed about with the merit of the Redeemer, then I tell you that Heaven shall have no courtier before God’s Throne more sumptuously arrayed than you!—

*“With your Savior’s garment on,  
You are holy as the Holy One”*

Thus in the four expressions which indicate skill and care, durability and use, purity and priesthood, delicacy and royalty we have wrapped up a mass of most precious thought—may our minds be on the alert for the working out of the thought! How grateful ought we to be to our good God for such distinguished love! But this is not all. He who washes us, anoints us, and clothes us then adorns us. Observe how the Holy Spirit, again, seems to labor for expression to set out the ornaments which God has put upon His people, which ornaments, I suppose, represent the Graces of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit in the regenerate man. I will not detain you an unnecessary minute over them, but ask you to look at each one with your Bibles open.

“I put bracelets upon your hands.” The Believer being saved becomes a worker, and when he works with the bracelets of faith and love upon his hands, how fair a worker he becomes! And, Christian, you have this honor. You work for God, trusting in God. You work for God, loving God— having no motive to constrain you but that of disinterested affection. You have these bracelets upon your hands. “And a chain on your neck.” And what is this but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit? That neck which once would not bend—a stiff neck, a rebellions neck with a proud obstinate iron sinew—bows itself before the Lord and wears the easy yoke of Christ. Blessed are they to whom God has given this golden chain made of many links of humble gratitude—a meek and quiet spirit!

This, also, has God given to the Believer. If you have lost it, bemoan yourself—but certainly it is one of His gifts and, as one of His Beloved, He has bestowed it upon you. Then He speaks of a jewel upon the forehead, or as some read it, “the nose-jewel,” for it was common with the Eastern women to wear a large golden ring or bow in the nose. Or the text may refer to a jewel which dangled from the hair upon the brow. Now every Believer has this when he is in his right state—this forehead jewel of an open confession of his Lord—this forehead jewel of a holy boldness, a conscience that gives an answer for itself, meekly, but yet without fear of men.

Every Believer has that dauntless courage which could beard the lion in its den for Christ—could rush through perils and through toils for Jesus— this forehead jewel God has been given to some of us, at any rate. May we always wear it. This is one of the brightest ornaments of Christians before men. When it is compared with the other ornaments it is one of the noblest that a Christian spirit can wear. Nor is the list exhausted. “I put earrings in your ears.” And there are no earrings more precious than these two which I will let you see. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” That is the best earring to wear in all the world, “My sheep hear My voice.” God has given His people the earring of discernment, “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” The other is the earring of affection, by which, hearing the voice of Jesus, they know His voice and at once arise and with cheerfulness follow Him. Yes, these are the ornaments of the Christian!

And then it is added, “And I put a beautiful crown upon your head.” God will not stop halfway. His people shall wear the best of the best and all of the best. He will adorn their feet with shoes of badgers’ skin and He will crown their head with a diadem of beauty. Now, heir of salvation, you are this day one of God’s princes! You may be very poor. You may feel very low spirited. You may have all sorts of troubles to fight with, but you are down in the red roll of the princes of the blood—you belong to Heaven’s true aristocracy! Be you who you may, if you are a Believer in Jesus Christ you are not knighted, nor made a baron, or a peer, but you are actually taken into the royal family itself! You are a king, and you shall reign with Jesus Christ forever and ever! “To him that overcomes will I give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome and am set down with My Father upon His Throne.”

See your dignity, Christian. I say nothing to make you proud, but I would say much to make you glad in the Lord and to make you rejoice in the mercies which He has given you! There is nothing which you could wish for, when in your spiritual senses, which you do not already possess. All your capacious powers can wish is given you in the Covenant of Grace. If imagination should take her utmost stretch and fly upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost ends of all conception, yet could she not compass nor dream of what God has prepared for them that love Him! Only the Spirit can reveal to you these depths of mercy, these treasures of loving kindness, these mountains of mercy, these hills of frankincense! You are rich to all the intents of bliss! You are rich to the full measure of Heaven and earth for all that that Covenant can give is yours today by “Promises which are yes, and amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.”

I am a poor speaker on such a theme as this, and though I have tried to entice you so far as I can into this river of Divine goodness, I have only led you up to your ankles. God’s Spirit could take you far deeper, for all the mercies you have received are only just the beginnings of what are coming! Well did we sing just now—

*“Glory to God for all the Grace I have not tasted yet.”*

That is the larger part of the Grace—the Grace to come. The present is good, oh, how good! But the future is better, ah, how much better! Beyond the river there comes the best of all. Our wine does not grow weaker towards the end of the feast—He has kept the best wine until the last. And, oh, what will it be to drink at the table of the King Eternal, draughts of His blessed love, in the place where sin and trouble shall never come to intervene and break our peace?

O Brothers and Sisters, wait awhile—your day shall come and your enemies shall be beneath your feet, and Satan shall be trampled there— and you—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin*

*With God eternally shut in,”*  
shall know what God has done, and forever has intended to do for His beloved ones!

II. Thus have I, as well as I could, set before you food for contemplation. Now, I want to DRAW TWO OR THREE REFLECTIONS FROM THIS and we will have done. The first is this—sitting down before the Lord in quiet this afternoon, reading this passage, turning over sentence by sentence, I think the emotion of the soul would express itself in words like these—“And what am I? And what is my father’s house that You have brought me here? And why this to me? Why me, Lord? Me?”

Depreciate Divine mercies and you will not marvel that you receive them—appreciate them at their proper estimate and you will wonder and weep, and wonder and love, and wonder and adore that ever such an unworthy thing as you should be so singularly favored! I will not linger over the reflection—that is for your closet rather than for my pulpit. But the next one is this—What a wretched return have we made to God for these amazing benefits bestowed! There are some parts of the earth where the soil is so fruitful, that to quote the language of a certain writer, you have but to tickle it with the hoe and it laughs with plenty. But there are other soils where you must plow and plow, and plow, and fertilize and use all arts to get but handfuls, after all.

Surely these last soils are very like ourselves. God has done great things for us and we have done little things for God. I took up on the Alp side a glistening stone one day and I noticed that the whole heap of stones which had been broken up for mending the roads was like the one which I took up—and in it there were sparkling pieces of gold! Everyone could see that there was gold in the stone and we asked the geologist if it were not so. Yes, all the stones with which they mend the road had gold in them!

Well, but why not extract the gold? Because it was in such miserably small quantities that it would never have paid for the extraction. Really, this is very much like ourselves. If there are some good thing in us, it is in such small quantities and seems to be imbedded in such hard quartz, that God’s great machinery of Divine Grace seems to be a waste of power, if I may so speak, when we compare the results in us with the effort which God puts forth towards us. I know there is no waste and in the end He will show that the means were only commensurate with the result. But so far as we now go, and can see of it, think of Christ sweating the great sweat of blood! Think of Him afterwards going up and yielding Himself to die the death on the Cross—the Incarnate God dying for the sins of men!

And the result of it is—what? A member of a Church, a wealthy man, who, when there is a collection, gives a four-penny piece. Did you ever see such a step from the sublime to the ridiculous as that? And yet it is so. Yes, and then take the best—the best of us. You smile because I put it in that shape, but conceive God Himself coming here on earth, bleeding and dying, and the most earnest man is the result. There is still a fall, a wretched, miserable fall from what God did down to what the most earnest of us can do for Him!

This is a thing to be bemoaned and to be grieved over! For such is the debt we owe to God that if we spend all the strength we have morning, noon and night, and wear ourselves out in the Master’s service—and had 50 such lives to give and ended them all at the stake—yet still the sacrifice were as nothing compared to what is due to the infinite majesty of the love of God! I lead you to a reflection which is more sad than this, and that reflection is, How base, then, in the light of this amazing mercy does our sin appear! I have read of one who was extremely poor and who was helped by a Christian man—helped again and again, and yet when the officers were out searching after the Protestant Christian, the man, to betray him for the sake of the reward, was the neighbor who had constantly eaten at his table and who had been helped by his charity!

This was brutal, that he who was so much under obligation should yet become a traitor! And yet it was only a neighbor. Your case is worse, Believer, for you are a friend and more—you profess to be a child of God, to be in union with Christ—and yet have you been a traitor to Jesus! O sweet Lord of my heart, and monarch of my soul, with precious blood You have sealed me as Your own. And fool that I am, that I should cast my eyes on other beauties, beauties did I call them?—other shams, other painted Jezebels! Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights, to seek after earthly joys, to set my soul on earthly loves and let my Lord and Savior go!

O you virgin souls that follow the Lamb wherever He goes, may you never wander from your spiritual chastity as some of us have done. O you whose delights are with Him still, who in the garden of nuts and among the beds of spices have beheld His face and seen those eyes which are like the fishponds of Heshbon by the walls of Bath-rabbim—you that have been enchanted with His Presence—cling to His garment! Keep His company and let no enchantment of the world induce you to desert Him!

But we, O what shall we do? Though like Peter we have denied Him, yet like Peter we can say, “You know all things, You know that I love You.” Jesus, believe not our words, but believe our actions this morning. Look not askance upon us because of our ill manners! Forget the past and clasp us to Your breast anew. Into Your precious blood cast the multitude of our offenses and forgive us freely and graciously. Once again let the flames of Your love flash into our hearts till our hearts, also, grow warm, and then never, never let them become chilled again! Let us be fastened to the Cross, bound with cords even to the horns of the altar that we may be Yours in full fellowship, sweet service and growing conformity all the days of our life!

Now, Beloved, the practical result, if what I have said is carried out, will be most blessed. But to push it home I would ask, what is there that any of us can do this morning for Christ? Since we have received so much, what can we give in return this morning? It shall be that some of you will say, “He shall have the sweet cane which I have bought with money, and the fat of my sacrifices. If I cannot speak for Him, I will give to Him. I will let Him see that I love Him, for like the holy women, I will minister unto Him of my substance.” Others of you will say, “I cannot do that, but I will speak a good word for Him this day. I will go to the school, or to the street, or to the Prayer Meeting, or to the Bible class and I will try to speak to someone about his soul. If I may but paint my Master in lovely hues so that one heart shall be enchanted with Him, I hope He will accept what I shall try to do.”

Now make that a resolution, that this day something shall be done by you for Christ. And another will say, “Alas! I cannot speak, I shall have no opportunity, but I will get me to my chamber and I will there speak with God on Christ’s behalf, and I will not let Him go except He bless me, and the Church, and all the cause and kingdom of my Lord.” Ah, Beloved, Christ will take of you anything that comes from your heart, whatever the gift may be! However feeble, and weak, and insignificant it may seem to others, it shall be rich and comely to Him if it comes from your heart. You owe all to Him. What will you render to Him? What will you do more than others? Do it not to earn anything, or seek a reward, but because He has loved you—love Him and serve Him in return!

God give you to give the ready answer and the acceptable answer, and may He accept it, for Jesus’ sake. I wish, this morning, you all had a share in these mercies. Some of you have not. The mercy is that the door is not shut. “Whoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life.” Trust Jesus, and you shall be saved!—

*“Come naked, and adorn your souls  
In robes prepared by God,  
Worked by the labors of His Son,  
And dyed in His own blood.  
Great God, the treasures of Your love  
Are everlasting mines,  
Deep as our helpless miseries are,  
And boundless as our sins.  
The happy gates of Gospel Grace  
Stand open night and day,  
Lord, we are come to seek supplies,  
And drive our needs away.”*

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HOW SAINTS MAY HELP THE DEVIL NO. 264

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 24, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“That you may bear your own shame and may be confounded in all that you  
have done, in that you are a comfort unto them.” Ezekiel 16:54.**

IT is not a comfortable state to be at enmity with God and the sinner knows this. Although he perseveres in his rebellion against the Most High and turns not at God’s rebuke, but still goes on in his iniquity, desperately seeking his own destruction—yet is he aware in his own conscience that he is not in a secure position. Hence it is that all wicked men are constantly on the look out for excuses. They find these either in pretended resolutions to reform at some future period, or else in the declaration that reformation is out of their power and that, acting according to their own nature, they must continue to go on in their iniquities. When a man is willing to find an excuse for being God’s enemy he need never be at a loss. He who has to find a fact may find some difficulty. But he who would forge a lie may sit at his own fireside and do it. Now, the excuses of sinners are all of them false. They are refuges of lies—and therefore we need not wonder that they are exceedingly numerous and very easy to come at.

One way in which sinners frequently excuse themselves is by endeavoring to get some apology for their own iniquities from the inconsistencies of God’s people. This is the reason why there is much slander in the world. A true Christian is a rebuke to the sinner. Wherever he goes he is a living protest against the evil of sin. Hence it is that the worldling makes a dead set upon a pious man. His language in his heart is, “He accuses me to my face. I cannot bear the sight of his holy character. It makes the blackness of my own life appear the more terrible, when I see the whiteness of his innocence contrasting with it.”

And then the worldling opens his eyes and labors to find a fault with the virtuous. If, however, he fails to do so, he will next try to invent a fault. He will slander the man. And if even there he fails and the man is like Job, “perfect and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil,” then the sinner will, like the devil of old, begin to impute some wrong motive to the Christian’s innocence. “Does Job serve God for nothing?” said the devil. He could find no fault with Job whatever, his character was untainted and unblemished. But, says he, “he keeps to his religion for what he gets by it.” I reckon it to be a glorious accusation when we are falsely charged with being religious for the sake of gain. It shows that our enemies have no other charge that they can bring against us. They have ransacked all the flies of their calumny and they can find nothing tangible

and this is the last they can bring—an imputation upon the motive of the man who has no other motive in all the world than to glorify his God and win sinners from destruction.

In this, then, let us glory. If sinners slander us, it is because we make them uneasy. They see that our lives are a protest against them—and what can they do? They must somehow or other answer the bill which we have filed against them in Heaven’s chancery and they do it by issuing a rejoinder against us and bringing us in as defendants in the case. We glory in this—that we are defendants who can prove our innocence—and we are not ashamed to stand before the bar of God to have our motives tried. There is much, I say, to cheer us in the fact of such a libel. We know the work is done. We are sure our shots have told on their armor when they are driven to return on us their calumnies and the venom of their wrath.

Now we know that they feel the might of our arm, now we know we are not like they, mere driveling and dwarfs. They have felt our might and against it they kick, they foam, they spew forth their wrath. In this, I say, we glory. We have smitten them hard, or else they would not rise against us in this fashion.

Alas, alas, however, sinners have not always to use calumny and lies. It is too true that the Church has given a real bona fide cause to the wicked for excusing themselves in their sin—the inconsistencies of professors. The lack of a pious heart and the absence of devout earnestness have given sad grounds to the ungodly to justify themselves in their sin. It is upon this melancholy subject that I am about to enter this morning. And may God grant unto all His people who shall feel convicted in their consciences, the spirit of mourning and contrition, that they may vex themselves before God and confess this great iniquity that they have done, namely, that they have comforted sinners in their sin by their own inconsistency and have justified the wicked in their rebellion by their own rebelling and revolting.

This morning I shall deal thus with the subject. First, I shall point out the fact—the different acts of Christians which have helped to comfort sinners in their sin. And then, secondly, I shall observe the consequences of this evil—how much the world at large has been injured by the deeds of professed followers of Christ. And then I shall come with a solemn warning bringing out the great battering ram, to dash against these refuges of lies and moreover crying with a loud voice to those who are the faithful servants of Christ to withdraw their hands and no longer to assist in keeping up the Jericho in which the wicked have entrenched themselves.

I. First, then, it shall be my sad and melancholy business this morning to show certain facts which it were dishonest to deny, namely, that THE ACTS OF MANY OF CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE OF JUSTIFYING AND COMFORTING SINNERS IN THEIR EVIL WAYS.

1. And first I would observe that the daily inconsistencies of the people of God have much to do in this matter. By inconsistencies I do not exactly mean those grosser crimes into which, at sad and mournful periods, many professors fall. But I mean those frequent inconsistencies which become so common, indeed, that they are scarcely condemned by society.

The covetousness of too many Christians has had this offset. “Look,” says the worldling, “this man professes that his inheritance is above and that his affection is set not on things on earth, but on the things of Heaven—but look at him—he is just as earnest as I am about the things of this world. He can drive the screw home as tightly with his debtor as I can. He can scrape and cut with those that deal with him quite as keenly as ever I have done.” No, Beloved, this is not a mere tale. Alas, I have seen persons held up to commendation as successful merchants, whose lives will not bear the test of Scripture, whose business transactions were as hard as griping, as grasping, as the transactions of the most worldly. How often has it happened that some of you have bent your knee in the sanctuary and have said, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” and one hour afterwards your finger has been almost pressing your thumb through the jugular vein of some debtor whom you had seized by the throat!

The Church of Christ appears to be as worldly as the world itself and professors of religion have become as sharp in trade and as ungenerous in their dealing as those that have never been baptized into the Lord Jesus and have never professed to serve Him. And now what does the world say? It throws this in our teeth. If it is accused of loving the things of time and sense, it answers, “And so do you.” If we tell the world that it has set its hopes upon a shadow, it replies, “But we have set our hope upon the self- same thing in which you are trusting. You are as worldly, as grasping, as covetous as we are. Your protest has lost its force. You are no longer witnesses against us—we are accusers of you.”

Another point in which the sinner often excuses himself is the manifest worldliness of many Christians. You will see Christian men and women as fond of dress and as pleased with the frivolities of the age, as any other persons possibly could be—just as anxious to adorn their outward persons—so as to be seen of men. They are just as ambitious to win the praise which fools accord to fine dressing, as the most silly fop or the most gaudy among worldly women. What says the world, when we turn round to it and accuse it of being a mere butterfly and finding all its pleasures in gaudy toys? “Oh, yes,” it says, “we know your cant, but it is just the same with you.” Do you not stand up and sing—

*“Jewels to me are gaudy toys,*

*And gold but sordid dust?”*  
And yet you are just as fond of glittering as we are.  
Your doctors of Divinity pride themselves just as much in their D. D. as

any of us in other titles. You are just as punctilious about terms of honor as any of us can be. You talk about carrying the Cross. But we do not see it anywhere, except it is a golden cross sometimes hanging on your bosom. You say you are crucified to the world and the world to you—it is a very merry sort of crucifixion. You say that you mortify your members and deny yourselves—your mortification must be suffered in secret, for it is

but very little that we can see of it! Thus the worldling casts back to our challenge, declaring that we are not sincere and thus he comforts himself in his sin and justifies himself in his iniquity,

Look, too, at the manifest pride of many professors of religion. You see members of Christian Churches as proud as they possibly can be. Their backs are as stiff as if an iron rod were in the center. They come up to the House of God and it is a Christian doctrine that God has made of one flesh all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, but the Christian is as aristocratic as anybody else, just as proud and just as stiff. Is the Christian clothed in broad cloth? How often does he feel it a condescension to own a smock frock! And how often do you see a sister of Christ in satin, who thinks it something wonderful if she sees a fellow-member in an unwashable print. It is of no use denying it. I do not think that the evil is so common among us as it is in some Churches. But this I know, that there are respectable Churches and Chapels in which a poor man scarcely dares to show his face.

The pride of the Church surely has become almost as great as the pride of Sodom of old. Her fullness of bread and her stiffness of neck has brought her to exalt herself. And whereas it is the real glory of the Church that, “the poor have the Gospel preached unto them,” and that the poor have received the Word with gladness, it becomes now the honor of the Church to talk of her respectability and of the dignity and station of her members and of the greatness of her wealth. What, then, do worldlings say? “You accuse us of pride, you are as proud as we are. You the humble followers of Jesus, who washed His saints’ feet? Not you—no, you would have no objection, we doubt not, to be washed by others, but we do not think it likely that you would ever wash ours. You, the disciples of the fishermen of Galilee? Not you. You are too fine and great for that. Accuse us not of pride—why, you are as stiff-necked a generation as we ourselves are.”

Now, these are only mentioned among us as inconsistencies—not as sins. Sins they verily are. And they are such sins that they restrain the Spirit of God from blessing the Church. Sins, too, they are that render the wicked callous in their sins, blunt the edge of our rebukes and prevent the Word of God from working in the hearts of men.

I might mention another sad fact with regard to the Church which often stings us sorely—the various enmities and strifes and divisions, that arise. You tell the worldly man that Christians love each other. “Ah,” says he, “you should go over to Ebenezer or to Rehoboth and see how they love each other. Don’t talk of leading a cat and dog life! Look at many of your Churches. See how the minister is treated and how the deacons are in arms and how the members hate one another. They can scarcely hold a Church meeting without abusing each other!” How often is this proved to be true in many Churches! And then the worldling says, “You tell us that we bite and devour each other and that our wars and fights come from our lusts. Where do your wars and fights come from? You tell us that our anger and wrath are the effect of sin that dwells in us—what causes your divisions and your strifes?” In this way, you see, the testimony of the children of God is rendered invalid and we help to comfort sinners in their sins.

2. Now it is my mournful duty to go a step further. It is not merely these inconsistencies, but the glaring crimes of some professed disciples, that have greatly assisted sinners in sheltering themselves from the attacks of the Word of God. Every now and then the cedar falls in the midst of the forest. Someone who stood prominent in the Church of God, as a professed follower of Jesus, turns aside. “They go out from us because they were not of us. For if they had been of us, doubtless, they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us.” We have wept over high professors becoming drunkards. We have seen mighty men at religious public meetings becoming scoundrel bankrupts. We have had it dashed in our faces, dozens of times, that religion often becomes a cloak for fraud and that when the world has trusted a religious man with its wealth, that religious man has carried it off with him and has not been found at the proper time.

Oh, this is the great curse of the Church. I was thinking only yesterday, with much sorrow in my heart, of the present age and I could not but come to the conclusion that all the burnings of Pagan tyrants, that all the tortures of Popish executioners, that all the bloody deaths to which God’s people were ever put, in any age of the world, have never done so much hurt to the cause of Christ as the inconsistencies of professors of the present time. It was about three years ago I think, that failures among religious men seemed to be the order of the day and our papers literally teemed with accusations against the Church of God. O my Brethren, let us not talk of these things, except with mourning and tears. Wrap yourself in sackcloth, O Church of God—put away your laughter and cast ashes on your head, for the crown of your glory is departed, your garments are stained and the filthiness of your garments witnesses against you.

O Church of Christ, your Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, but now their visage is blacker than coal and their hands are defiled with iniquity. Remember the time of your purity, when your priests were glorious and your sons and daughters were clothed in royal apparel? How are you fallen! How are you cast down from the high mountains! Your princes are clothed in rags. The veils are plucked from the faces of your daughters and you yourself have become disconsolate and a widow by reason of the iniquity of your sons and of your daughters. Woe unto us, for your glory is departed, your sun is covered with thick darkness and your stars withhold their light. The crown is fallen from our head—woe unto us that we have sinned.

My Hearers, my soul has carried me away. Breathless and panting I return to my humbler but not less earnest style. Remember how vast your powers for mischief! Your ministers may preach as long as they will. But you undo their preaching if you are unholy. If you are inconsistent in your lives, Paul, Apollos and Cephas might preach with power, but they have not half the power to build up that which you have pulled down. You are

the mightiest workmen, you professors of religion—you can undo infinitely more than we can accomplish.

And now I pause and relieve the shadow of this subject with something which, I fear, is in the sight of God equally vile. How often do the people of God comfort sinners in their sins by their murmurings and their complaints? Oh Beloved, we are too much in the habit of covering our faces with sadness, on account of our temporal trials and too little in the habit of weeping on account of the failings of the Church of God! How frequently do you meet with a true Christian full of unbelieving cares! Ah, he says, “All these things are against me.” He has food and raiment, but he is not content with it. He has more than that, but his store is a little diminished and he is very cast down and he has no faith and cannot trust the Lord. “Oh,” says the worldling, “see these Christians. They talk about faith, but their faith is not half so much service to them as my desperation is to me that hardens my heart and makes me stand up against affliction a great deal better than their faith in God’s Providence can do. Why, just look at these saints—a driveling set of crying creatures—they never have either peace or joy.

“They are everlastingly pulling long faces and talking through their noses about their sad trials and troubles. They never have an hour of happiness. Who would be a Christian? I don’t want to be converted,” says the worldling. “Why should I pluck out the sunbeam from my eye and take the smile from my brow? Why should I profess to follow a God whose servants only worship him by weeping and never offer any sacrifice but that of groans and sighs and murmurs?” Might not a wicked man come in often—when Christians are grumbling together about the badness of the times, about the high price of commodities and the low rate of wages and so forth—and might he not say, “Yes, I can see your God treats you very badly. If I were you I’d strike and have nothing to do with Him”? And he would go away laughing and saying, “Ah, Baal treats me better. I get more pleasure in this world than these Christian people do. Let them have their brave Heaven to themselves, if they like—I’m not going sniveling through this world with them. Let me have joy and rejoicing while I may.” Don’t you think that in this way you and I have done a world of damage to the cause of Christ and may have helped to comfort sinners in their iniquities?

One other point and I will have done with this. Perhaps the greatest evil has been done by the cold-heartedness and indifference of religious professors. I charge you not, O Church of God, with inconsistency. I lay no crime at your door now. It is with another fault I charge you—but one as grievous. I pray you, plead guilty to it, for you will but speak the truth and then I pray God that this your guilt may be cleansed and that you may offend Him no longer with this, your evil. The Church of God at the present age is cold and lukewarm and lifeless, compared with what it used to be. When I was preaching in Wales this week, I could not but observe the power which attended the ministry—when there was a living congregation and an earnest company gathered together to hear the Word of God.

We have here become accustomed to sit in a kind of solemn silence to hear the Gospel. Not so in Wales. There is to be heard the voice of acclamation-every person expresses the feelings of his soul in audible prayers and cries to God. And at last, when the Spirit has descended, you hear the loud cries of “Gogoniant,”—“Glory to God.” As each precious sentence drops from the lips of the preacher, it seems to be taken up and fed upon by the people while they shout aloud for joy. I believe it is a great improvement on our English congregations and some of our English preachers could not go on in their dull style, if sometimes the people had a chance of either hissing them or cheering them on.

That, however, is but an index of the cold state of the Churches. We are a phlegmatic, cold nation—even Scotch divines are more alive than we are—they speak the Word of God with more earnestness than many of our ministers do in England. Cold as we think the north is, yet has even it become warmer than we are. And now, what says the world to all our coldness? Why, it says—“Ah, this is the kind of religion we like,” says the worldling; “we don’t like those raving Methodists. We can’t stand them. We don’t like those earnest indefatigable Christians of the kind of Whitfield— oh, no, they were a raving set of folks. We don’t like them. But we like these quiet folks.” “Yes,” says the worldling, “I think it is quite right that every man should go to His Church and his Chapel on a Sunday. But I never could go and hear such raving as Mr. So-and-So gives.”

Of course you could not. You are an enemy to God and that is why you like a Laodicean Church. That very Church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors. The world says, “We like everything to go on smoothly. We like a man to go to his own parish Church and hear a good, solid, substantial sermon read. We like to go up to the meeting house and hear a sober, eloquent Divine. We don’t like any of this furious preaching, any of these earnest exhortations.” No, of course you like that of which God has said, “You are neither cold nor hot.” God hates such and that is why sinners love it. But what effect does all this have upon the worldling? Why, just this. He says, “I like you, because you don’t rebuke me. I like that kind of religion, because it is no accusation against me. When I see a Christian hot and in earnest about being saved,” he says, “it rebukes my own indifference.

“But when I see a professed Christian just as indifferent about the salvation of men as I am, why, then I say, it is all a farce, nonsense! They don’t mean it, the minister does not care a bit about whether souls are saved or not and as for the Church, they make a great deal of noise every now and then at Exeter Hall, about saving some poor blacks far away, but they don’t care about saving us.” And so a worldling wraps himself up and goes on his way in his sin and his iniquity and perseveres, even to the last declaring all the while that religion is but a sham, because he sees us careless in solemn matters and cold concerning everlasting realities. Thus I have, mournfully in my own soul, set forth the plan whereby

Satan comforts sinners in their sins, even by means of those who ought most sternly to rebuke them.

II. And now for the second point—THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS EVIL. And here I wish to speak very pointedly and personally to all of you who are professors of religion. And I do hope that you will take every point to yourself, in which you must feel that you have been and are guilty. Friends, how often have you and I, in the first place, helped to keep sinners easy in their sin, by our inconsistency? Had we been true Christians, the wicked man would often have been pricked to the heart and his conscience would have convicted him. But having been unfaithful and untrue, he has been able to sleep on quietly, without any disturbance from us. Do you not think, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you have each been guilty here?—that you have often helped to pacify the wicked in their rebellion against God?

I must confess myself that I am guilty. I have labored to escape from the sin, but I am not clean delivered from it. I pray each one of you makes a full confession before God, if by your silence, when sin has been committed before your eyes, or by a smile, when a lascivious joke has been told in your hearing, or if by a constant indifference to the cause of Christ you have led sinners to sleep more securely in the bed of their iniquities. But to go further still. Do you not think that very often, when a sinner’s conscience has been roused, you and I have helped to give it a soporific draught by our coldness of heart? “Hush! Master Conscience,” says the sinner. But he will not be still, but cries aloud, “Repent, repent.” And then you, a professing Christian pass by and you administer the laudanum draught of your indifference and the sinner’s conscience falls back again into its slumber and the reproof that might have been useful is entirely lost upon him.

I am sure that this is one of the great crying sins of the Church—that we are not now the witnesses of God, as we should be—but often quiet the witness of conscience in the souls of men. Look now to your lives—I am speaking personally to each one—look at yesterday and the days that went before and I ask you and I solemnly charge you to answer that question. Have you not often assisted, in the first place, to keep men’s consciences quiet and afterwards to send them to sleep when they have been aroused?

Further—is it not possible that often sinners have been strengthened in their sin by you? They were but beginning in iniquity and had you rebuked with honesty and sincerity, by your own holy life, they might have been led to see their folly and might have ceased from sin. But you have strengthened their hands. They have gone forward confidently, because they have said, “See, a Church member leads the way.” “So-and-So is not more scrupulous than I,” says such an one. “I may do what he does” And so you have helped to strengthen sinners in their sins. No, is it not possible that some of you Christians have helped to confirm men in their sins and to destroy their souls? It is a masterpiece of the devil, when he can use Christ’s own soldiers against Christ. But this he has often done.

I have known many a case. Let me tell a story of a minister—one which I believe to be true and which convicts myself, and therefore I tell it with the hope that it may also waken your consciences and convict you, too. There was a young minister once preaching very earnestly in a certain Chapel and he had to walk some four or five miles to his home along a country road after service. A young man, who had been deeply impressed under the sermon, requested the privilege of walking with the minister, with an earnest hope that he might get an opportunity of telling his feelings to him and obtaining some word of guidance or comfort. Instead of that, the young minister all the way along told the most singular tales to those who were with him, causing loud roars of laughter and even relating tales which bordered upon the indecorous. He stopped at a certain house and this young man with him and the whole evening was spent in frivolity and foolish talking.

Some years after, when the minister had grown old, he was sent for to the bedside of a dying man. He hastened there with a heart desirous to do good. He was requested to sit down at the bedside and the dying man, looking at him and regarding him most closely, said to him, “Do you remember preaching in such-and-such a village on such an occasion?” “I do,” said the minister. “I was one of your hearers,” said the man, “and I was deeply impressed by the sermon.” “Thank God for that,” said the minister. “Stop!” said the man, “don’t thank God till you have heard the whole story. You will have reason to alter your tone before I have done.” The minister changed countenance, but he little guessed what would be the full extent of that man’s testimony.

Said he, “Sir, do you remember, after you had finished that earnest sermon, I, with some others walked home with you? I was sincerely desirous of being led in the right path that night. But I heard you speak in such a strain of levity and with so much coarseness, too, that I went outside the house, while you were sitting down to your evening meal. I stamped my foot upon the ground and said that you were a liar, that Christianity was a falsehood, that if you could pretend to be so in earnest about it in the pulpit and then come down and talk like that, the whole thing must be a sham.

“And I have been an infidel,” said he, “a confirmed infidel, from that day to this. But I am not an infidel at this moment. I know better. I am dying and I am about to be damned. And at the bar of God I will lay my damnation to your charge—my blood is on your head”—and with a dreadful shriek and one demoniacal glance at the trembling minister, he shut his eyes and died. Is it not possible that we may have been guilty thus? The bare idea would make the flesh creep on our bones. And yet I think there are few among us who must not say, “That has been my fault, after all.” Are there not enough traps in which to catch souls, without your being made Satan’s fowlers to do mischief?  
Has not Satan legions enough of devils to murder men, without employing you? Are there no hands that may be red with the blood of souls beside yours? O followers of Christ! O Believers in Jesus! Will you serve under the black prince? Will you fight against your Master? Will you drag sinners down to Hell? Shall we—(I take myself in here, more truly than any of you)—shall we, who profess to preach the Gospel of Christ, by our conversation injure and destroy men’s souls?

III. Thus I think I have expounded the solemn consequences of this fearful evil. And now I come, in conclusion, and I pray God to help me, while I deal earnestly and solemnly with you, AND BRING OUT THIS GREAT BATTERING RAM, TO BEAR AGAINST THIS VAIN EXCUSE OF THE WICKED.

Among this great congregation, I have doubtless a very large number of persons who are not converted to God and who have continually made this their excuse, “I see so much of the inconsistency of professors that I do not intend to think about religion myself.” My Hearer, I conjure you by the living God, give me your ear a moment, while I pull this vain excuse of yours to pieces. What have you to do with the inconsistencies of another? “To his own master he shall stand or fall.” What will it better you, if one half of all the professors of religions be sent to Hell? What comfort will that be to you, when you shall come there yourself? Man, will God require the sins of other people at your hands? Where is it said that God will punish you for what another does? Or do you imagine that God will reward you because another is guilty? You are surely not foolish enough for that!

I ask you, what can you have to do with another’s servant? That man is a servant of God, or at least professes to be. If he is not so, what business can it possibly be of yours? If you should see twenty men drinking poison, would that be a reason why you should drink it? If, passing over London Bridge, you should see a dozen miserable creatures leaping off the parapet, there would be a good argument why you yourself should seek to stop them, but no argument why you should leap, too. What if there are hundreds of suicides? Will that excuse you, if you shall shed your own blood? Do men plead thus in courts of law? Does a man say, “O Judge, excuse me for having been a thief, there are so many hundreds of men that profess to be honest that are as big thieves as I”? You will be punished for your own offenses, remember, not for the offenses of another. Man! I bid you, look this in the face. How can this help to ease your misery? How can this help to make you happier in Hell, because you say there are so many hypocrites in this world?

But, besides, you know well enough that the Church is not so bad as you say it is. You see some that are inconsistent. But are there not many that are holy? Do you dare to say there are none? I tell you, man, you are a fool! There are many bad coins in the world, many counterfeits—do you, therefore, say there are no good ones? If you say so, you are mad—for the very fact that there are counterfeits is proof that there must be realities. Would any man think it worth his while to make bad sovereigns if there were no good ones? It is just the quantity of good ones that passes off the few false coins. And so no man would pretend to be a Christian unless there were some good Christians. There would be no hypocrites if there were not some true men. It is the quantity of true men that helps to pass off the hypocrite in the crowd.

And then again, I say, when you come before the bar of God, do you think that this will serve you as an excuse, to begin to find fault with God’s own children? Suppose you were brought before a king, an absolute monarch and you should begin to say, by way of appeal, “O king, I have been guilty, it is true, but your own sons and daughters I do not like. There are a great many faults in the princes of the blood.” Would he not say, “Wretch! you are adding insult to wickedness. You are guilty, yourself, and now you do malign my own children, the princes of the blood?” The Lord will not have you say that at last. He has pardoned His children. He is ready to pardon you. He sends mercy to you this day, but if you reject it, imagine not that you shall escape by recounting the sins of the pardoned ones. Rather this shall be an addition to your sin and you shall perish the more fearfully.

But come, Man, once again—I would entreat of you with all my might. What? Can you be so foolish as to imagine that because another man is destroying his own soul by hypocrisy, that this is a reason why you should destroy yours by indifference? If there are thousands of untrue Christians, so much the more reason why I should be a true one. If there are hundreds of hypocrites, this should make me more earnest to search myself and should not make me indifferent about the matter. O Sinner! You will soon be on your dying bed and will it comfort you there to think, “I have rejected Christ, I have despised salvation, I am perishing in my sins,” and to add, “But there are many Christians who are hypocrites”? No, death will tear away that excuse. That will not serve you.

And when the heavens are in a blaze, when the pillars of the earth shall reel, when God shall came on flying clouds to judge the children of men, when the eternal eyes are fixed upon you and like burning lamps are enlightening the secret parts of your belly, will you then be able to make this an excuse—“Good God! It is true, I have damned myself, it is true, I have willfully transgressed—but there were many hypocrites”? Then shall the Judge say, “What have you to do with that? You had nothing to do, to interfere with My kingdom and with My judgeship. For your own offenses you are lost. For your own rejection of Christ you shall perish everlastingly.”

And now I conclude, by addressing the people of God with equal solemnity and earnestness. My dear Hearers, if I could weep tears of blood this morning, I could not show too much emotion concerning this most solemn point. I do not know that this text ever struck me before yesterday, but I no sooner noticed it than it came home to me as an accusation. I plead guilty to it and I pray for forgiveness. I only wish that a like power may attend it to you, that you may feel that you have been guilty, too.

O Friends, can you bear the thought that you may have helped to drag others down to Hell? Christ has loved you and pardoned your sins. And will you push others downward? And yet if you are inconsistent and es

pecially if you are cold and lukewarm in your religion, you are doing it. “Well,” says one, “I don’t do much good, but I do no hurt.” That is an impossibility. You must be either doing good or evil. There is no borderland between truth and sin. A men must be either on land or in the water. And you are either serving God or serving Satan—each day you are increasing your Master’s kingdom, or else diminishing it.

I cannot bear the thought that any of you should be employed in Satan’s camp. Suppose there ever should be an invasion of this country by France. The bells rings from every Church steeple, the drum is sounding in every street and men are gathering at every market-cross. Peaceful men spring up to soldiers in an instant. Multitudes are marching away to the coast. When we come near it we behold a troop of soldiers who have climbed our white cliffs and with bayonets fixed they are marching against us. We, with a tremendous cheer, rush on against them, to drive them back into the sea which girds our beloved country.

Suddenly, as we rush forward, we detect scores of Englishmen marching in the same ranks with our foes and seeking to ravage their own country. What should we say? Seize these traitors. Let not one of them escape—put them all to death. Can Englishmen take the side of England’s enemies? Can they march against our hearths and homes, betray their fatherland and take the side of the tyrant Emperor? Can this be? Then let them die the death! And yet this day I behold a more mournful spectacle yet. There is King Jesus marching at the head of His troops. And can it be that some of you, who profess to be His followers, are on the other side? That professing to be Christ’s you are lighting in the ranks of the enemy— carrying the baggage of Satan and wearing the uniform of Hell—when you profess to be soldiers of Christ?

I know there are such here—God forgive them! God spare them. And may the deserters yet come back, even though they come back in the chains of conviction! May they come back and be saved! O Brothers and Sisters, there is enough to destroy souls without us—enough to extend the kingdom of Satan without our helping him. “Come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing. Be you separate.” Church of God! Awake, awake, awake to the salvation of men! Sleep no longer. Begin to pray, to wrestle, to travail in birth. Be more holy, more consistent, more strict, more solemn in your deportment! Begin, O soldiers of Christ, to be more true to your colors and as surely as the time shall come when the Church shall thus be reformed and revived, so surely shall the King come into our midst and we shall march on to certain victory, trampling down our enemies and getting to our King many crowns, through many victories achieved.

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THE HEART FULL AND THE MOUTH CLOSED  
NO. 1289

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

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

***Ezekiel 16:62, 63.***

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

There are two very amazing things in this chapter. Which is the more amazing is hard to tell. The first is the extraordinary sin of Israel. God speaks of it in the strongest imaginable language. He represents Judah’s sin as being greater than the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, though both Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed for their abominations. He compares Judah’s backslidings to the lewdness of a woman who forgets her marriage vows and sins blatantly with many lovers, adding filthiness to filthiness. And so He makes sin to appeal exceedingly sinful, as a violation of the heart’s love to God and the soul’s chastity towards the Most High. A very dreadful thing is sin as set forth in this chapter!

The other amazing thing is God’s Grace—how, when He began with Israel, He found her like an infant cast out in her blood, naked and unwashed. And He took her up in all her filthiness and said to her, “Live,” and washed, cleansed and clothed her. He hung her ears with jewels and when she grew to riper years she turned aside from Him—turned His mercies into occasions of provocation and made His blessings to be instruments of sin. He describes Himself as pardoning her again and again and yet she continued to invent new sins, looking down, all the while, upon her sisters Sodom and Gomorrah and reckoning herself very superior to them. And yet she was behaving worse then they and going deeper and deeper into rebellion against the Lord.

Yet His mercy follows her. His love still pursues her and He makes the chapter to culminate in mercy with such words as these—“Nevertheless I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting Covenant. And I will establish My Covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord: that you may remember, and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.” Two words, if you can learn them, will teach you the deepest practical wisdom—sin and Grace. No one ever measured either of them—except One, and He, when He measured them, was in a bloody sweat and poured out His soul unto death.

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

Only our suffering Lover, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows the two to their perfection. May we be helped to enter a little further into the double secret while we commune together. The first exercise to which I shall invite you is this—let us think of the condition into which the Grace of God has brought all Believers. God is pacified towards them. “When I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.” Then, secondly, let us think of the knowledge which has been imparted thus to all Believers—they know the Covenant, they know the Lord and they know themselves. And they are made to remember and to be ashamed. Finally, in the third and principal place, let us dwell upon the silence which, from now on and forever is induced in all Believers. “You shall never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.”

I. So, then, first of all, let us review THE BLESSED CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY BELIEVER IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY THE SOVEREIGN ACT OF GOD’S MERCY. He has been brought into such a condition that God can say to him, “I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.” The Hebrew word which here sets forth forgiveness and pardon properly signifies to cover a thing with that which adheres and sticks to the thing covered—not with dry dust or leaves, which could be easily removed—but with glue or pitch, so that the thing hidden cannot easily be brought to sight again.

The same word is used concerning Noah’s ark. “You shall pitch it, or cover it, within and without with pitch.” All the planks were to be covered with the pitch—not with a filmy paint that might barely color them, but with a thick pitch—a sticky substance which would adhere to the substance of the wood and penetrate it and cover it altogether. When God forgives our sin, He covers us as completely as the wood of the ark was covered within and without with pitch. Our sin is covered and hidden right away from His observation. Child of God, I beg you to think of this for a moment! God is pacified towards you because your sin is covered—all of it—yes, it is all gone.

As far as God is concerned, your sin has ceased to be. He laid it on Jesus Christ, your Substitute, and He took it and bore the penalty for it—no the thing, itself, He, as your scapegoat, carried your sin right away and it is lost in the wilderness of forgetfulness. Into the depths of the sea He has cast your iniquities. In His own tomb He has buried your offenses. What said the Scripture? “He has finished transgression and made an end of sin.” Grand work! Made an end of it. And if there is an end of it, why there is an end of it and it has gone! This day, O believing child of God, there is fulfilled towards you that gracious word—“In those days, and in that time, said the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

Through faith in Jesus, your transgressions are all removed as far from you as the east is from the west. The depths have covered your sins— there is not one of them left. The Lord is pacified for all that we have done so that no ground of quarrel remains. O Believer, God is pacified towards you, for your sin is covered! It is put away, all of it and altogether! Since you have believed in Jesus Christ, your sin has not become dimly visible— neither by searching may it be seen as a shadow in the distance, but God sees it no more, forever! He has not merely taken away some of its results, some of the fiercer judgments that might have broken forth had not Christ intervened, but He has utterly removed all the penal consequences of it.

The sin is covered in the most emphatic sense. God has turned away all the fierceness of His anger and you may say, “O God, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me.” The many, the countless hosts of sin that you have committed since your childhood are all scattered as a cloud and the one black sin, which cost you more regret than many scores of others, has been removed as a thick cloud! The one repeated sin which grew into a habit which seemed as though it mastered you completely and brought you into utter bondage—it, too, has died into the tomb of the great Substitute. They are all gone—no enemy remains. In the sepulcher of Christ they are buried never to rise. Not one of these dead things shall live, for the efficacy of the death which slew them is eternal!

They cannot rise against you from the grave. No, not one of them, while sun and moon endure—no, while God endures, for He said it—“They shall not be mentioned against you anymore, forever.” “Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It is divinely sweet to think of this! God is pacified towards His people for all that they have done, altogether pacified, for their sins have ceased to be! And this is not occasionally true, but always true—not only so in happier moments, when we enjoy a sense of it, but always, whether we have a sense of it or not!

The standing of a Believer does not depend upon his recognition of his standing. There are times when, if he could have all the world for it, he could not read his title clear—no, he could not spell the capital letters of that title. There are times when he sees his sin, but cannot see his pardon—yet he is pardoned for all that—pardoned while self-condemned! The

Israelites, when they were inside their houses, could not see the blood sprinkled on their doorposts. How could they? By what strange process would they be able to see the blood outside the door while they sat within at the table? No, and it was not their seeing the blood that saved them, for if you turn to the Book of Exodus you find the Lord saying, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.”

God always saw the blood—that was the main point in the matter and, therefore, it was sprinkled where the destroying angel could see it as he flew upon his errand of wrath. Glory be to God, when I cannot see the blood of Christ, myself, my God can see it! If I have ever looked, by an act of faith, to the Lord Jesus, I am saved! If I am resting in Him, I am forgiven. And when my eye of faith is dim and my sense of rest in Christ is overloaded with a yet deeper sense of my own unworthiness, my standing is still not altered, my security is not affected, the pacifying of the Lord towards me is not changed one jot or tittle. At all times, in the dark as well as in the light, when I am downcast as well as lifted up, the Lord is pacified towards His people.

I would to God that the Lord’s people grasped this more fully and lived in the power of it more completely! May God grant we may! O my Soul, sinful and unworthy though you are, there is a peace established between you and your God which never will be broken—a league which never will be violated! God has thoughts of peace towards you. Does not the word so mean? When I am pacified— “when I am peace-ified”—“when I have made peace towards you.” God thinks of nothing but peace towards His children. “Peace, peace,” He said. He is the God of peace, the fruit of His Spirit is peace. The very name of His Son is peace! The Heaven to which He is bringing us is everlasting peace and even now the peace of God which passes all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ!

The Believer goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace. His heart, his mind, his conscience are filled with peace towards God. There is peace, there is nothing but peace, between my soul and God! Oh, what a joyous thought this is! Grasp it, Christian, and let your spirit exult in it! And all this, remember, is written in our text concerning a people who had plunged into wondrous sins! I have already remarked that I could not explain all that God has said about Israel in this chapter—it would be improper. Nor do I think any man ought to try to tell another all the evil which he has seen in himself. Sometimes we tell to our fellow Christians about our own sense of unworthiness, but you are not always speaking to edification.

It has happened to me, sometimes, that the Brother to whom I have spoken of myself has not believed a word I have said. He has looked me in the face and he has said, “You are not well, I fear. I am sorry to see you so low in spirits.” Indeed, I only spoke the truth and did not tell him one-half of the unworthiness I felt. But he did not know the wormwood and the gall, nor ought I to have wished to make him drink of my cup. That same Brother, perhaps, has come to me with his story of his own failures and transgressions and sins—and then it has been my turn to wonder. I have looked at him and I have said—“Bless you! I wish I were half as good as you are and half as faithful in my Master’s service.” Every man must bear his own burden. My friend does not know my humiliation before God, neither do I see any unworthiness in my friend compared with to what he sees and feels.

We need not tell our neighbors all that we feel about ourselves anymore than this chapter can ever be explained to every carnal ear. But oh, Brothers and Sisters, no man living has ever exaggerated his own sin or thought too meanly of himself! There does not live beneath Heaven any man whose sense of sin is as deep as the sin really is! I find, when I am talking with enquirers, and they are overburdened with a sense of sin, that the only thing to say to them is, “It is all true, every bit you are saying.” “Oh, but,” they say, “you do not know.” “No,” I say, “nor yet do you. You are 10 times worse than you think you are.” “Oh Sir, but I feel myself to be utterly lost.” “Yes, and so you are. You are only feeling the truth.” “But I feel as if I were driven to despair.” “And so you ought to be, for if you are looking to yourself, there is nothing but despair for you.”

Do not interrupt the young convert when he begins to say that he is distressed by a sense of sin. And if he describes sin in dreadful terms, let him go on to do so, for the more he abhors sin, the better. The trembling penitent is near the truth, for his sin is, indeed, great and terrible. If you make him out to be a little sinner, you will next offer him a little Savior, a little Christ and a little Gospel. No, let him go on with that sense of sin. I would even pray God to make him feel it more and more! Meanwhile it is your privilege to present to him an infinite Atonement and a God willing and able to forgive. Tell him that God sent not His Son into the world to save the righteous, or to call those to repentance who have no sin to be repented of.

Tell him that the whole scheme of redemption is so magnificent because it deals with an infinite evil and it is made to a grand scale because the mischief it has to deal with is hideous beyond all conception. If a man feels sin to be unutterably horrible, so much the better. Do not try to get low thoughts of sin, but be humbled in the dust, for then Christ is glorified. The greatness of the sin reveals the greatness of the redeeming sacrifice and the direful nature of the disease declares the Divinity of that Physician’s skill who is able to put it all away. Child of God, return with grateful restfulness to the memory of your complete deliverance from the wrath of God due to sin! God is pacified towards you concerning all your sin thus described in all its heinousness, hideousness and horror. Whatever conception of it you have now obtained, and it may be a very, very alarming one, yet in all its terribleness God is pacified towards you concerning your sin! Although your conception may fall far short of the truth, yet, as far as that whole truth about sin is concerned, God is pacified towards you in the Person of His dear Son.

I wonder what God’s thought of sin is. He has thrown some little light upon it in this chapter, but when He hung up His dear Son upon the tree, then He declared sin to be a monster, indeed! When God, Himself, bore the pangs of death that He might save His creatures from sin. When all the waves and billows of sin’s stormy deep rolled over the Incarnate God and when He said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” what must His thoughts have been concerning sin! But God never thought

worse of sin than it is. He only thought the truth and it is as sin is in its truth—and as Jesus felt it in its truth when He bore it on the tree—it is as in that true idea of sin that He has put it all away and He is pacified towards us today.

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

II. We pass on, secondly, to notice WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF REACHING THIS PEACEFUL STANDING. We have learned three things. I do not say that all Christians have clearly discovered them, I wish they had. But I do know some Christians who have learned these very points thoroughly. First we have learned salvation by a Covenant. “I will establish My Covenant with you.” He who knows how to pronounce the word, “covenant,” is on the road towards being a thorough theologian! Salvation by Covenant! The thought is charming, for we were lost by a Covenant.

Father Adam stood for us and represented us in the old Covenant of Works. If Adam will keep that Covenant, he and all his children shall be blest. Alas, our foundation was too frail! Our first parent was not able to bear the responsibility of the Covenant and, therefore, he fell—and we all fell in him to our fatal cost. Some have inquired, “Was this just?” Do not raise that question, because that is the loophole of your hope! The devils, when they fell, fell each one for himself, and so they could never rise again! But we fell by another in a Covenant made with Another. Here, then, was the way to restore us again!

As we sinned representatively it was possible for us to satisfy the Law by a Representative! Here was the opening for the way of salvation! By a second Covenant Head, man may be redeemed, and therefore Jesus Christ comes, the second Adam, and God makes a Covenant with Him, which Covenant runs thus—“If He will bear the penalty of sin—if He will keep the Law, then all that are in Him shall be delivered from every sin! And the righteousness of the second Adam shall be imputed to them and they shall be loved and blessed as if they were righteous.” Oh, matchless mystery of love! Have you ever learned this?

Some of you young people who have lately been converted, have you ever learned the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace? Have you seen what it is to be in Christ and accepted in Christ because the Lord has made Him to be a Covenant for His people—a Leader and Commander to His people? And have you nestled down beneath our Lord’s perfect Atonement and His perfect Righteousness, and said, “These are mine, for He is my Adam and I am in Him. And God saves me now, not because of what I did or am, but because of what my Covenant Surety was and is. I am saved through Him. My standing is in Him”? He who understands this Covenant has learned something very full of consolation, for he knows that it is a Covenant which he cannot break, for it was not made with him, personally, but made for him in his great Substitute and Surety, Christ Jesus.

Christ has not broken the Covenant and only He could do so. He kept it and, therefore, the promise is sure to all His people. And it is a Covenant “ordered in all things, and sure”—a Covenant from which God will never turn aside. “My Covenant I will not break,” He said, “nor alter the Word that has gone out of My lips.” HE has sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater—by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that He might give strong consolation to the heirs of the promise. Certain Brethren tremble when they hear us thus discourse upon the Believer’s privilege and security, but we cannot help that. Isaac lives at home and rejoices in his birthright and if Ishmael and his mother love slavery better, they must have it.

Nevertheless, what said the Scripture? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondsman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.” As for those who are the children of the promise and inherit through the promise, their name is Laughter, as the name of Isaac was. And they shall rejoice, for they are the true heirs—neither shall they ever be driven out, for in Isaac was the seed to be called forever. So said the Lord, and so shall it stand. It is a blessed thing to learn the Covenant of Grace!

The next thing we have learned while reaching our happy condition of peace with God is the lesson that Jehovah is, indeed, God. Read those solemn words, “You shall know that I am the Lord.” To be saved in a way that makes us know that God is God is to be taught aright. I believe that this is one of the lessons least known throughout the Church and in the world it is not known at all. That God is God is easy to say but hard to know. I learned it when the Lord brought me to Himself and I have been learning it more and more in many ways as He has taught me and brought me to bow before Him. I have learned His justice and if ever I hear men talking about the injustice of everlasting punishment for sin, I have found no echo in my conscience to that observation because, if I could be lifted up into God’s place, I feel that the very first thing I should have to do would be to eternally condemn such a guilty thing as I myself have been and am.

As I have judged my own soul, I have had to pronounce over it that very sentence which God pronounces over all the ungodly—“Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” I have had to say, “Amen,” in my soul to all the Divine denunciations of evil. I have thus, in my conscience, learned that He is a just God, and thus has one of the great attributes of Deity been known to me. I have also been made to learn His sovereignty. I remember the time when I thought that if God saved everybody in the world but me I could not blame Him. I have to come to His feet and feel, “I have no rights, and make no claims.”

Shaking my hands free of anything like an appeal to what I am as His creature, or as His servant, I have felt that I have forfeited all the rights of creatureship by my sin and I have put myself absolutely at His disposal, beseeching Him to reveal His undeserved favor to me. My ears have even

been tutored to find music in that awful declaration, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But, oh, this doctrine does not seem to be known by a large number of people! They will not come to it—they cannot bite the dust nor bow so low as that. “Man is a noble creature and his rights must be considered.” “God must deal alike by all.”

Many are these proud and arrogant boasts, which, to my soul, read like blasphemy! And yet men calling themselves Christian ministers give utterance to them! This I know, that He is God and does as He pleases with His Grace. He taught me this before He stretched out the silver scepter and said, “I am pacified towards you.” And oh, how we have to learn His power. The power of God is seen by the natural eye, in some measure, in storms and tempests, but, believe me, it is never seen with the inner eye by any man so well as when the Lord overcomes his sin! He has seen his sin and he has felt no more able to grapple with it than the sear leaf with the hurricane—and yet the Lord has suddenly stopped the fury of that sin and delivered the man, so that he has said—“Now I know that You are God, for who but God could have done this for me? Who but Yourself could have chained my imperious passions and broken the iron yoke from off my neck?” Then has the man felt the Omnipotence of Jehovah!

Above all we learn that precious word, “God is Love,” but there is no understanding it until you are actually broken down under a sense of sin and are led to see that your sin deserves the hottest Hell. Then, when you hear the Lord say, “But, nevertheless, for My own sake have I forgiven you, and through Jesus Christ My Son have I put all this sin of yours away: it shall never be mentioned against you anymore, forever”—then the eyes look up and says “Love! I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You!” Such love! Such matchless love! Such amazing love! One cannot talk about it without longing to get away to some secret place to pour out your soul before God with tears instead of words, to think that He should forgive so freely, so richly and so completely forgive!

If you would know the Godhead, you must behold it in the Person of Jesus Christ while you look up to Him and see Him through your tears. In Him you see yourself crucified as a rebel and a traitor, deserving nothing but wrath. And then in Him you see God over all exalted, dispensing mercy, not because of man’s merit, or even because of man’s prayers or tears, or anything like goodness in man—but simply because He wills to do it—to display the majesty of His stupendous Grace in passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.

The third lesson which is connected with our deliverance is this, “That you may remember and be ashamed.” We have learned ourselves. To remember and to be ashamed—that is not comfortable. Who likes to remember and be ashamed? Some of you good people can remember your whole lives, but you do not feel at all ashamed. Why should you? With so much of your own excellence to glory in, why should you be ashamed? But, remember, if the Lord is ever pacified towards you, you will remember and you will be ashamed—so that no good can come from the selfcontentment which you are so loath to lose. You will be ashamed if ever you are pardoned. You will be ashamed at being unable to discover any excuse for your sin.

Once you could have found 20 excuses and had your choice of them. But now that the Lord has forgiven you, you cannot find one. And as you turn them all up—those old excuses of yours—those fig leaves of yours with which you once hoped to cover your nakedness, you despise them and think you never saw such flimsy things! You are doubly ashamed to think that you ever invented such excuses—ashamed to think that you could have been such a fool as to dream that there was any reason in your excuses—that what made sin worse should have seemed to you at any time to make it better! You are ashamed, now, to think how it was that you lived all those years in sin and unbelief.

I was utterly amazed to think that I had not believed in Jesus Christ long before. Was that all—to trust in Christ? Why, I had been going all round the world to do something and feel something, and be something— and there it was—I was to be nothing! Christ was to be everything and I was to be thus saved! I was just to take salvation freely as a gift to me. I was ashamed. I could not invent an excuse for having remained in unbelief, though until the Lord was pacified with me I stubbornly said, “You know I cannot believe.” I had hosts of excuses, while I was unforgiven, but they were all gone when Mercy forgave me.

Have you ever tried to put two things straight before your eyes—your own life and God’s Character—you before God and God before you? Have you not felt that you could not look at them both, for you were ashamed and could not comprehend them? You used to say, “Oh, that sin was the result of my upbringing, that was the product of bad example.” Or you passed it off by saying, “Ah, I made a mistake that time.” Now that you are saved your conduct seems to you to have been all mistakes, all blunders, all mischiefs, all bad, all horrible! You are ashamed, do not know what to say, you cannot defend yourself. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man is so ashamed that he cannot speak for himself anymore, but leaves Jesus Christ to speak for him—when he is so ashamed that all he can do is to sit still and admire, and wonder, and adore, and love, and bless, and praise, and magnify God for such unexpected mercy!—

*“Why was I made to hear Your voice,  
And enter where there’s room,  
While thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve than come?”*

Why, did You love me? Why did You bear with me so long? Why was I gently led to yield myself to Your sway? Why were my eyes opened? Why was I not left to willful blindness as others were? I thought once I could have explained it, but now I cannot, for it is past finding out. “O God, I am ashamed. Your very love confuses me as much as my sin does. I am in a maze, I am perplexed, I am astounded!” Thus is the Word fulfilled. “You shall remember and be ashamed.” My Brothers and Sisters, I hope the Lord, when He brought you to know Himself, taught you these three things—your standing in the Covenant, His own Glory as the God of that Covenant and your own less-than-nothingness as He utterly perplexes and astounds you, both with your guilt and with His mercy. III. The last thing is this—THE SILENCE WHICH IS FOREVER INDUCED. “You shall never open your mouth anymore because of your shame.” It takes a great deal to fill a man’s mouth and almost as much to shut it. Some men’s mouths never will be filled till the sexton gives them a spade full of dirt, for their greed is insatiable and half the world would not be enough for them. Some men’s mouths never will be stopped except by the coffin lid. Their motto is, “While I live I’ll crow.” And so they will, for boasting is bred in their bones and it will come out of them. Though they have nothing to boast of, yet as long as they breathe, they will brag.

But when God saves a man, He takes means to end his self-exaltation most effectually, so that he will never open his mouth anymore in his own praise. He stops him from all boasting about what he is and what he has been and what he thinks he shall be. If you find any man talking about how excellently he has lived and what a commendable person he has been, you may be sure that God has never been pacified towards him! When a man cries, “But is not our morality something? Is there not a great deal to be said in favor of those who are sober and righteous?”—you may know that God has never been pacified towards that man, for if it were so, he would never open his mouth anymore about his morality.

He would be as ashamed of his morality as other men are of their outward sins, for he would see it to be a poor imperfect thing at best. Our morality is a very pretty thing when people look at it who are in the blindness of Nature. But when we bring our morality under the microscope and look at it as God looks at it, what a horribly immoral thing this so-called morality is! You begin to look below the surface and you discover that a certain man refrained from outward sin, not because he would not have delighted to do wrong, but because he was a little too shrewd and did not want to injure his own interests. He was not such a fool as to fall into vulgar sin, that is to say, his selfishness saved him.

Sometimes the man who did actually transgress had more generous impulses than the other who did not sin, because his sneaking selfishness kept him within the lines of outward consistency. When you come to look at very much of morality, it will not bear inspection. It is a very pretty thing, like the moss and the fungus growing out of putridity—a very pretty thing until you understand where it came from! If any man who believes himself to have been moral and sinless will only begin to look at the reasons why he has been so innocent, and search himself, he will often discover that inside all that purity of his there has been a mass of pride, selfconceit, self-seeking, indifference to God and every detestable thing imaginable! When the Lord shows a man all this and casts him down into the ditch till he abhors himself—and then cleanses him in the precious blood till He is pacified towards him—he will never open his mouth about that matter anymore!

Neither will a man who has been cleansed in this way open his mouth anymore against Divine Sovereignty. It seems to some minds to be a very fine thing to talk about the rights of moral agents and rail at all idea of the Lord exercising the prerogatives of Kingship. They love to go to the verge of blasphemy to show that they are not so foolish as to be Calvinistic. When the spiritual dandy hears the Biblical doctrine that he has sinned against God and that if he is to be saved it must be all of Grace, he is too fine a fellow to believe the Truth of God! He does not want to enter Heaven like a criminal, or to receive pardon like a convict! He inclines to a more genteel Gospel.

Now, if the Lord is pacified towards that man, you will never hear another word of that sort from him. “Oh, no,” he will say, “let the Lord live forever and let Him be King.” He is the man above all others who loves to hear of God as absolute! He knows how gracious, how strong, how truly good He is. He has heard the language of Paul ringing in his heart as well as in his ears—“No, but O, man, who are you that replies against God?” And he has answered, “I dare not reply, for I am less than nothing! And I would not reply if I could, for I love God and I bless His name.” One of the sweetest notes that ever falls upon that man’s ears is—“The Lord reigns.” He loves to think that Jehovah reigns and if it were in his power to restrict His reign and abridge His absolute authority, he would not do so. He wishes Him to be King forever and sit as Lord upon the floods, world without end! In that matter, then, the man’s mouth it shut forever.

So, also, dear Friends, this way of salvation shuts a man’s mouth as to all murmuring and complaining against God upon any score whatever, for, says he, “If the Lord has pardoned me, let Him do what He wills with me.” Our proud flesh exalts itself against the will of the Lord and says, “It is hard that you should always be poor when you would have done so much good with money. It is hard that you should be so often ill while you are so useful. It is hard that you should have so little talent, when God knows that if you had great abilities you would have been so zealous and led the van in the Church of Christ, for you love Him so much.”

Ah, dear Friends, but when Grace forgives us we never talk so! We say, “No, my Lord, I am so unworthy that if You favor me to be a doorkeeper in Your house I will be grateful for it. If I am permitted, at the last, to get inside the gates of Heaven to sit among Your children, as the meanest of them, I shall be forever grateful to Your mighty love and bless Your gracious name. I have no quarrels to pick with You. I have no demands to make of You. ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’ If I can glorify You on a bed of sickness, I will lie there and cough to Your Glory! If I can glorify You in a mud cottage, I will dwell there and starve on a few pence a week to Your Glory! If I can honor You in rags, or in the poorhouse, so let it be. Yes, if in death it will honor You for me to have a pauper’s funeral or none at all, so let it be. I belong to You from this day forth. I am such a sinner, so forgiven and so indebted to Almighty Grace that I can never open my mouth anymore to find fault, for You have dealt so kindly and so lovingly with me.”

May that spirit rest upon you, beloved Friends. Now, I wish I could hope that all of you had tasted of the Grace and love of God as some of us have done. But I dare not flatter you. I fear that many of you are utter strangers to this matter. It ought to encourage everyone here who has not found peace with God, to hear us tell of what we feel of our own sinfulness, because, Sinner, where one sinner gets through, there is room for another! If there is a prison door and that door is broken down and one gets out, another man who is in the same prison may safely say, “Why

should I not escape, too?”

Supposing we were all beasts in Noah’s ark and we could not get down from the ark to the ground except by going down that slanting ramp which most of the painters have sketched when they have tried to depict the scene. Well, we must go down that ramp. Are you afraid? Are you, sheep and hares, afraid that the ramp will not bear you up? Listen, then! I am an elephant and I have come down out of the ark over that ramp and, therefore, it is sure that all of you who are smaller than I am can come down, too. There is strength enough to bear up the hare and the coney, the ox and the sheep, for it carried the elephant! The way down has been trod by that heavy, lumping creature—it will do for you, whoever you may be.

Ever since the Lord Jesus Christ saved me, I made up my mind to one thing, namely, that I should never meet another person who was harder to save than I. Somebody said to me, once, when I was a child, when it was very dark and I was afraid to go out, “What are you afraid of? You won’t meet anything uglier than yourself.” Surely as to my spiritual condition that is true! I never did meet anything uglier than myself and I never shall. And if there is a great, big, black, ugly sinner here, I say, Sinner, you are not uglier than I was by nature, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ loved me! Why should He not love you, too? I tell you, that though Jesus Christ is Omniscient, and it is saying a great thing to say what He could not see, yet I do venture to say that Jesus Christ could not see anything in me to love.

What if He cannot see anything good in you? Then we are on a par and yet I know He loves me, why not you? That He loves me I know. Bless His name, I know He loves me and I love Him, too. If He loved me when there was nothing in me to love, why should He not love you when there is nothing in you to love? Oh, turn that ugly face towards the lovely Savior and trust Him! I put it in a pleasant way and you smile, but I want to get it into your hearts. I want some poor, trembling sinner to say, “I shall remember that. I do think myself an ugly sinner, but I will come to Christ and trust Him.”

If you do, you will never regret it, but you will bless God forever and ever, and so shall I! And when we get to Heaven we will talk about it and we will say, “Here we are, a pair of huge, horrible sinners. We came to Jesus Christ and He took us in and, blessed be His name, we will praise Him as long as ever we live.” That we will, I guarantee you! Do you not feel sure of it? God bless you, for Christ’s sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 51. **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—51, 546.**Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #3494 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DIVINE DESTRUCTION AND PROTECTION  
NO. 3494

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1916.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

**“And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.”  
Ezekiel 17:29.**

CAN your minds fly back to the time when there was no time, to the day when there was no day but the Ancient of Days? Can you speed back to that period when God dwelt alone, when this round world and all the things that are upon it had not come from His hand? When the sun flamed not in its strength and the stars flashed not in their brightness? Can you go back to the period when there were no angels, when cherubim and seraphim had not been born and, if there are creatures older than they, when none of them had as yet been formed? Is it possible, I say, for you to fly so far back as to contemplate God alone—no creature, no breath of song, no motion of wing—God Himself alone, without another? Then, indeed, He had no rival! None, then, could contest with Him, for none existed. All power, and glory, and honor and majesty were gathered up into Himself. And we have no reason to believe that He was less glorious than He is now, when His ministers delight to do His pleasure, nor less great than now, when He has created worlds on worlds and thrown them into space, scattering over the sky, stars with both His hands! He sat on no precarious throne. He needed none to add to His power. He needed none to bring Him a revenue of praise. His AllSufficiency could admit of no lack. Consider next, if you can, the eternal purpose of God that He would create. He determines it in His mind. Could any but a Divine motive actuate the Divine Architect? What must that motive have been? He creates that He may display His own perfections! He does beget, as it were, creatures after His own image that He may live in them—that He may manifest to others the joy, the pleasure, the satisfaction which He so intensely feels in Himself. Certain I am His own Glory must have been the end He had in view. He would reveal His Glory to the sons of men, to angels and to such creatures as He had formed in order that they might reflect His honor and sing His praise!

You are not ignorant, my Brothers and Sisters, of the fact that sin entered into the world. You know that the Creation, which had been harmonious as a Psalm in God’s praise, voluminous and exhaustive as a book in which He revealed His own Character—this Creation, once exceedingly fair, became foully marred. Rival instincts were produced and rival interests were set up. Man’s will stood up against God’s will—man’s profit against God’s honor—man’s device against God’s counsel. Eve took of the accursed fruit and Adam partook of the same and, from that day on man became a rival to God, just as Satan, aforetime, had rebelled against the blessed and only Potentate and usurped authority. From the time when Satan fell, God’s purpose was to break down everything which set itself up in opposition to Him. From that day till now, no matter how great, how lofty, how apparently excellent a thing might be, it has been the rule with God to pull it down if it did not stand in Him and for Him! Yes, and wherever He has looked, no matter how mean a thing may have been, how low, how degraded to outward appearance, it has been God’s constant rule to lift it up if it stood in Him and for Him! Or if, by the lifting up of the humble, He might throw scorn upon the haughty, He would thereby magnify His own absolute right to exercise Sovereign control and to do with men as He willed.

Oh, that I could commend the words of some of the mighty masters of song, or that I had an angel’s voice, so much rather would I hymn this high majestic theme than speak of it in listless prose! But I cannot rise to the awful heights of this incomparable design! I contemplate it with awe not unmingled with admiration—the Eternal God withstanding everything that opposes itself against Him—thrusting down the mighty from their seats, plucking off crowns from the heads of princes, degrading the escutcheons of nobles, trampling in the mire the fine linen and the scarlet of the rich, setting at nothing the wisdom of the wise, divesting the philosopher of his toga, rending in pieces the robes of the priest, and pouring contempt upon everything that vaunts pretension or arrogates prestige in defiance of His sacred prescriptive, irrevocable lordship! There is no power or permanence, no warrant or worth in any claim to greatness or goodness independent of God, or antagonistic to Him. My conceptions are too dwarfish, my language is too feeble to compass the grandeur of this theme. It’s truth commends it and its usefulness enhances it—it bows the heart before God and convinces us that only then are we in a fit state to be filled with His fullness, to live in His life, to be wise with His wisdom and to be glorious in His Glory—when we are emptied of our own conceits. Mine, however, will be a more practical lesson at this time. And I shall use more homely words than that nobler subject might have demanded.

I THINK I see a great forest which reaches for many a league. The trees are of divers growths and of various ages. Some of them are very lofty. Here a towering cedar and yonder the storks have made their nests among the tall fir trees. There are stout oaks that laugh at storms, and elms that will not be twisted with the tempest. See how they rival each other! And there are lowlier trees—some bearing fruit, though scarcely seen—others, like the vine, creeping upon the ground—so obscure they can hardly be observed. It is a strange forest in which trees of every clime are to be found. Some green, verdant, laden with blossoms and with fruit. Others dead, dry, withered, with scarcely here and there a leaf. It is the evening, the cool of the day. The Lord God who visited the fair garden of Eden is come to walk in this forest. Along those deep glades, amidst that thick shade, the Almighty appears. He comes. How do I see Him? He bears in His hands an awful axe and He passes His finger along its edge to see that it is sharp. Strong is the arm that wields it. Howl, cedars, if once He lifts that axe against you! What does that Woodsman mean to do? Wait, and let us hear Him speak. Oh, you trees of the field, be silent before the Lord! Clap not your hands until we have heard Him speak. “The trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree”—beware, you towering cedars! “That I have exalted the low tree”—take courage, you lowly vines! “That I have dried up the green tree”—wail, you verdant elms! “And have made the dry tree to flourish”— hope, you withered boughs! “I the Lord have spoken, and have done it.” Let the trees be silent before the Lord, for He comes to judge them, and He judges them with much jealousy. That forest I have before my eyes. Now men, like trees, appear to me in the vision. While I gaze on this dense mass of people listening to my voice, let me interpret the Mighty Woodsman’s words to you. There are four notes of which we shall speak, one after the other. May God sanctify the emblems to our profit, touching our ears and teaching our hearts, that we may rightly understand what the Lord says to the trees of the forest.

I. “THUS SAYS THE LORD, THE TREES OF THE FIELD SHALL KNOW THAT I, THE LORD, HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE HIGH TREE.”  
Look over history and you will see that everything gigantic in stature and colossal in dimensions, whatever has been great to human apprehension, grasping at earthly fame, has become an object for God’s penetrating arrows and a subject for His withering blight. A grand idea of universal monarchy flashed upon the mind of man. He would build a tower, the top of which would reach to Heaven! What did the Lord do with this fine scheme? “I will come down,” He said, “to Babel, and see if it is altogether as they have said.” Then He touched their tongues and confounded their language, and scattered the imaginations of their hearts— and so He laughed them to scorn, and left them to be a laughingstock to all generations! Then came the great power of Egypt. Pharaoh said, “Am I not lord of Thebes, with its hundred gates, and with its myriads of brazen chariots? Have I not a mighty host of cavalry? Who is equal to me? I speak, and the nations tremble.” When the king hardened his heart, how did Jehovah—the King of Kings—get Himself honor from Pharaoh and his hosts? “You did blow with Your wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea!” In later years Babylon set herself up as a queen. “I shall be a lady forever,” said the gay metropolis of the earth, the mighty city of Euphrates. “I sit alone. I shall see no sorrow.” Behold, she decks herself out with scarlet! She arrays herself with silk! All the nations of the earth are quiet when she arises nor is the sound of a whisper heard when the voice of her command goes forth! But where are you, daughter of Assyria, where are you, now, O daughter of Chaldea? Where is the crown which once circled your brow and adorned your head? Go, mark a heap of rubbish and of desolate stones! Hear the hooting of the owls and the howling of the dragons, as each one calls to his fellow in the midst of a desolation which cannot be repaired! How are you fallen from Heaven, Lucifer, Son of the Morning! Thus God breaks in pieces with His right hand everything arrogant and supercilious that dares to assert greatness apart from His endowment, or to presume on authority other than He delegates! I might prolong the strain. I might tell you of Rome and all the boastings of that Imperial mistress—point to her faded charms and tell of her decay and her decadence. I might lead you back to Sennacherib and all his hosts overthrown, or recite the story of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out from the abodes of men and feeding as the beasts. I might show you lesser kings, kings of Israel, brought exceedingly low until they who had sat on the throne as princes pined in the dungeon among slaves! To multiply instances would be only to confirm the general current of history and illustrate the fact that the Lord, even the Lord of Hosts, always cuts down the high tree, humiliates the creature that exalts itself and suffers no flesh to glory in His Presence! That is the law of His government.  
The question arises, how does it concerns us? Doubtless it opens a sad prospect to those who are lifted up with pride, or inflated with selfopinion. Are there any among you who boast in heraldry a long succession of illustrious names which has ennobled your pedigree? Some people seem to think that the world is hardly good enough for them to tread upon, as if they were made of china, while other men are molded but of common clay! They look down upon the public as an ignoble herd and speak of the masses as the “many-headed,” and the “great unwashed.” Such a man will play the parasite to his own dear self, passionately cherish his own conceits and petulantly hold that whatever belongs to him is better than anyone else can procure for love or money, be it his house, or his horse, the water from his well, or the wine from his cellar! At his wit let all inferiors laugh! To his greed let all who would receive his patronizing nod do obeisance. In stately isolation he will acknowledge no rival. Do you know, man, that in one respect you have a veritable preeminence?—you may fairly challenge all your fellows for one whose disposition the Lord hates more than He abhors yours! Among the seven abominations, your order ranks highest. No liar or murderer can claim a preeminence over you in vice so long as the Proverbs stand. Before long the heel of the Almighty shall be lifted higher than your haughty head! He will cast you down, be your look ever so proud, for the Lord has purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the excellence of the earth!  
There is, again, an arrogance of mind, of judgment, of opinion, just as ignorant—if not quite so grotesque—as his who dreams that his birth is of higher caste and his blood of richer hue than other men! Humanity in the bulk is the idol of some people—and yonder I see the man who quotes himself as an illustrious specimen. He does not believe in the total depravity of human nature. Judging by himself, the statement that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, is a myth! Or if it were ever true of a faithless Jew, it never was a fair indictment against such an orthodox Christian as he is! No, no, he has kept the Law. He feels that in all things he is blameless. He has not erred, neither will he humble himself before the word that God speaks to us. In the opinion of such, the Gospel that we preach is very good for harlots, thieves and drunks, but it is of no use to the righteous, for they have put down their own names among those who need no repentance! Admirable in their conduct, their temper amiable and their disposition generous, a salvation by Free Grace would be wasted on them! The Lord will abase you, be you man or woman, whoever you may be! He will shame you! The axe is ready to be laid at your root even now! Your goodness is not God’s goodness, and your righteousness is not Christ’s righteousness—therefore shall the moth consume it, and it shall be eaten away. Or it is my friend yonder, a working man, who says, “Well, I work as hard as anybody. I bring up my children as well as I can. I have nothing from the parish, and if I see a poor mate out of work, I always subscribe my mite, though I have not much to give away—can it be right to tell me that I am not in a fair way of going to Heaven?” Ah, the Lord will deprive you of such boasting, for He will bring down all these high trees! You that have any righteousness of your own, whether you are rich or poor—the same word applies to you all! What matters it whether you are born of princes, or the offspring of beggars—pride will nestle in any heart and presumption will take advantage of any circumstances! Perhaps I may address some person who says, “Well, I am a member of the orthodox and true church. I have been baptized and I have been confirmed after the most proper manner. I receive the Lord’s Supper on all fit and proper occasions. The clergyman from whom I take the sacrament has received Apostolic ordination. How tasteful the architecture of our church! How decorous the congregation! How enchanting the music! There are none of your rough wild notes that give vent to the feelings. Our organ is the perfection of mechanism and it is played with the utmost skill! Our sacred singers perform their parts with reverent taste. Our litanies are wailed out in plaintive tones. We do the thing in the right style and as I am a member of a branch of a Catholic church, I hold myself to be an heir of eternal life.” From your towering imaginations, O man, you shall speedily totter! God will cast you down as surely as you live! No boasting, even of our orthodoxy, or of our attention to religious formalities shall ever be allowed to abide His judgment. The Lord has set His face against all boasting and all confidences, other than a trust in the Cross and a holy reliance on the finished work and righteousness of Jesus Christ!  
Or shall it fare better with another class? There is our friend who says, “Well, well, I do not believe in forms and ceremonies, but, mark you, I always judge and weigh everything.” He estimates himself as an independent thinker. He is bound by no precedents, fostered by no creeds, and considers that he is amenable to no judgment but his own. He acknowledges no lord but his own conscience, no duty but such as he prescribes himself! And as for wisdom, he looks with indifference on all things whatever that his private judgment has not endorsed. Moreover, he doubts the Inspiration of the Bible and has his misgivings as to the authenticity of some parts of it. He indulges a little suspicion as to the Deity of Christ. And as to the Doctrines of Grace, he professes much intelligence, but he exhibits gross negligence. Strong in his self-assertion, he makes light of the Word of God and the will of God, while he holds Prophets and Apostles in little esteem. Ah, well, Sir! God is against you! He will make a fool of you one of these days, if you are so wise as to exalt yourself above His Revelation! The world shall see your folly. I tell you, captious questioner, that the Lord will bring you down. “Tut, tut, tut, I do not believe in any of these things,” exclaims the successful merchant, “I say the best thing is to push ahead on one’s own account! I mean to save money, to get rich, to rise in the world as others have done who have made capital of their own wits and taken care of their own interest.” This is the religion of many people—their creed being that God will help those who help themselves! In their account, the highest wisdom is to attend to this world, and as for the world to come, the best policy is to ignore it! To the statutes of the Lord they give no heed. Evidently you see no need to depend on God. With a stout pair of arms and a good clear brain, you are confident you can make your own way in the world. Will you prosper, Sir? I tell you, no, for God is against you! The Lord will bring you down. Whether it be strength of limbs and lungs, force of brain and intellect, cunning works or scheming plans you rely upon, He will lay you level with the dust before long! You shall know that he who exalts himself against his maker makes a sorry adventure. Disaster and everlasting confusion are your inevitable fate!  
II. FURTHERMORE THE LORD SAYS, “I WILL EXALT THE LOW TREE.”  
Here is a word of comfort to some who especially need it. You remember Joseph in the dungeon, Israel in Egypt, Hannah in the family of Elkanah, David when Samuel would have passed him by, Hezekiah when Sennacherib rebuked him. Are not all these instances of God exalting the low tree? We have no time to speak on them, though they are well worthy of attentive study. But rather now let us ask, Where are the low trees here among ourselves? Who are they? The low trees are those poor in spirit who think others better than they are, themselves. Who, instead of carving their names high, are willing to have them written low because they feel they have nothing of which to glory, nothing wherein to boast. The low trees are the penitents, those who take their stand afar off with the publican and say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” You who feel your own weakness to do anything right. You who are conscious of your own worthlessness and afraid that God will never hear your prayers. You who are bowed down low with a sense of guilt and hardly dare to look up to the place where His Honor dwells—you are the low trees—you are such as God exalts! You, too, who tremble at His Word when you see the threat and fear lest it should be executed upon you. When you hear the promise, you hardly think it possible that it can belong to you—you are low trees—God shall exalt you! You who feel your ignorance and are willing to be instructed. You who are modest as children and ready to sit at the feet of Jesus. You who have been broken in

pieces until you feel that a crumb of mercy would be more than you deserve and are willing to take any dole He is pleased to give—you are the low tree. And you that are despised, who walk in darkness and see no light, slandered for Christ’s sake, reproached with crimes you never committed. You of whom the world is not worthy, though the world accounts you to be unworthy of its esteem—you are the low trees and God shall exalt you! God grant us Grace to humble ourselves under His mighty hand! The Lord exalts the low trees. Is there a soul among you who is ready to despair—a low tree so low that it can only compare itself to a bramble bush? Well, God dwelt in a bush! You may think that if He should have mercy upon all other men, yet He must make an exception of you, so aggravated are your offenses, so depraved your disposition and so alien to anything good! Oh, bless the Lord! He exalts the low tree! If this voice can now reach any humble, fearful, broken-hearted soul, even though that soul should say it is too good to be true, yet, in God’s name, let me assure you it is God’s message to you! Rejoice, yes, sing unto your God, for He will lift up the poor from the dunghill, while He casts down the mighty from the seats of their pomp and their places of power!  
III. THE LORD HAS ALSO DECLARED THAT “HE WILL DRY UP THE GREEN TREE.”  
Whether that green tree is high or low, it does not matter. If it is green in itself, He will cut it down. Mark you, a man may be as high as Heaven—if it is God who makes him high, he will stand! But if he is high in creature strength, and creature merits, and creature glory, he shall be brought down! And a man may be low without merit, if he is merely mean, paltry and pitiable, not worth a straw. That is not the spirit of lowliness that God blesses! In like manner, a man may be green because he is planted by the rivers of God’s Living Waters. That is healthy enough, but those who are like the green bay tree of the Psalmist, trees growing in their own soil, never transplanted by Grace, green in the verdure of worldly prosperity and taking all their delight in earthly things—those are the trees God will dry up! Many I know of this kind! They profess to be God’s people and they say, “Well, I never have any anxiety about my eternal state. I do not see why I should ever have any doubts or fears. I have no pricks of conscience.” This green tree boasts “that its leaves never fade, that its evidences are always bright.” “They have no changes. Therefore they fear not God.” “They have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They have no cares. They walk confidently, they talk arrogantly, they smile disdainfully at some of God’s people who groan over their infirmities and bemoan their sins. Perhaps they go the length of protesting that they have no vices and do no wrong! Or they will say, “Why, as for me, I have overcome my bad habits and made amends for my youthful follies and indiscretions. And if I have any faults, they are only such as are natural to men, and they do not cause me any trouble.” He will even turn round and rail on this wise, “I cannot think how some of God’s people can do as they do!” No, he is such a blessed, heavenly-minded hypocrite, that after he has condoned his own crimes, he condemns other people’s customs! Therefore he holds up the severity of his judgment as a proof of the integrity of his character. He makes broad fringes on his own garment and he cannot think how good men can wear such narrow fringes on theirs. He has a wide phylactery and he cannot imagine how a godly man can wear a smaller one! He prays an hour and a half at the corner of the street—he cannot imagine that any man is godly who prays for ten minutes in his closet! He sounds a trumpet and gives away three halfpence to the poor—he cannot understand people when they give away ten pounds, or a hundred pounds in the cause of religion—he thinks they must have mercenary motives! He might stand up and say, “Look at me if you want to see what a man should be, how a Christian should live, and what his manner, conduct and conversation should be!” Behold the man who counts himself the paragon of perfection! Have you ever met with such green trees? I have. These people feed without fear and mock without motive. They laugh at the idea of Paul’s apprehension, when he said, “I keep under my body, lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” They think such fears inconsistent with the Doctrine of Final Perseverance, though in this they are mistaken! A man may know that a true Believer will persevere and yet be very much afraid that he shall not himself hold out because he may suspect himself whether he is a true Believer at all! This green tree is never troubled about the future—it is all right with him—he has launched upon a smooth, deceitful sea, and he believes it will be calm until he gets to the other side! As for human weakness, he knows nothing at all about that. He hears God’s children crying, “Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?” and he looks shocked!  
The professor, too, who boasts his deep experience, is like this green tree. Young Christians he frowns at—he does not like young people. No, he would not have many young people in the church because they might adulterate it, and bring down its spiritual tone. As to Doctrine, he is profoundly learned—“he can divide a hair, between the west and southwest side,” and he censures at once the man who does not understand all the points! He understands more than the Bible reveals! He has improved upon the Scriptures and those who cannot get up to his standard, he despises. As for the poor, and meek, and sickly among the people of God, he, one of the strong ones, pushes them on either side and will give them no rest. Never a man yet had anything to boast of as his own, but God was sure to dry him up! Let your life be as green as an emerald, it shall be brown as March dust before long! You seek sap and nourishment from yourselves. The spider’s web—how soon it is blown away! Well it may, because it comes out of the spider’s own bowels. Everything that comes out of self and lives on self, and hangs on self, and fattens on self, no matter how green it may be, verily, verily, it shall be dried up! Lastly—  
IV. THE LORD MAKES “THE DRY TREE TO FLOURISH.”  
There are some dry trees to be pitied in their present condition, yet to be congratulated on their prospects. I would not say a word to encourage doubting, but I would say a great many words to encourage doubters. How many of God’s people may be fitly compared to a dry tree! They have little joy. They have not got to full assurance. They are afraid to say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Every night, before they go to bed, they feel such consciousness of sin that they can hardly sleep. They feel themselves so weak that where others go and think nothing of it, they dare not trust themselves. They are afraid to risk temptation. Sometimes they are so conscious of their own weakness that they do not exert themselves as they ought—and hence their low spirits, their melancholy and their mourning. They think they are of no use to the Church. They are half inclined to suspect it was a mistake for them to be baptized, and that they were to blame for uniting themselves with the people of God. “Oh,” they say, “if I am a lamb, I am the sickliest of the whole flock.” Were I an heir of promise, would I feel the assaults of sin as I do? Or would I be so much the prey of indwelling corruption and become so dry and withered? When they retire to the closet to pray, they can hardly utter a word. They come to the assembly of Believers and though they do sing with their lips, the heart cannot sing as it would. There are times, too, when walking home they say, “I go where others go, but I get no comfort! If I were really the Lord’s, would I be thus? If I did trust Christ, should I ever be so languid?” Brothers and Sisters, if it is of your own bringing about that you are thus dry, I do not offer you any comfort! But if the Holy Spirit has led you to see your weakness, your nothingness, your deadness, then I am glad you have been brought to this pass, for God will cause the dry tree to flourish! When we are weak, then are we strong! The death warrant is gone out from God against everything that is of the creature. All that is of nature’s spinning must be unraveled—not your bad nature, only, but your good nature! Not your vices, only, but your virtues! Not your sins, alone, but your graces! All these must be contemned and despised so far as you venture to put them in the place of Christ! You must cry, “Away with them! Away with them,” as if they were so much dung and dross! Christ’s blood, only, for our hope, the Spirit’s work only for our life! Here let us stand and we shall be safe. The dry tree, by Divine Grace, shall flourish! The green tree, deserted by the dew of Heaven, shall dry up! The low tree, fostered by the Lord, shall mount even to the stars! The high tree, cut down by the axe of judgment, shall lay outstretched along the plains of ruin forever!  
I think I see the Last Great Day. There is a greater forest than this— this is but one corner of it. I see that forest stretched over sea and land, over mountain and valley. It is a forest of men! There stand the Pharisees, the self-righteous, the tyrants, the autocrats of haughty dispositions, the men of profound intellect with lofty brows, the men that questioned God’s government, the infidels who said, “Atheos,” and denied His being! I see the high trees that towered to such an elevation and attracted so much admiration. And there, too, are the low trees contented to be low, for Christ of Nazareth was lowly. He, whose disciples they are, came riding on an ass even in the day of His highest earthly triumph. And now I hear the trumpet ring exceedingly loud and long. Through the glades of that vast human forest the sound comes ringing broad and clear, “Smite! Smite! Smite! And let all the high trees fall!” O God, what a crash!  
He smote great kings and slew famous kings, for His mercy endures forever. He smites. What? Another crash? The orthodox who rested in their orthodoxy, and the self-righteous men and women fall there! Yonder the philosophic atheist, and here the scoffing skeptic—there the haughty persecutor, and there, again, the pompous priest and pretentious ceremonialist! Gather them in Tophet, ordained of old, pile them together, cedar upon oak, and elm upon fir, gather them together! Pile them on, pile them up! Let the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, come upon the mighty pile. It is the funeral pyre of the giants. There lies the dead body of sin and here comes the living spouse of sin—to be sacrificed upon that same pile. Her name is Pride. She comes—they clasp. The great transgression and the evil imagination! Together they lie down and the flames arise. Now the cedars, full of resin, give forth their flame! The sparks go up to Heaven and the flames even unto the Throne of God, while I hear the voices of multitudes singing, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for You have judged the great temptress, even Pride, and You have given her up to be burned with fire!” But what of you, what of you who will be firewood to that great burning? What of you, proud sons of men, who will be fuel to that flame? Turn, turn you! Fly to Christ and then you shall stand in the judgment, and join in the anthem, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,” “Be wise now, therefore, O you kings! Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Oh, that we all may be found among the humble— not the haughty—in our present life, and that we may be gathered among the blessed, not destroyed among those whom the Lord abhors, in our future destiny!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**ISAIAH 1:1-9.**

Verses 1, 2. The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Ezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The good and gracious God, having been treated ungenerously, makes His appeal not to men who, themselves, are guilty, but to the very heavens and earth, calling on the silent stones of the field, the trees of the forests and the stars of heaven to judge between Him and His rebellious children. “I have nourished and brought up children”—taken a nurse’s interest in them, shown a parent’s love to them, “and they have rebelled against Me.”

3, 4. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. More brutish than the brutes are men when they forget their God! The dog follows its master’s heels, but man will not be obedient to his Lord. The ox knows his owner and gives some sign of recognition when he sees him, but, alas, the ungodly sons of men know not the God who made them, feeds them, keeps them alive!

Where are you, oh backslider? Mingling once again with the people of God, let these words come home to you! There is a, “Thus says the Lord” in the Prophet’s words to them—and thus says the Lord to you! You have gone away backward, provoking the Holy One of Israel to anger!

5. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. It was of no use chastising these people. They only sinned the worse for all the afflictions that were sent—and when the fire of affliction does not melt the iron heart, what can do it? Why waste the fuel upon them? You will revolt more and more—the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. They had been smitten, they had been afflicted till the whole nation, through and through, had been brought low. Their head and heart had been made faint. And, oh, there are some that have passed through many trials and are none the better! They have seen poverty and yet they go again to the sin that first brought them to it. They feel in their very bones the result of their transgressions, and yet they hug in their bosoms the serpent that has stung them!

6. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. The whole land of Israel was so destroyed through sin, it was like a body that is covered with sores that have not been touched by the surgeon’s hand. Yet they did not repent.

7, 8. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: strangers devour your land in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. A mere shanty run up during the grape season, wherein the persons who took care of the vineyard found shelter from the rain.

8. As a besieged city. For the same purpose.  
9. Unless the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we would have been as Sodom, and we would have been like unto Gomorrah. Yet, though they were reduced to this, they kept on with their sins! It really seems as if men would suffer anything for their sins rather than give them up. It is not always the pleasure of sin which seems to fascinate, but the very bitterness of sin seems sweet to some.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1795 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

PLEADING AND ENCOURAGEMENT  
NO. 1795

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”  
Ezekiel 18:23.**

**“For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: therefore  
turn yourselves, and live.”  
Ezekiel 18:32.**

**“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live: turn you, turn you from your  
evil ways, for why will you die,  
O house of Israel?”  
Ezekiel 33:11.**

SIN, having a thorough possession of the human heart, entrenches itself within the soul as one who has taken a stronghold speedily attends to the repairing of the breaches and the strengthening of the walls, lest, haply, he should be dislodged. Among the most subtle devices of sin to keep the soul under its power and prevent a man’s turning to God is the slandering of the Most High by misrepresenting His Character. As dust blinds the eyes, so does sin prevent the sinner from seeing God aright. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” But the wicked only see what they think to be God and that, alas, is an image as unlike God as possible!

They say, for instance, that God is unmerciful, whereas He delights in mercy. The unfaithful servant in the parable was quite sure about it and said most positively, “I knew that you were an austere man,” whereas the Nature of God is as opposite to overbearing and exaction as light is from darkness! When men once get this false idea of God into their minds, they become hardened in heart. Believing that it is useless to turn to God, they go on in their sin with greater determination. Either they conceive that God is implacable, or that He is indifferent to human prayers, or that if He should hear them, yet He is not likely, in the least, to grant a favorable answer. Men darkly dream that God will not attend to the guilty and the miserable when they cry to Him; that their prayers are not good enough for Him; that He expects so much from His creatures that they cannot even pray so as to please Him—that, in fact, He seeks a quarrel against us and is a taskmaster who will grind all He can out of us.

Being themselves slow to forgive, they judge it to be highly unlikely that the Lord will pardon such sins as theirs. As they will not smile on the poor or the fallen, they conceive that the Lord will never receive unworthy ones into His favor. Thus they belie the Host High! They make Him who is the best of Kings, to be a tyrant! He who is the dearest of friends, they regard as an enemy! And He whose very name is Love, they look upon as the embodiment of hate! This is one of Satan’s most mischievous devices to prevent repentance. As in the old times of plague, they fastened up the house door and marked a red cross upon it—and thus the inhabitants of that dwelling were sealed unto death—even so the devil writes upon the man’s door the words, “no hope,” and then the sick soul determines to die and refuses admission to the Physician. No man sins more unreservedly than he who sins in desperation, believing that there is no pardon for him from God.

An assault where the watchword is, “No quarter,” usually provokes a terrible defense. The pirate who is hopeless of pardon becomes reckless in his deeds of blood. Many a burglar in the old times actually went on to murder without remorse because he thought he might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. When a man believes that there is no hope for him in the right way, he determines that he will get what he can out of the wrong way. And if he cannot please God, he will, at least, please himself. If he must go to Hell, he will be as merry as he can on the road and, as he puts it, he will “die game.”

All this comes of a mistaken view of God! Do you not see the likeness between sin and falsehood? They are twin brothers! Holiness is truth, but sin is a lie and the mother of lies! Sin brings forth falsehood and then falsehood nourishes sin. Especially in this fashion does falsehood maintain sin, by maligning the God of Love. He is a God ready to pardon and by no means hard to be moved to forgiveness—why do men stand off from confessing their wrong and finding mercy? He is not a God who takes pleasure in the miseries of men—why do they think so ill of Him? His ear is not dull to the cry of sorrow; His heart is not slow to compassionate distress—on the contrary, He waits to be gracious—“His mercy endures forever.” He delights in mercy—why will men run from Him? God is love immeasurable, love constant, boundless, endless—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*  
Part of our business as ministers of Christ is to bear witness to the loving kindness of the Lord against the falsehood with which sin dishonors

His goodness. I desire to do so, this morning, and to do it in right down earnest—in the hope that those of you who are convicted of sin may, this day, be able to rest in the mercy of God—even that exceeding mercy which He has revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son. I have been very much struck with several letters which I have received this week from deeply-wounded souls. God is at work among us with the sword of conviction. I have felt a great degree of joy in receiving these letters—painful as they are to their writers—they are very hopeful to me. I am sorry that any persons should be near despair and should continue in that condition, but anything is better than indifference!

I am not sorry to see souls shut up in the prison of the Law, for I hope they will soon come out of the prison-house into the full liberty of faith in Christ. I must confess my preference for these old-fashioned forms of conviction—it is my judgment that they produce better and more stable Believers than the modern superficial methods. I am glad to see the Holy Spirit overturning, throwing down, digging out the foundations and making you like cleared ground, that He may build upon you temples for His praise! How earnestly do I pray that the Lord may make of these convicted ones, champions for the doctrines of Free Grace, comforters for His mourners and consecrated servants of His Kingdom! I look for large harvests from this deep subsoil plowing. The Lord grant it, for His name’s sake!

I can see in several who have written to me that their main idea is erroneous, that they have fallen into a wrong notion about God. They do not conceive of Him as the good and gracious God which He really is. This error I am eager to correct. Listen to me, you mourners! I desire to tell you nothing but the sober Truth of God. God forbid that I should misrepresent God for your comfort! Job asked his friends, “Will you talk deceitfully for God?” And my answer to that question is—“Never!” I would not utter what I believed to be falsehood concerning the Lord, even though the Evil One offered me the bait of saving all mankind thereby!

I have noticed in certain Revival Meetings a wretched lowering of the Truth of God upon many points in order to afford encouragement to men—but all such sophistry ends in utter failure! Comfort based upon the suppression of the Truth of God is worse than useless! Lasting consolation must come to sinners from the sure Truth of God, or else, in the day when they most need it, their hopes will depart from them as the giving up of the ghost. I will therefore speak to you the Truth in its simplicity concerning the blessed God, whose servant I am. I beseech you no longer to persevere in your slander of His infinite love. Oh, you that feel your sin and dare not put your trust in your forgiving God, I pray you to learn of Him and know Him aright, for then shall that text be fulfilled in you— “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” May the Holy Spirit come, now, in all His brightness, that you may see God in His own light! As for me, I feel my duty to be one in which nothing can avail me but that same Spirit. Chrysostom used to wonder that any minister could be saved, seeing our responsibilities are so great—I am entirely of his mind. Pray for me that I may be faithful to men’s souls.

Notice that in each one of my texts the Lord declares that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked—and in each following passage the statement is stronger. The Lord puts it first as a matter of question. As if He were surprised that such a thing should be laid at His door. He appeals to man’s own reason and asks, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” Oh, Souls, can you really think that God desires your damnation? Can you be so demented as soberly to believe such a calumny? Will such a theory hold water for a single minute? After all the goodness of God to multitudes of rebellious men, can you allow such a dark thought to linger in your mind—that God can have pleasure in men’s being sinners and ultimately destroying themselves by their iniquities? Your own common sense must teach you that the good God is grieved to see men sin, that He would be glad to see men of a better mind and that it is sad work for Him to punish the finally obstinate and impenitent! He cries most plaintively “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.” He puts it here as a question of wonderment, that men should so grossly malign Him as to think that the God of Love could have any pleasure in men’s perishing by their sins.

But then, in the next place, in our second text, God makes a positive assertion. Knowing the human heart, He foresaw that a question would not be enough to end this matter, for man would say, “He only asked the question, but He did not give a plain and positive statement to the contrary.” He gives us that clear assurance in our second text—“I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: therefore turn yourselves, and live.” When the Lord speaks, He is to be believed, for He is God that cannot lie! We know that this speech of His is authentic—it comes to us by an Inspired Prophet, concerning whose call by God we entertain no doubt whatever. Let us, then, believe it heartily. If I were to state this as my own opinion, you might do as you please about believing it. But since God says this, then we claim of you all, as God’s creatures, that you believe your Creator—and that this statement be never questioned again. “Where the word of a king is, there is power”—power, I trust, to silence all further debate upon the willingness of God to save!

But still, as if to end, forever, the strange and ghastly supposition that God takes delight in human destruction, my third text seals the Truth with the solemn oath of the Eternal. He lifts His hand to Heaven and swears—and because He can swear by no greater, He swears by Himself— not by His Temple, nor by His Throne, nor by His angels, nor by anything outside of Himself! He swears by His own life! Jehovah, who lives forever and ever says, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.” The man who dares to doubt the oath of God will be guilty of an arrogant presumption which I would not like to impute to any of you! Shall God be perjured? I tremble at having even suggested such a thing! And yet, if you do not believe the Lord’s own oath, you will not only have made Him a liar, but you will have denied the value of His oath when He swears by His own life!

What He thus affirms must be true—let us bow before it and never entertain a doubt about it. Most miserable of all men that breathe must they be who will dare to attack the veracity of God, when God, to confirm their confidence, puts Himself upon an oath! Let us hear the voice of the Lord in its majesty, like a peal of distant thunder—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.” I invite your earnest consideration of this utterance thus given in the form of a question, an assertion and a solemn oath.

I. And I notice, first, the assertion that GOD FINDS NO PLEASURE IN A SINNER’S DEATH. Really, I feel ashamed to have to answer the cruel libel which is here suggested, yet it is the English of many a man’s doubts. He dares not come to God and trust Him because he darkly dreams that God is a terrible Being who does not wish to save him—who is unwilling to forgive him and unwilling to receive him into His favor. He suspects that God finds some kind of terrible delight in a soul’s damnation! That cannot be! I need not disprove the falsehood. God swears to the contrary and the falsehood vanishes like smoke. I will only bring forward certain evidence by which you who are still under the deadly influence of the falsehood may be delivered.

First, consider the great scarcity of God’s judgments among the sons of men. There are people who are always talking of judgments, but they are in error. If a theater is burnt down, or if a boat is upset on the Sabbath, they cry, “Behold, a judgment!” Yet churches and meeting houses are burned, and missionaries are drowned when upon the Lord’s own business! It is wrong to set down everything that happens as a judgment, for, in so doing, you will fall into the error of Job’s friends and condemn the innocent. The fact is there are but few acts of Divine Providence to individuals which can definitely be declared to be judgments. There are such things, but they are amazingly rare in this life considering the way in which the Lord is daily provoked by presumption and blasphemy!

It was a judgment when Pharaoh’s hosts were drowned in the Red Sea. That was a judgment when Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down, alive, into the pit. There were judgments later on in the Church of God when Ananias and Sapphira fell dead for lying against the Holy Spirit—and when Elymas the sorcerer was blinded for opposing Paul. Still, these are few and, in later days, the authentic instances are equally rare. Does not the Lord Himself say that “judgment is His strange work”? Among His own people there is a constant judgment of fatherly discipline, but the outer world is left to the gentle regime of mercy. This is the age of patience and long-suffering. If God had taken any pleasure in the death of the wicked, some of you who are now present would, long ago, have gone down to Hell! But He has not dealt with you after your sins, nor rewarded you according to your iniquities. If God were constantly dealing out judgment for lying, how many who are now here would, by this time, have received their portion in the burning lake! If judgments for Sabbath-breaking had been commonly dealt out, this city of London would have been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah!

But God reserves His wrath till the Day of Wrath. He winks at man’s obstinacy, for this is not the place of judgment, but of forbearance and hope. The fewness of visible deeds of judgment upon ungodly men in this life proves that God takes no delight in them. And then, secondly, the length of God’s long-suffering before the Day of Judgment, itself, comes, proves how He wills not the death of men. The Lord spares many guilty men throughout three-score years and ten, bearing with their ill-manners in a way which ought to excite our loving gratitude. Youthful folly is succeeded by manhood’s deliberate fault and that by the persistence of mature years—and yet the Lord remains patient! Some of you have rejected Christ after having heard the Gospel for many years—you have stifled your conscience when it has cried against you—and you have done despite to the Spirit of God. You have rebelled against the Light of God and have committed greater and yet greater sin—but God has not cut you down!

If He had found pleasure in your death, would He have allowed you to live so long? You have cumbered the ground, not two or three years, as the barren fig tree did, but two or three scores of years you have stood fruitless in the vineyard of God—and yet He spares you! Some have gone beyond all this, for they have provoked God by their open unbelief and by their abominable talk against Him, His Son and His people. They have tried to thrust their finger into the eye of God! They have spit in the face of the Well-Beloved and persecuted Him in the person of His people! Yet the Lord has not killed them on the spot, as He might justly have done. Have you not heard His sword stirring in its scabbard? It would have leaped forth from its sheath if Mercy had not thrust it back and pleaded, “O you sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!” It is only because His compassions fail not that you are favored with the loving invitations of the Gospel. Only because of His Infinite patience does Grace still wrestle with human sin and unbelief. Let us each one cry—

*“Lord, and am I yet alive,  
Not in torments, not in Hell?  
Still does Your good Spirit strive—  
With the chief of sinners dwell?  
Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am out of Hell!”*

Furthermore, remember the perfection of the Character of God as the moral Ruler of the Universe. He is the Judge of all and He must do right. Now, if a judge upon the bench were known to take delight in the punishment of offenders, he ought to be removed at once, for it would be clear that he was thoroughly unfit for his office. A man who would take pleasure in hanging, or imprisoning, would be of the foul breed of Judge Jeffreys and other monsters, from whom, I trust, our bench is forever purged! But if I heard it said that a judge never pronounced the sentence of death without tears; that when he came home from the court and remembered that some had been banished for life by the sentences which he had been bound to deliver; he sat in a moody, unhappy state all the evening, I should say, “Yes, that is the kind of person to be a judge.” Aversion to punishment is necessary to justice in a judge!

Such an one is God, who takes no pleasure either in sin or in the punishment which is the consequence of sin—He hates both sin and its consequence—and only comes, at last, to heavy blows with men when everything else has failed. When the sinner must be condemned, or else the foundations of society would be out of course, then He delivers the terrible sentence—but even then it is with unfeigned reluctance—and He cries, “How can I give you up?” The Great Judge of All seems to descend from the Glory of His Judgment Seat and show His more familiar face to you in the text, as, in effect, He cries, “I have judged, and I have condemned, and I have punished; but, as I live, I find no pleasure in all this. My pleasure comes when men turn unto Me and live.”

If any further thoughts were necessary to correct your misbelief, I would mention the graciousness of His work in saving those who turn from their evil ways. The care which the Most High has taken to produce repentance, the alacrity with which He accepts it and the abounding love manifested to returning prodigals are all indisputable evidences that God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in their salvation! To prevent the death of the wicked the Lord devised a plan of salvation before all worlds—and those who accept that plan find that the Lord has provided for them a Substitute in the Person of His own dear Son, who is, indeed, Himself, and that in His Person, God Himself, has borne the penalty due to sin—that thus the Law might be solemnly honored and the Divine Justice vindicated. The Lord has gone up to the Cross and bled His life away there, that God might be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! Does not this prove His delight in salvation? The Holy Spirit comes on purpose to renew the heart and take the stone away from it—that men may become tender and penitent—does not this show that God delights to save? The whole resources of the Godhead go forth with spontaneous delight for the salvation of those who turn from their sin.

Yes, they go forth before men turn, to turn them that they may be turned! God is even found of them that sought Him not and He sends His Grace to those who cried not after it! As if God were indignant that such a charge should be laid against Him that He delights in the death of any, He preferred to die, Himself, upon the Cross rather than let a world of sinners sink to Hell! To prove the desire of God that men should live, His Son abode for more than 30 years on this poor earth as a Man among men! And His Holy Spirit has dwelt in men for all these centuries, bearing all the provocations of an erring and ungrateful people! God has proved Himself in multitudes of ways to be not the Destroyer, but the Preserver of men. “He that is our God is the God of salvation.” “Salvation belongs unto the Lord.”

Thus would I try to vindicate the ways of God to men. When men are to be tried for their lives, if their friends are able to do so, they come to them in prison and say, “It is a very hopeful thing for you that it is not Judge So-and-So, who is terribly severe. You are to be tried before the kindest man on the bench.” Many a prisoner has plucked up courage at such news and oh, poor Sinner, you who dare not trust God, let me chide you into hope by reminding you that Love sits embodied on the Throne of Judgment this day! And that He who must and will condemn you, if you turn not from your sins, nevertheless will find no pleasure in that condemnation, but will be loath to make bare the axe of execution. Will you not turn to Him and live? Do not His compassions beckon you to make a full surrender and find Grace in His sight?

II. But now, secondly, GOD FINDS NO ALTERNATIVE BUT THAT MEN MUST TURN FROM THEIR WICKED WAYS OR DIE. “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.” It is one or the other—turn or burn! [Read sermon #106, Volume 2, Turn or Burn at http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols1-3/chs106.pdf ] God, with all His love to men, cannot discover any third course—men cannot keep their sins and yet be saved. The sin must die or the sinner must die! Be it known to you, first, that when God proclaims mercy to men upon this condition, that they turn from their ways, this proclamation is issued out of pure Grace. As a matter of bare right, repentance does not bring mercy with it. Does a murderer receive pardon because he regrets his deed? Does a thief escape from prison because, at last, he comes to be sorry that he was not honest? Repentance makes no available amends for the evil which is done—the evil still remains and the punishment must be executed. It is of Grace, then, that I am permitted to say, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways.”

It is because at the back of it there is a great Sacrifice—it is through an all-sufficient Atonement that repentance becomes acceptable. The Son of God has bled and died, and made expiation for sin! And now He is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sins. Today the word of the Lord is, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This is not according to the Law, which gives no space for repentance, but it is a pure matter of Grace! God saves you, not because of any merit in your turning, but because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. And He has decreed to save all who turn from the paths of evil.

Note, next, that if there is no repentance, men must be punished, for on any other theory there is an end of moral government. The worst thing that could happen to a world of men would be for God to say “I retract My Law. I will neither reward virtue, nor punish iniquity—do as you like.” Then the earth would be a Hell, indeed! The greatest enemy to civil government among men is the man who preaches universal salvation—salvation apart from a change of heart and life. Such teachers are a danger to national order—they remove the foundation of the commonwealth! They practically say, “Do just as you like. It may make a slight difference to you for a little while, but it will soon be over and villains and saints will share an equal Heaven.” Such talk is damnable! I can say no less. If there is to be a government at all, it is necessary that sin should not go unpunished. Leniency to the dishonest is cruelty to those whom they injure. To save the murderer is to kill the innocent! It were an evil day for Heaven and earth if it could once be proven that God would reward the depraved in the same way as the sanctified! Then would the foundation be removed and what would the righteous do? A God who was not just would be a poor Ruler of the universe!

Yes, my Hearers, sin must be punished! You must turn from it or die because sin is its own punishment. When we talk to you of the fire that never can be quenched and the worm that dies not, we are supposed to mean those literal things, but, indeed, these are figures—figures representing something more terrible than themselves—the fire is the burning of a furious rebellion in the soul and the worm is the torture of a neverdying conscience. Sin is Hell! Within the heart of disobedience there lies a world of misery. God has so constituted us, and rightly so, that we cannot long be evil and happy. We must, if we go wrong, ultimately become wretched. And the more wrong we are and the longer we continue in that wrong, the more assuredly are we heaping up sorrow for ourselves throughout eternity! Holiness and right produce happiness, but iniquity and wrong must, by a necessity of Nature which never can be changed, produce tribulation and anguish. It must be so. Even the Omnipotence of God cannot make an impenitent sinner happy. You must turn from sin, or turn to misery—you must either renounce your sins or else renounce all hope of a blissful eternity. You cannot be married to Christ and Heaven until you are divorced from sin and self!

I believe that every man’s conscience bears witness to this if it is at all honest. There are consciences of a very curious kind about at this time— abortions—and not true consciences at all. I find men deliberately acting upon crooked policy and yet they talk of truth and holiness! Yet every conscience that is not drunk with the mixed wine of pride and unbelief will tell a man that when he does evil he cannot expect to be approved— that if he neglects to do good he cannot expect to have the same reward as if he had done the good—that, in fact, there must be in the nature of things, a penalty attached to crime! Conscience says as much as that and now God, Himself, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, puts it to you—you must repent or perish! If you go on in your evil ways, you must be lost. There must be a turning from sin or the Most High God can never look upon you with favor. Do you hear this? Oh, that you would let it sink into your heart and work repentance in you!

III. This leads me on to the third point which is a joyful one—GOD FINDS PLEASURE IN MEN’S TURNING FROM SIN. Read the passage again—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.” Among the highest of the Divine joys is the pleasure of seeing a sinner turn from evil! God delights in those first thoughts which men have towards Himself when, being careless up to then, they, all of a sudden begin to reflect upon their ways and consider their condition before God. He looks with pleasure upon you who have before been wild and thoughtless; who, at last, meditate upon Eternity and weigh the future of sin and judgment. When you listen to those inviting Words, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near,” God is pleased to observe your attention.

When you begin to feel, “I am sorry for my sins; oh, that I had never committed them!” He hears your sighs. When your heart is sick of sin; when you loathe all evil and feel that though you cannot get away from it, yet you would if you could, then He looks down on you with pitying eyes. When there is a new will springing up in your heart, by His good Grace—a will to obey and believe—then, also, the Father smiles. When He hears within you a moaning and a sighing after the Father’s house and the Father’s bosom—you cannot see Him—but He is behind the wall listening to you! His hand is secretly putting your tears into His bottle and His heart is feeling compassion for you. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.” Mark that last character—the man has only a little hope, but the Lord takes pleasure in him! When yet the good work is only in the twilight, God is as pleased with it as watchmen are pleased with the first beams of morning light! Yes, He is more glad than they that watch for the morning!

When, at last, you come to prayer and begin to cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” God is well pleased, for here He sees clear signs that you are coming to yourself and to Him. His Spirit says, “Behold, he prays!” And He takes this as a token for good. When you unfeignedly forsake sin, God sees you do it, and He is so glad that His holy angels spy out His joy! I am sure that God watches the struggles of those who endeavor to escape from old habits and evil ways. When you try to conquer vile thoughts; when, at the end of the day, you sit down and cry over the day’s failures because you did not get as well through the day as you hoped to do, the Lord observes your desires and your lamentations. Just as a mother tenderly watches her child when it begins to walk and smiles as she sees it toddling from chair to chair, and puts out her finger to help it, so does God take pleasure in your early attempts after holiness, your longing to overcome sin, your sighs and crying to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

God says, “I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms,” and in the same way He is teaching you. I will tell you what pleases Him most of all, and that is when you come to His dear Son and say, “Lord, something tells me that there is no hope for me, but I do not believe that voice. I read in Your Word that You will cast out none that come unto You, and lo, I come! I am the biggest sinner that ever came, but Lord, I believe Your promise. I am as unworthy as the devil himself, but Lord, You do not ask for worthiness, but only for child-like confidence. Cast me not away—I rest in You.” “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” but it gives God a Divine pleasure to see the first grain of mustard seed of faith in a poor, turning sinner’s heart! Oh, I wish you would think of this, you that keep on condemning yourselves! When you write me those letters full of self-condemnation, you please me—and if you please me, I am sure you please God much more, who is so much more tender than I can ever be, though I would gladly try and humbly imitate Him.

How I wish I could bring you to trust my Lord, this morning, and end those cruel doubts and fears!—  
“*Artful doubts and reasoning be  
Nailed with Jesus to the tree.”*

God’s great convincing argument is His dying, bleeding Son. Oh, you chief of sinners, turn to Him, and God will have pleasure in your turning! Do you not know that all these thoughts towards Him are breathed into you by His Spirit? All those regrets for sin, those desires after holiness and especially your trusting in Christ, hoping in His mercy—all are His work—they would never have been found in your soul if the Spirit had not put them there! If I saw a fair flower growing on a dunghill, I should conclude that a gardener had been there, some day or other, and had cast seed upon the heap. And when I see your soul commencing to pray, hope and trust, I say to myself, “God is there! The Holy Spirit has been at work there, or else there would not have been even that feeble trust, that faint hoping.” Be of good courage—you are drawing near to a gracious God!

During the rest of your life, when you go on fighting with sin and when you consecrate yourself to Jesus—when you wash your Savior’s feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head with the Magdalene, or when you break your alabaster box of myrrh and pour it on the Master’s head with Mary—the Lord has great pleasure in you for Jesus’ sake! He takes no pleasure in the groans and cries of Hell, but in the repentance of sinners He has joy! The fires of Hell give Him no delight, but penitents smiting on their breasts and Believers beholding Christ with tearful eyes are a royal spectacle to Him! It must be so—He swears it—and it must be true. Cease your quibbling and believe unto eternal life!

IV. Lastly, since He has pleasure in men’s turning to Him, GOD THEREFORE EXHORTS TO IT AND ADDS AN ARGUMENT. “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways for why will you die, O house of Israel?” He perceives His poor creature standing with his back to Him, looking to idols, looking to sinful pleasures, looking towards the city of destruction— and what does God say to him? He says, “Turn!” It is a very plain direction, is it not? “Turn!” Or, “Right about face!” That is all. “I thought,” says one, “I was to feel so much anguish and so much agony.” I should not wonder if you do feel it, but all that God says is, “Turn!” You now face the wrong way! “Turn” and face the right way. That turning is true repentance. A changed life is of the essence of repentance and that must spring from a changed heart, from a changed desire, from a changed will. God says, “Turn!” Oh, that you would hear and obey!

Notice how He puts it in the present tense—“Turn you, turn you,” not tomorrow, but now! Nobody will be saved tomorrow—all who are saved, are saved today. “Now is the accepted time.” “Turn!” Oh, by the infinite mercy of God, who will enable you to turn, I pray you turn from every evil, from every self-confidence—to God! No turning but turning to God is worth having. If the Lord turns you, you will turn to Him, and to confidence in Him, alone—and to His service and His fear.

“Turn you, turn you.” See, the Lord puts it twice! He must mean your good by these repeated directions. Suppose my man servant was crossing yonder river and I saw that he would soon be out over his head and so, in great danger? Suppose I cried out to him, “Stop! Stop! If you go another inch you will drown. Turn back! Turn back!” Will anybody dare to say, “Mr. Spurgeon would feel pleasure if that man were to drown”? It would be a cruel cut. What a liar the man must be who would hint such a thing when I am urging my servant to turn and save his life! Would God plead with us to escape unless He honestly desired that we should escape? I think not. Every sinner may be sure that God takes no pleasure in his death when He pleads with him in these unrivalled words, “Turn you, turn you; why will you die?” There is what the old divines used to call an ingemination, an inward groaning, a reduplication of pleading in these words, “Turn you, turn you.” He pleads each time with more emphasis. Will you not hear?

Then He finishes up with asking men to find a reason why they should die. There ought to be a weighty reason to induce a man to die. “Why will you die?” This is an unanswerable question in reference to eternal death. Is there anything to be desired in eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power? Can there be any gain in losing your own soul? Can there be any profit in going away into everlasting punishment? Can there possibly be anything to be wished for and desired in being cast into Hell where your worm dies not and your fire is not quenched? O Souls, be not unreasonable! Do not neglect this great salvation! It must be the most awful thing in all the world to die in your sins— why do you choose it? Do you desire shipwreck? Why hug that rocky shore and tempt destruction? Will you eat the poisoned dainties of sin because they are sugared with a little present pleasure? In the end, the gall of bitterness will fill your heart.

I am no flatterer—I dare not be, for I love you and would persuade you to turn unto the Lord. There is a flower which always turns to the sun— oh, that you would, in the same manner, turn God! Why turn away from Him? “WHY?” is a little word, but how much it takes to answer its demands! WHY do you continue in sin? WHY do you refuse to believe your Savior? WHY will you provoke God? WHY will you die? Turn round and say, “Oh, God, I cannot bear to perish everlastingly and, therefore, I cannot endure to live in sin. May Your rich Grace help me!” Oh, that you would trust in the Lord Jesus! Repose in Him and in His finished work, and all is well!

Did I hear you say, “I will pray about it”? Better trust at once! Pray as much as you like after you have trusted, but what is the good of unbelieving prayers? “I will talk with a godly man after the service.” I charge you first trust in Jesus! Go home alone, trusting in Jesus. “I should like to go into the Enquiry Room.” I dare say you would, but we are not willing to pander to popular superstition! We fear that in those rooms men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of Enquiry Rooms turn out well. Go to your God at once, even where you now are! Cast yourself on Christ, now, at once, before you stir an inch! In God’s name I charge you, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 33.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 558, 202.  
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THE BOND OF THE COVENANT  
NO. 1840

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and you shall know that I am the Lord.”  
Ezekiel 20:34-38.**

THIS striking utterance was given forth by that renowned Seer, Ezekiel, at the time when the Israelites, scattered in every country, had begun to forget their nationality. They judged it prudent and wise, as much as possible, to disguise their distinctive character and melt their race into the Babylonian or Chaldean—and become like the heathen. But God, who chose His people of old, would not have it so, and He interposed with this striking passage—“And that which comes into your mind shall not be at all, that you say, we will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.” The Lord tells them that He had them for a people and He meant to hold them for a people. Whether they delighted in it or not, He would not let them go! He pronounced a solemn oath concerning them—“As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you.”

They shall no more become Babylonians than of old He would suffer them to become Egyptians. This passage, which I have taken for a text, may very truthfully be regarded as a threat of terrible judgment upon erring Israel—as much as if the Lord had said, “You of the house of Israel, whom I have made to be the type of My spiritual people, you shall be Mine. And if you wander from Me, I will distinguish you by special punishments. Therefore I now threaten you with special judgments. If you will attempt to mix yourselves up with the Gentiles, I will deal with you with a startling severity, such as I have never shown unto the heathen. Your sins are greater, your privileges greater and so shall your chastisements be greater. You, only, have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

Dear Friends, it is a dreadful thing to profess to belong to the people of God! It is a matter of great privilege if it is true, but if it is a lie, it is an awful thing involving sevenfold judgment! God will cause His professing people to be distinguished from other men and they that come in among them, who are not truly of them, shall be so dealt with that both the ears of him that hears thereof shall tingle! Special severities will overtake apostate professors—therefore they had better know what they are doing. You cannot trifle with the Christian faith! You cannot be a traitor and quietly glide away—you shall be marked as the son of perdition! You shall be known like Judas, as one for whom it would have been better that he had never been born! A profession of Christianity, without the real possession of it, will turn out to be a mantle of fire to him who puts it on! Such is the run of this passage.

But at the same time, reading between the lines and considering the verses very carefully, another reading is suggested—God, if He does not show distinguishing judgment, will display distinguishing Grace. Without twisting the passage at all, I will use the whole of it as setting forth that peculiar favor which God intends to exhibit towards His own chosen and of which they shall be the subjects, to the praise of the glory of His Grace. I see within this threatening black cloud, a bright light of infinite mercy, a silver lining of love! A golden thread of Grace runs through these threatening verses, for the Lord speaks of taking away the rebels from among His people but, all along, when He addresses the remnant of His people, His tone is that of Grace.

He solemnly threatens judgments, but these are preparations for mercy. He preaches to them, by the Prophet, concerning mercy and judgment blended in effectual working for salvation. Lovingkindness underlies and overlays His wrath. He puts on a frown in order to smile. He deals harshly with His chosen, that He may deal safely with them—killing them, that He may make them alive—piercing them with the arrows of conviction, that He may pour in the wine and oil of His healing comforts! The central part of my text is this—“I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.” I want briefly to explain what that means. Our second subject shall be the method which God often pursues with men when He is bringing them into this bond of the Covenant. By terrible things in righteousness He saves those whom He determines to bring to Himself!

When we have spoken upon that matter, our third point will be the ultimate design of it all—of His severity in leading them by so stern a way and of His love in bringing them into the bond of the Covenant—the design is, “You shall know that I am Jehovah.” Judgment and mercy are both intended to make men know, in their inmost souls, that He who thus deals with them is, indeed, the living God.

I. First, then, the MEANING OF BRINGING MEN INTO THE BOND OF THE COVENANT. If we take the passage as referring to the work of Grace, it signifies that they shall know under what Covenant they stand. Beloved, there is scarcely a more important question for all of us than this—under which Covenant do we live? Are we under Law or under Grace? By the very fact of our creation, we are under bonds to our Maker to love and serve Him—and this is a form of the Covenant of Works. In serving God, we should have found happiness. In rebelling against Him, we have found sorrow. Thus the Covenant which was bound up with the very nature of things had its sanctions of reward and penalty.

Without being strictly defined in words, the foundation of it was laid from the first. But God put it into words when He dealt with us in Adam, our first Covenant-head. He was forbidden to eat of the fruit of one special tree and he was warned that in the day in which he should eat of it, he would surely die. This Covenant was speedily broken—man being in honor, continued not. Our whole race in Adam broke the Covenant and fell from its high estate. There we lie by nature, condemned under the Covenant of Works. Set forth, as that Covenant is, in the Ten Commandments of the Law, it is as terrible as it is pure. The commandment is holy, just and good, but we constantly violate it. The perfect Law has been broken by all of us—by some it has been violated openly by wanton, willful acts of rebellion—by all of us it has been broken in heart and will. He that breaks one link has broken the chain. He that is guilty of one command is guilty of the whole Law—for it is one and indivisible.

Now, you that are under the Law, hoping to be saved by your own works, see where you are—as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse, for, “cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.” Whatever excellencies you may have—and you have many in the sight of men—yet if you are under that Covenant of Works, your comeliness is turned into corruption! “This do and you shall live,” is no promise to you now, seeing you have failed to do! It becomes to you a curse because of your transgressions. But there is another and a better Covenant, which is not a Covenant of Works at all, but of free, rich, Sovereign Grace. It was made of old with Christ, the second Adam, our better Covenant-Head. Its tenor was on this wise— He shall obey the Father’s will—actively and passively He shall do and suffer the will of the Most High. And, in doing so, He shall save those whom the Father has given Him! A great multitude inherit the reward of Christ’s perfect obedience for, being chosen by God and having the Lord Jesus to be their Representative, they are made to live by His fulfilling and honoring of the Law.

The great question for each one is—Am I under that New Covenant? Am I under that Covenant of Grace and peace?—that Covenant “ordered in all things and sure”? You can answer that question by this one—Are you in Christ Jesus? Are you resting wholly on Him, alone? If so, mark this—the Lord has said, by His servant Isaiah, “I have given Him for a Covenant to the people.” If you have Christ, you are in the Covenant of Grace! If you are trusting in Him, God has made an everlasting Covenant with you, ordered in all things and sure, concerning which we read in your hearing, just now, both in Jeremiah 31 and in Ezekiel 36. Dwell on those Covenant promises! “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” And again, “And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.”

Oh, the blessedness of being under such a sure Covenant! This is what is aimed at, that God may bring His own from under the Law and place them under the Covenant of Grace. Though as yet they care nothing about it, He will bring them to know and realize that they are standing in the Covenant of Grace, with Christ as their Covenant-Head. The drift of the inward work is to lead them to accept the gift of God and so to come “into the bond of the Covenant.”

They shall, secondly, be led to see how this Covenant binds them to God. If you are in this Covenant, you belong to God and He will have you, for the Christ will not shed His blood in vain, nor pay a ransom price for that which He will not possess. He will keep to Himself the spoil which He has taken from the hand of the mighty—and His Father will give Him to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied. If you are in this Covenant, you belong to the Lord forever and neither shall it be possible for you to be your own, or to be the devil’s. You are “the sheep of His pasture and the people of His hand”—and He will keep you as the apple of His eye and preserve you as the jewels of His crown. You are bound to Him if you are in the Covenant of Grace—do you wish to break this Covenant? Do you wish to depart from the solemn obligations which that Covenant of love casts upon you?

Though this Covenant is not of works, it produces more works than the Covenant of Works ever could, for, being saved by Grace, it is written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.” Grace, and the gratitude which comes of it, form a firmer bond to hold the soul from straying than the hope of reward can possibly do! It is stronger than the fear of Hell. O, mighty Grace, you hold us with the cords of a man from which we never desire to escape! We are the Lord’s people and He is our God! He holds us and we hold to Him. He is our Husband and our hearts are knit to Him. The bond of the Covenant unites us to the thrice holy God and none shall break the sacred union.

To come under the bond of the Covenant means, also, to come under the discipline of the Covenant, for they that are in gracious Covenant with God will find that He deals with them as with sons and, inasmuch as He loves them, they shall know the truth of that Word of God—“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” “If they break My Covenant,” He says, “I will chasten them with the rod of a man.” And again, “You, only, have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” If you enter into Covenant with God and you turn aside, even in little matters, you shall soon discover that the Lord is a jealous God! If you disobey God, He will make sin bitter to you. He will not let you transgress as other men do—goats may wander with impunity, but the sheep may not! God reserves the ungodly unto the day of judgment, but judgment begins even now at the house of God! His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor if He purges nothing else! You cannot be in Covenant with God and yet be left alone in your transgressions, for it is to the reprobate that He says “Let him alone, he is given unto idols.”

The mark of God’s people is that if they sin they smart—and if they wander they are whipped back. Despondency, sickness, bereavement, loss and even temporal death may fall upon the chosen as visitations of God to deliver them from the power of Satan! So, you see, it is God’s design to bring His people to know their Covenant standing, to see how the Covenant binds them to their God and to feel that this holds them under a holy discipline such as God does not exercise upon the mass of mankind, but only upon “a people near unto Him.”

Further, this coming under the bond of the Covenant means, surely, that they yield to its restraint. I do not know how to give a better expression to what I mean than by quoting the lines we often sing—

*“Oh to Grace how great a debtor  
Daily I’m constrained to be!  
Let that Grace, now, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”*

Can Grace ever be a fetter? Oh, yes—it is the most blessed of all fetters, for it holds us fast—and yet never violates our liberty! It binds the very heart in willing captivity. This is the bond of the Covenant. “Oh,” says one, “I do not want to be under any bond.” Then, in all probability, you are bound by the chains of self-will. In Grace you can be under bonds, yet not in bondage. I am in the bonds of wedlock, but I feel no bondage—on the contrary, it is a joy to be so bound! The bonds of love and the cords of a man cause no chaffing. The bond of Grace is a marriage bond, inviting us to Him whom we love above all, even the altogether lovely Bridegroom of our souls! It is our joy to look up to our Covenant-Head and obey Him in all things!

This bond holds us back from doing what it would be to our injury to do. It restrains us from sinning against God. Instead of wishing to be free of this bond, we desire to realize it in its most stringent form—by being crucified with Christ—nailed up hands and feet so as to be incapable of following the wandering wishes of the unregenerate nature! O, that we were utterly incapable of sin! Would God we were bound to holiness as with belts of steel! I hope many of you feel the blessed restraint of Covenant relationship, so that you cry with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” The love of Christ both restrains and impels us because we thus judge that if One died for all, then all died, and that He died for all that they which live might not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again! Blessed bond of the Covenant! Oh, to wear its easy yoke and bow before its gentle scepter! The heart is never so free as when it is brought into complete captivity to the love of God. The true freedom of the will is freedom from sin. O, Lord, truly I am Your servant! You have loosed my bonds; and now I cry, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar!”

But surely, it means, also, the security of the Covenant—“I will bring you under the bond of the Covenant,” must mean, “I will bind you to the Lord Jesus, your Surety and Bondsman, and He shall secure you forever.” This Covenant is everlasting, a Covenant of Salt, hence we sing—

*“This bond shall never break,  
Though earth’s old columns bow!  
Our sure foundations never shake,  
We’re one with Jesus now!”*

One with Jesus we shall always be, for who shall separate us? That is a blessed phrase which speaks of our soul being bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. This is what the Covenant has done for us—it has made us so one with Christ and in Christ; so one with the eternal Father, that it is written, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Bound by everlasting bonds, who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? I cannot linger longer over this precious Truth of God, but surely it is an unspeakable privilege to be brought into such a Covenant bond! I trust many of you know by experience what it means.

How earnestly do I pray that some who have been strangers to this matter may begin to spell it out this morning. Oh, you whom God means to save, I trust He has brought you into such a condition that you would give your eyes to come from under the Covenant of Works, since there is no salvation there! You feel it must be Grace, alone, that can save such unworthy creatures as you are and, though you cannot, as yet, see spiritual truth, you are longing and looking out for some ground of hope in the infinite loving kindness and long-suffering of God in Christ Jesus. Well, be of good cheer, for I am going to talk to you, now, about the way in which God deals with many whom He brings under the bond of the Covenant!

II. This is our second head. THE EXPERIENCE OF SOME IN COMING UNDER THE BOND OF THE COVENANT. I do not want to be mistaken. I believe that many are brought under the bond of the Covenant by very simple and gentle means, especially those who sweetly yield to the gentle drawings of the Holy Spirit. Very early in life some are brought to Jesus with little terror or distress of mind. Let them be very grateful for it. If you come to Christ, I do not care how you come, for I am sure you could not have come at all if the Father had not drawn you and if He has drawn you, there is no mistake in your method of coming! If you have tasted but little of the bitterness of sin because you have been kept from it by preventing Grace, do not raise a question on that account. Though you may not have been made to sit and sigh in the blackness of darkness, it is enough if you now see the great Light of God. The Lord, in great tenderness, brings many of His children to Himself early in the morning, so early that they enjoy a long and blessed day in His service—and they are strangers to those broken bones which come of a long sojourn in the enemy’s camp.

These Israelites to whom Ezekiel spoke had gone very far into sin, as far as they could go—they had been false to their promises, wicked in their lives and rebellious in heart against their God. With many of this character, the Lord deals with a singular severity of love. He strikes them with a sword, for only so can their sins be slain. Of those processes of Grace we will now speak.

To begin, will you follow me in the text at the 34th verse? Here were a people whom God had chosen to be His own, but they had ignored that choice and had said to themselves that they would be like the families of the countries, to serve gods of wood and stone. Many among those whom the Lord has chosen in His secret purposes are saying to themselves, “We will never belong to those religious people; we will never be called cants, hypocrites, Methodists, or Presbyterians.” They have a perfect horror of being ridiculed for Christ’s sake! These persons are, for the present, perfectly satisfied to take their lot with the multitude—distinguishing Grace has no charms for them. Hear, then, what God will do with such if He means to bring them under the bond of the Covenant!

First, He will cause them to come out from their present company. “I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.” You do not mean to leave your present settlement, but you shall come out of it once and for all. You shall feel yourself to be as a speckled bird among your former associates. The Lord will make you to loathe the amusements which are now your delight—and the lusts of the flesh—which you now follow after as the fish hastens to the bait, shall become abominations to you! You shall find in your old sins such death and corruption that you shall turn from them as a man turns from a rotting carcass. God can readily enough accomplish this by ways known to Himself. Your old friends will not miss you and, what is more, they will not desire you to return to them! You shall be so miserable that they will be glad to be rid of you! As the wounded stag retires into the depths of the forest to bleed and die, alone, because those which are not wounded roughly push at it with their horns, so it shall be with you—you shall prefer solitude to the galling words of the ungodly.

If the Lord has chosen you and you have chosen sin, He will deal with you with a strong hand and an outstretched arm—and make you know His fury against evil. His love to you shall show itself in wrath against your sin. You shall come to think of God as angry with the wicked every day, for so He is. You shall hear that sentence sounding in your ears, “If he turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready.” What is more, you shall not only read the words, but you shall feel the arrows of vengeance sticking fast in you, till you long to escape from your transgressions.

The Israelites in Egypt, for a time, were glad to dwell there and they began to worship the gods of Egypt. But presently God put it into Pharaoh’s heart to oppress them—and he did so most grievously—Israel had to make bricks without straw till their bondage grew unbearable and they cried unto the Lord their God. He will make it so with you, if you are one of His, for out of the Egypt of the world you shall come. You may get the flavor of the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt upon your palate and delight in then, but you shall yet be made to nauseate that in which you delight—and long for heavenly manna which you now despise! The Lord Jesus will seek out His own sheep and separate them from all other flocks.

Note, next, that God said He would bring them into distress and loneliness—“And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people.” It was not to be a wilderness like the wilderness of sin where there were no inhabitants, but, “I will bring you into the wilderness of the people.” This is, indeed, a terrible wilderness, for you walk in the midst of crowds and yet you are perfectly alone—you mingle with the great congregation and yet feel that none can enter into your secret. How wretched to sit here and feel that there is not another man like you in all this vast assembly! You have come into a howling wilderness where there is no water of joy, or track of hope. Where now your mirth and giddiness? Where now your comrades in iniquity? The Lord can soon make the gay worldling into the desponding solitary. I have seen Him touch proud young men and they have been brought to deep humiliation of spirit, so as to be glad to sit down like little children and learn the way of the Kingdom of God! Oh, you stiff-necked, hard-hearted sinners—if God’s almighty love goes forth, He will soon turn your hearts of stone into flesh till you become ready to weep yourselves away because you have grieved your Savior!

Many here can remember when they were in that condition—when the ministry seemed a wilderness! They went up to hear the Word of God preached and, while others were converted, they were not! The Bible, itself, seemed to be a wilderness—when they read it they found no comfort. The Book appeared to thunder at them! Great pieces of ordnance were fired against their consciences out of its Law. They turned to Christian friends and, sometimes, to unchristian friends—but from neither the one nor the other could they obtain any help! No man understood them—they did not understand themselves! “They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.” Like the Jews in Babylon, they sat down and wept. Then was fulfilled in them this Word of God—“I will bring you into the wilderness of the people.” This is God’s way of bringing men to Himself. He digs them up by the roots, that He may remove them and plant them by the rivers of waters in the garden of the Lord.

Read on. What does He say next?— “And there will I plead with you face to face.” Brothers and Sisters, you that know what this means by experience must help me out, for I cannot describe it in words. When the Lord becomes so realized to the guilty conscience that there seems to be nothing anywhere except God and that poor sinner, face to face with one another, then there is a time of fear and trembling, indeed! For God to stand face to face with an unpardoned sinner and plead with Him is a matter of deep solemnity. Do you know it? The sinner then cries out with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Why, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” If the Lord does but let loose His terrors upon men’s minds and deals with them hand to hand, then their beauty is consumed like the moth! The poor preacher tried often to touch their proud hearts, but he could not reach them. But when God comes, by His Holy Spirit, as a spirit of bondage and begins to plead with them face to face, they are right speedily low in the dust! They know not how to answer the Lord for one of a thousand of the sins which He presses upon their consciences! When He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, the hail soon sweeps away their refuges of lies! If I could have been saved by finding one excuse for my sin when I was under conviction, I could not have discovered it. I was without excuse. I knew that I was guilty and I wondered that I was not sent to Hell then and there! When once God pleaded with me, “face to face,” there was no help for it but to plead guilty at once.

The Lord further declares He will plead with them as He pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness. How did He do that? Why, very terribly indeed! Certain men had rebelled against God and against Moses—and God said, “Hang up their heads in the face of the sun.” At another time when certain of them rebelled against Aaron, the earth opened and swallowed them up—and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive into the Pit. Once the Lord pleaded with them by sending fiery serpents among them— and multitudes were bitten and died. At another time the pestilence multiplied graves at each resting place. He brought them very low by these terrible pleadings! Had not Moses stood in the gap, as mediator, and had not Aaron intervened as a faithful High Priest, they had been utterly consumed! Truly the Lord pleaded with them by terrible things in righteousness!

Beloved, broken-hearted Hearer, are you passing through that stage? Is God pleading with you in that fashion? Does He bring judgment after judgment upon you? Do His threats follow each other like peals of thunder? Has He burned up all your comfort? Has He scorched and withered all your confidence? Are you brought unto the dust of death? Do you cry out, “My soul chooses strangling rather than life! Day and night Your hand is heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer”? Believe me, you are not alone in such a dread experience—many of God’s dear children have traversed this valley of death shade and, by this road, they have been brought under the bond of the Covenant! It is not that God loves to treat us thus, for He does not afflict willingly, but, like a wise father He will not spare the rod and spoil the child. Self-confidence must be killed! Carnal confidences must be destroyed! Self-righteousness must be slain. The Lord will turn your sweetness into bitterness and your light into darkness, that you may be fully weaned from your own ways and may be made willing to be saved by Sovereign Grace.

What more does God do? Well, it is said, “And I will cause you to pass under the rod.” What is this passing under the rod? I have frequently seen sheep, when the shepherd has required to count them—he makes them pass through a half-opened gate and there he numbers them. They would all come rushing through, but the shepherd blocks the way and, as they come out, one by one, he touches them with his staff and so counts them. The Lord makes His chosen to pass through a narrow place, even a strait gate, where only one can come at a time—and then and there He counts them and causes them to give an account of themselves individually. You have been hidden away among the thousands, but now you shall be made to appear as a separate individual and so you shall come under the rod of the Lord and be numbered with His flock. Perhaps you are frightened, as the sheep are when the shepherd counts them, for they think they are all going to be killed—but there is far more room for comfort than for dismay—for that which God counts, He values, and if He visits you with special chastisement it is because He has special designs of Grace towards you which you shall understand, by-and-by!

Then mark this—as the shepherd, by counting his own sheep, declares and exercises his right of possession, so the Lord, when He wakes up our minds to feel our personality, causes us to recognize that we are not our own, but are bought with a price. What a blessed knowledge that is when we discover that we are not our own, for in it lies the brightest hope for us! If I had been my own, I would have been lost! It is because I am the Lord’s that I shall not be lost, for He will not lose the Father’s gift, or His own purchase. They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, even as Jesus says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” This is to come under the rod—to be counted one by one—and to be accounted to belong to God alone.

Moreover, we come under the rod of rulership, for a rod, in the old time, was the usual scepter of kings. What a blessed thing it is when a man comes under the rulership of Christ—when he cries—

*“I yield—by Sovereign Grace subdued;  
Who can resist its charms?  
And throw myself, by wrath pursued  
Into my Savior’s arms!”*

“I will bring you under the rod.” That is, “I will make you to yield willing obedience to My Law and Word.” It means, also, the rod of chastisement. “Happy is the man whom God corrects.” Let the afflicted rejoice in his adversities instead of being cast down by them, for, “whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone, Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*“I will bring you under the rod.”

Now, have I been describing the experience of any person here? I feel sure I have! Thousands who will read these words will leap for joy as they exclaim, “This is precisely where I am! I said, ‘Surely He is going to destroy me,’ but if this is the way in which the Lord brings me under the bond of the Covenant, I will forever bless His name!” May the Holy Spirit apply these, my words, to all the prisoners of hope!

III. But time fails me, so I must close by noticing THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF ALL THIS. This bringing them under the bond of the Covenant has a grand intent in it.

The first design is evident in the text—it is to bind them to God. We would have gone astray long ago and entirely left our God, if it had not been for our bitter experience when the Lord was making Himself known to us. In later life, all the better crops come in from having a deep plowing before the seed is sown. I bear the scars of my terrible convictions about me to this day—and they prevent my trifling with sin. When I came to Christ, my soul was stripped to the skin—not a rag of my own righteousness or of my own strength remained upon me. I was worse than a beggar! I was utterly destitute and did not even know how to beg.

It seems to me that some of my Brothers and Sisters came to Christ with a good coat on and have never ceased to wear it under their Gracegiven robes. Too many are unable to say, “Grace,” without stuttering. But when a man’s mouth has been washed out with the wormwood of selfhumiliation, it is a fine thing for his pronunciation—he can say, “Grace,” I will guarantee you—and give it a full emphatic sound! If anybody had said to me, “You are a saved soul and the Lord has put away your sin, but your salvation is the result of a good, natural disposition,” I am afraid I would have proved the reverse by calling him a liar to his face! It would have angered me to hear such a falsehood! Grace, alone, has made me to differ and saved me through faith in Christ Jesus. I cannot go any further, my Brothers and Sisters. My highly-intelligent, cultured Brethren may go where they like, but I must abide with the Doctrines of Grace! The march of proud human intellect will end with the devil, but I am bound, in all sincerity, to continue where I began, namely, with Free Grace.

Where else can I go? Nowhere else is there for me a beam of light, or a ray of comfort. Rock of Ages, I am secure on You! But once off that foundation, I sink in quicksand. Much of our smarting experience in coming home to God is meant to bring us under the bond of the Covenant so that we shall never leave it again. We have had such a drilling and dressing that the very thought of any other salvation but that which is of Grace is detestable to us.

The next design of God is that He may entirely separate His people from the world. “I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me.” When God makes His servants to bitterly know the evil fruit of sin, then they no longer hunger for that forbidden fruit. “Oh, you are straight-laced,” says one. Indeed, we are, where sin is concerned! A boy climbed into a neighbor’s garden and stole unripe plums and, after eating them, he became very ill and was forced to drink pints of horrible medicine to save his life. When he was better, his school fellows said to him, “Come with us and steal some plums,” but they seemed to be mocking him. The boy is very straight-laced, is he not? He remembers the gripes and the pains which those plums brought him and he will have no more of them! The burnt child dreads the fire. Thus the Lord often brings His people away from their sins by giving them sharp and cutting experiences of what evil will do for them. If such is the present consequences of sin, they begin to guess what sin will bring them when they come into judgment and condemnation on account of it.

Furthermore, the Lord chastens His people, thus, that He may bring them into their own land of promise into the rest of His love. Whereas this text tells us of the rebels—that they shall not enter into the land of Israel—it is implied that those who obey the Divine command shall enter into the land of promise and peace. Blessed be God for the land of promise into which we enter by faith! What a subject! I wish I had a week in which to preach upon it! When you quit the desert of Sinai, or the Covenant of Works, you enter into the land of promise, or the Covenant of Grace—and then you plead the precious promises of God and realize the riches of His Grace to the delight of your soul! Then is it true, “so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” But no man ever gets to live upon the promise of God until, first of all, he is weaned from all self-reliance and all self-glorying. When God has stamped self with the seal of death and we have seen destruction written upon all carnal confidence, then we are glad to accept as a gift that which we can never win as a reward!

The table of Covenant-Grace is loaded when, in all the land of human merit, there remains not a morsel of bread! None so joyfully enter into the land of Grace as those who are weary of the wilderness and can find no rest in their own doings. As the way to Canaan was across a desert, so the way to the Covenant is often by a bitter experience. And as the land that flows with milk and honey was all the lovelier because of the howling wilderness, so is Grace all the more precious because of the utter failure of self!

Last of all, the great end of all is that we may know the Lord. I speak thoughtfully when I say I fear that large numbers of professors do not know the Lord. That is to say, the Lord Jehovah—as known to Ezekiel, is not known by many who profess to believe in the true God. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But He is not the god of the 19th Century. This generation has made a god of its own. The effeminate deity of the modern school is no more the true God than Dagon or Baal. I know him not, neither do I reverence him! Jehovah is the true God—He is the God of Love—but He is also robed in Justice. He is the God of forgiveness, but He is also the God of Atonement. He is the God of Heaven, but He is also the God who sends the wicked down to Hell. We, of course, are thought to be harsh, narrowminded and bigoted—nevertheless, this God is our God forever and ever. There has been no change in Jehovah! He has revealed Himself more clearly in Christ Jesus, but He is the same God as in the Old Testament— and as such we worship Him.

When a man has smarted because of his sin and has been made to feel the burning coals of anguish in his own spirit. When the Lord has set him up as a target and shot at him with arrows which drink up his life. And, when afterwards he has been saved and the splendor of infinite love has shone upon him, then he knows Jehovah! When God has brought the contrite man into the place of security, comfort, joy and delight in Christ Jesus, then he knows the Lord! The full-orbed Deity is beheld by the broken and contrite in the day of his deliverance—neither does he know which to adore and admire most—the power, the wisdom, the justice, or the Grace of God! We love everything that is in God when we are brought under the bond of the Covenant. May God bless this word to many sorrowing spirits, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 31:31-37; Ezekiel 36:25-32; 20:32-44.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 228, 242.

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SWEET SAVOR

NO. 688

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**“I will accept you with your sweet savor.”  
Ezekiel 20:41.**

GOD does not cease to observe the sins of His people. As the eyes of Moses never waxed dim, so the eyes of God do not grow dim with regard to the sins of His chosen. We may learn this from the recapitulation of those offenses which we find in the chapter before us and in many other places in Scripture. He looks down from Heaven and beholds their wanderings, the hardness of their hearts, the stubbornness of their will, their daily and continual violations of His statutes and commands. Mercy has some other source than that of laxness in the memory of God. He knows the sins of man and He hates the sins of His people just as much as the sins of other men. No, if there are sins which are worse in God’s estimation than others, they are the sins of His own elect.

But, notwithstanding this severe strictness, and although God must have a much clearer view of the evil of sin than any of us ever can, He freely pardons those whom He reserves. He casts their sins behind His back and remembers not their iniquity. He blots out their transgression like a cloud, and their iniquities like a thick cloud. He has a time to chasten but He has also a set time to bless. He afflicts, but He does not afflict from the heart. And when He turns in a way of Grace to His people, He then seems to be flying on the wings of the wind for He comes with all His soul most heartily and richly to display His favor and His love toward the objects of His choice.

One would have thought that the persons described in this chapter never would have been acceptable to God. They had so thoroughly defiled themselves, and after so many trials had been so desperately incorrigible, that one would have supposed the chapter would have concluded with thunderbolts of vengeance and a terrible voice condemning them to be driven forever from the face of the Most High. Instead of this it concludes with mercy! The trumpet ceases its loud swell, and the melodious tone of the harp is heard in gentle notes of melody. The thunder and the lightning are over, the storm is past, and the still small voice, in refreshing calm, proclaims the infinite pardon that proceeds from a tender Father’s heart.

Our text seems to me very full of fatness. Its savor will be doubtless passing sweet to those who have grace to appreciate it. We shall contemplate it in two lights. First we have a promise that the persons of His people shall be accepted as a sweet savor. Sinners are accepted through the merits of Christ: “I will accept you with your sweet savor.” I cannot accept you otherwise, but I will accept you thus. Then, secondly (which is more consistent with the context), we are assured that our offerings shall be accepted—“I will accept you with your sweet savor.” I will not only love and receive you, but I will also receive your worship and your service.

Your sweet savor, those same things which once you offered to idols, you shall from now on bring as an offering to Me and when I have accepted you and you are reconciled to Me, then I will accept your good works and your prayers, and your praises, too.

I. First of all, as being the fundamental evidence of Divine Grace, THE LORD ACCEPTS THE PERSONS OF HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE SWEET SAVOR OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The merits of our great Redeemer are sweet savor in the nostrils of the Most High. Whether we speak of the active or passive righteousness of Christ there is alike an overpowering fragrance. Such was the merit of His active life by which He honored the Law of God and exemplified every precept like a precious jewel in the pure setting of His own humanity.

Such, too, the merit of His passive obedience as He endured with unmurmuring submission, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness—and with the ever-deepening stream of sorrow—and at length yielded to that unknown agony when He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane. And then when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked out His hair. He stretched His hands to the nails and was fastened to the cruel wood that He might suffer the wrath of God on our behalf. These two things are sweet before the Most High, and for the sake of His doing and His dying, His substitutionary sufferings and His vicarious obedience, the Lord God of infinite Justice accepts us with the sweet savor of Christ.

There are many sweet savors mentioned in the Old Testament. One of the first is the sacrifice of Noah where the word is used which is implied here. As soon as Noah came out of the ark he offered up clean beasts, and it is said, “the Lord God smelled a sweet savor of rest.” That is the very word here—a sweet savor or a savor of rest. And Noah obtained a Covenant made with him and with all creatures on the face of the earth—that a flood should no more destroy the earth—that Covenant being given partly as the result of the sweet savor of rest. In like manner there is a Covenant made with the chosen seed through our Lord Jesus Christ who is unto us a sweet savor of rest because God delights in Him as our blessed Substitute and Representative.

But I prefer to confine your attention this morning to one figure peculiarly instructive. These words, “sweet savor,” appear to me to contain an allusion to the incense which was commonly offered in religious worship and particularly to the incense which was used in the Jewish tabernacle, of which you will find a description in the thirtieth chapter of the book of Exodus. In order that the sweet merits of the Lord Jesus may be the more fragrant to your understanding, I ask you to turn to that chapter and let me refer you to some points in which the holy incense brings out clearly before our eyes the qualities and excellencies of the merits of Christ.

You will read at the thirty-fourth verse—“And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto you sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And you shall make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And you shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume, which you shall make, you shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof; it shall be unto you holy for the Lord. Whoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.”

Now you observe that this incense was sweet unto God—so, too, are the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, as a Spirit infinitely and exclusively holy, delights in holiness! As a truthful Spirit He cannot be satisfied with anything that is untruthful. As a most just, and yet loving Being, He finds in the Person of Jesus Christ an expiation which was in every way honorable to Justice, and a revelation of Grace according to the goodwill of Divine love which is precious to Himself beyond all expression, and admirable to all holy creatures far beyond all blessing and praise. Whenever the great God contemplates His own dear Son, He feels an intense delight in surveying His Character and in beholding His sufferings.

You and I, so far as we have been taught of God, must find infinite and unspeakable delight in the Person and work of Christ. But alas, we are like common people who look upon a fine picture without a cultivated understanding in the art of painting—we cannot perceive the whole beauty— we do not know the richness of its coloring and the wondrous skill of all its touches. Who but Jehovah understands holiness? Who like God knows what great love means? Or who save the Lord can comprehend justice and truth to perfection?

Therefore it is that as He gazes upon that matchless masterpiece of Love and Justice, of Truth and Holiness, embodied in the Person of His dear Son, He finds that infinite satisfaction which our faith is perpetually struggling by small degrees to realize. There is no doubt a discipline by which every faculty may be educated. If I may use so homely an idea, the nostril of one man may be refreshed with a coarse perfume which would disgust another man of finer taste. The educated nostril may be able to discern between this and that savor till it is only to be gratified with something exceedingly refined and delicate.

Adhering to the metaphor of the text, the Lord our God is so holy, and just, and true that the coarser virtues of mankind—the best of all that we can bring—might disgust Him! But when He looks upon His dear Son there is such a rarity of sweetness in the sacred confection of His blessed Character that He takes delight in it and the savor is sweet unto Him. We love Him, we delight in Him when we think of His Character. In our inmost souls we feel that there is nothing we could find fault with, but everything to admire and adore. And the most holy God finds even greater satisfaction!

The merits of the Savior are so sweet a savor to Him that we strive in vain to reach the knowledge of it. The sweetness of the incense in the Temple was meant to set this forth. The incense, however, was not the result of one sweet drug, but of several mixed together. We have four mentioned. The Talmud says there were eleven—we do not know whether there were or were not—we are content to believe, as the Scripture tells us, that there were four. Many ingredients, then, are mixed and mingled together to make up the one surpassing sweetness of this incomparable perfume.

And, Brothers and Sisters, it is certainly so in Christ Jesus. If we take the characters of other men, however excellent they may be, they only excel in some one, or possibly some two points. But when you contemplate the Savior you find all the virtues enshrined in Him. Other men are stars but He is a constellation! No, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of splendor! Other men are gems and jewels but His Character is perfect and matchless.  
If I look at Peter, I admire the crown imperial, where every jewel glitters—other men finish but a part of the picture, and the background is left—or else there is something in the foreground that is but roughly touched. But he finishes the whole, not the minutest of which is his courage. If I look at Paul, I am amazed at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God. If I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing. But when I look to the Savior I am not so much attracted by any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, and the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense—the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection.

Still more remarkable is the perfect balance of the Savior’s Character as typified to us in the exact proportions of these spices. You observe they are to be of equal weight. If you look, there is not to be so much stacte, and then but half as much of galbanum, but each one in its fair proportion—they are to be of equal weight. So is it in Christ. It is difficult to get a fully-balanced character. You can see in some men indomitable energy, but you cannot see at the same time any delicate tenderness. You will see in another an exceeding tenderness which degenerates into effeminacy through want of some sternness to modify it.

Who among you would wish to imitate Elijah? He is sterling in his integrity, a noble specimen of humanity, but the gentleness which should temper his fiery courage is so far lacking that much as you admire him you cannot love him. Even Moses—though I may venture to say that among those that are born of women there has never been a greater. There has never been one beside himself who could have his name ennobled in the same song with our great Prophet—the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb—yet, as you look at Moses, beautifully balanced as his character is in most respects, that condescending loveliness which glistens in the Savior you cannot detect about the glory even of the Hebrew lawgiver.

Brethren, the Savior’s Character has all goodness in all perfection! He is full of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. Some men, nowadays, talk of Him as if He were simply incarnate benevolence. It is not so. No lips ever spoke with such thundering indignation against sin as the lips of the Messiah. “He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” While in tenderness He prays for His tempted disciple, that his faith may not fail, yet with awful sternness He winnows the heap and drives away the chaff into unquenchable fire!

We speak of Christ as being meek and lowly in spirit, and so He was. A bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench— but His meekness was balanced by His courage—and by the boldness with which He denounced hypocrisy. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You fools and blind, you serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell?” These are not the words of the milksop some authors represent Christ to have been. He is a man— a thorough man throughout—a God-like man—gentle as a woman, but yet stern as a warrior in the midst of the day of battle. The Character is balanced—as much of one virtue as of another. As in Deity every attribute is full orbed—justice never eclipses mercy, nor mercy justice, nor justice faithfulness—so in the Character of Christ you have all the excellent things, “whatever things are lovely, whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report,” you have them all. But not one of them casts a shadow on another—they shine each and all with undimmed splendor!

Turning to the incense again, I shall want you to notice that all the ingredients of this incense were of the very finest kind—pure frankincense. And then again in the thirty-fifth verse, “pure and holy.” And then the thirty-sixth verse—“most holy.” So all the virtues of Christ were the best forms of virtue. His love was not love in word but in deed. His faithfulness was not the faithfulness of cynicism, which criticizes and finds fault—it was the faithfulness of a friend that loves at all times. Select any one trait in the Redeemer’s Character, I mind not which it is, you shall find that in that respect He will surpass the greatest master of that virtue, be he whomever he may!

Take His faith in God—I do not think we sufficiently admire the faith of Christ—that faith never wavers even in the time of His strong crying and tears. As David so richly describes it, He still trusts in God, rests on Him—appropriates the Divine name, “My God, My God,” and which adoration exclaims, “You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel.” Oh that mighty faith of His! You shall take Abraham’s faith and put it side by side with the faith of Jesus and you find the Patriarch failing here and there, though he was the father of the faithful. But the faith of Jesus was steadfast and immoveable.

Did it seem to stagger once when He said, “O My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me”? Oh, it never failed! His steadfastness was never more illustrious than when He thus spoke, “Nevertheless not as I will but as You will.” Or, again, “Your will be done.” Was not that faith exercised in purest submission? Take any other of the virtues (I have not time to do so this morning, nor is it necessary that I should, but), wherever you fasten your meditations you shall see Christ excels there—His gold is the gold of Ophir—His jewels are of the first water—His wheat is the finest of the wheat—the fat of kidneys! And when He lays Himself upon the altar it is not as the lean bullock which of old Israel would bring to God, but as the fatted one offered with the whole strength and perfection of every part of Him unto the Most High! Every component part, then, of the incense was pure, and so was every part of the merit of Christ.

You will not fail, also, to observe that there is no stint as to quantity. In some other parts of the temple service quantities are given, as, for instance, in the twenty-third and the following verses of this chapter. You have the quantities of each ingredient for making the anointing oil, yet here you have no quantities whatever for the incense. The anointing oil had five hundred shekels worth of one principal spice, and two hundred and fifty shekels worth of another—but this is to be made without limit— as if to indicate that the merits of Jesus Christ know no bounds whatever!

Oh, when that sacred box of precious ointment was broken on the Cross, who knows how far the merit of it extended? It perfumed the earth to its utmost bound so that God has had patience with it. It acted as a salt to all creation so that it might not be destroyed, and the sweet perfume went up to Heaven. The angels knew it and returned their harps, and God perceived it, and with benignant smile looked upon the human

race— *“Oh the sweet wonders of that Cross,*

***Where God the Savior loved and died!  
Her noblest life my spirit draws  
From His dear wounds and bleeding side.”***

There is no end to the merit of Jesus! You lost Sinners, you need not think that it cannot avail for you. However great your sin its ill savor can all be quenched through the sweet savor of His perfect merit! And though your sins should be so many and so numerous that it should seem impossible but that the swift witnesses as avengers of blood should follow you up with their clamors, yet God regards more His Son than He does the sin of man, and has an eye to the merit of the Savior as well as to the demerit of the sinner. The first is greater than the second, so that He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembers not the transgression of His people because His mercy in Christ Jesus endures forever. It is without stint or quantity.

I hope I shall not weary you, but this seems to me to be a rich vein. I would observe that all through this incense is spoken of as being peculiarly holy, most holy unto God. The entire dedication of Christ’s life and death to God is most remarkable. You can never see a divided aim about the Savior’s action. When but a child, He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” To the very last He was still consumed with the zeal of His Father’s house. He never had a thought of fame. It is really wonderful how little Jesus Christ seemed to notice what people thought of Him.

There used to be an idea that Christ did a great many things to prevent people from forming such-and-such erroneous impressions of Him. For instance, it was supposed that He was anxious, after His Resurrection, to make it clear that He was Himself and that He was not an impostor. I do not think such a motive ever entered into His mind. He was so simple and child-like that He acted out His whole self not perpetually guarding against misconstruction, nor restricting Himself because of the adversary. His Character was too transparent, and His actions were too unvarnished to admit of His continually locking up that loophole, or stopping up that gap. Not He! His life was clear, without a spot of defilement—His whole soul drifted right on to this one thing—the glory of God through the salvation of man.

He was not deluded for a moment by the golden apples that were cast in His pathway. They would have made Him a king, but He was a King too great to stoop to an earthly crown! As temptation could not attract Him, so neither could trials and difficulties restrain Him. Like an arrow from a bow that has been drawn by a strong archer, He sped right onward to the great goal of His existence—the accomplishment of the work that God had given Him to do. “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!” He set His face to go up to Jerusalem—He never turned His face away until He could look up to Heaven and say, “It is finished!” and then He gave up the ghost. Christ’s merits are most holy, purely offered unto God—no selfishness, no worldliness— everything Divine.

This incense, although little is said of it, was, of course, compounded when the ingredients were all brought together. It had to be compounded with great care, according to the art of the confectioner. Now, there certainly is great art and wondrous skill in the composition of the Savior’s life. Why there is wondrous skill about the record of it, for those who have denied the authenticity of the evangelists ought to accept a challenge which has often been put to them. Are there four narrations written? Would somebody who believes these to be forgeries kindly forge a fifth? Would somebody be pleased to write another which, though as much a forgery as any of the other four, should be consistent and have something new to recommend it?

I would even venture to say if somebody attempted to make one new miracle, or write the fabulous record, they would find it as impossible to write a miracle on paper as to work the miracle—for there are some traits and points about the miracles of the Savior which betoken their genuineness, since to describe or imagine them were not possible! We could easily prove our point if this were the time, but it is not necessary. There is a matchless beginning in the life of the Savior and a matchless ending. In what is not done there is as much that is characteristic about Christ as in what is done. If you have ever read those spurious gospels which profess to contain the early life of the Savior, the protevangeleon, you will see that this absurd, ridiculous, preposterous composition never could be harmonized with the life of the Savior.

What is not there even in the record is as wonderful, I say, as what is there! The whole life is a compound of the confectioner. But it seems that when compounded it had to be all bruised and broken. “You shall beat some of it small,” says our version. Look at that “some of it.” How did it get there? “You shall beat of it.” Not “some of it,” but “all of it.” “You shall beat of it small, very fine.” Now, certainly the whole life of the Savior was a process of bruising Him very fine. He begins with grief. He concludes with agony. “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests,” but He has not where to lay His head—and at last He has not a rag to cover Him—but hangs naked to His shame upon the Cross.

His very grave is borrowed, just as was the manger in which He lay as an Infant. Altogether the whole sweetness of the life of Christ is brought out by the exquisite griefs which He is made to suffer. I question whether anybody knows anything about the sweetness of Christian Grace till he has been tried. We are told that when the ships are floating near Ceylon they can smell the perfume of the cinnamon groves—

*“What though the spicy breezes  
Blow softly on Ceylon’s isle.”*

But navigators tell us that the perfumes are only smelt in poetry—you never smell them there—in fact, cinnamon does not smell! And that we might wander through all those groves without knowing that they were odoriferous. But take the cinnamon and begin to grind it—begin to pound it, above all begin to burn it—then it is that you get the sweetness!

And the good man’s goodness is not known so much in his days of happiness and pleasure as in his times of sorrow and of grief. We must be put into the mortar. We must feel the weight of the pestle to get the sweetness from it. And the Savior’s whole life was just that pounding beneath the heavy hammer of human wrath and at last of Divine anger against sin—and then the sweetness came forth. But this incense was most sweet to God when it came to the burning. It was put upon the altar amidst the hot coals and then the sweet perfume went up. So, Beloved, the very preciousness of Christ in its most extreme and best degree is to be seen when He is put upon the hot coals in Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

However, I need not tell you the tale over again. You loving hearts have learned it well. Your tender souls have wept all along the Via Dolorosa up to the Cross and through the hours of grief and suffering. You know what a sweet savor that must have been when the thrice holy Savior offered Himself as a holocaust to God that He might put away the ill savor of human guilt. Thus I have run through the whole. You will observe I do not stop to say a word about the four ingredients. It is very easy to spiritualize, and more especially the most difficult passages, because then you can say any nonsense you like. I have, however, omitted to do so. I do not really think there is anything to be said about them except just this—the stacte appears to have been a form of myrrh which dropped from the myrrh tree without cutting, and therefore was highly esteemed.

The voluntary sufferings of Christ, in that He gave Himself and laid down His life—no man taking it from Him—does certainly render His sufferings peculiarly delightful both to us and to God. As for the onycha there is a great dispute about it. The word seems to be allied with another signifying a distillation—and the Savior’s blood is a marvelous distillation from His body, and His grief from His soul. The galbanum appears to have been a very bitter drug and it has been thought, therefore, by commentators, that it could not have been used as a sweet perfume. I think differently. It is well known that many of the most bitter tasting drugs are sometimes the sweetest smelling when they come to the fire. And honey, which is so sweet to the taste, becomes sour when laid on the flames.

I think the bitterest form of galbanum would be the most significant if that is what is intended, for it would then express the bitterness of His griefs to His own taste, but the sweetness of the savor of these bitters to the Most High. Frankincense, especially, you know is exceedingly bitter tasting, but extraordinarily sweet when laid upon the hot bars of iron or upon hot coals. There were many sorts of frankincense—there was one which was very rare and highly esteemed which appears to have been the pure frankincense intended here. But whatever each of those drugs may have been, or may not have been, it is certain they made a compound which God reserved to Himself and enjoined that it should never be used by men for any sort of purpose. It was reserved for Himself to set forth the holy merits, the inimitable perfections, the transcendent glories of the Character of the sufferings of that precious Redeemer of whom God says to us, “I will accept you with your sweet savor.”

Now for two or three practical words before I pass on. Do you feel your need of this sweet savor? How can you hope to be accepted before God in yourselves? I think that the word “loathing,” which occurred in our reading just now, is what we must feel with regard to our sinful selves. There may be some of you, very much growing in sanctification, who possibly look upon yourselves and congratulate yourselves on the progress that you have made. But I confess, if I know anything of the Divine life, that while I do feel myself more consecrated to Christ than ever I was, yet I do feel my unworthiness to be permitted to say so.

My utter powerlessness to do anything as of myself is a present pressing and overwhelming thought with me—one that lowers me into the dust and ashes and makes me sometimes wonder that Christ should even touch such an one—and yet at the same time to hope that if God, foreseeing all this evil, could nevertheless look upon me, He will not cast me away. Brothers and Sisters, do you not feel that you cannot be accepted unless it is through this sweet savor? Well, then, when you feel this, will you, in the next place, prize that sweet savor? Speak of it in the highest and most eulogistic terms!

You cannot exaggerate when you speak of the virtues and merits of the Redeemer. Set a high store by His Person! Prize His life, and like St. Ber  
nard you may say— *“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast.”*

Brethren, what a preciousness must there be in Him to overcome our want of preciousness! What a savor to put away our ill savor! What a cleansing power in His blood to take away sin such as ours! And what glory in His righteousness to make such unacceptable creatures to be accepted in the Beloved!

And if you have gotten so far as to prize it, the next exhortation I would give you is never come before God without it. Turning back to that passage in Exodus you notice that the Lord says in the thirty-sixth verse, “You shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you.” Oh, never assay to meet God without that precious incense! Never think of such a thing! As the Apostle tells us, “Our God is a consuming fire.” Give Him this incense to consume, that He doesn’t consume us! Bring Him this merit lest our demerit should compel Him to smite us as He did Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire before the altar.

What a blessed thing, then, to stand in prayer and feel that you are offering up again the blood of Jesus! What a delightful exercise in praise to feel that your praise comes up accepted because of the incense which He offers! Oh, to live under the shadow of the atoning Cross! Brethren, we do not experience enough of this. I confess, sorrowfully, the wanderings of my own spirit away from Calvary. May the Master bind us to the horned altar where His blood was shed and may we never venture again to go away from that blessed spot! Do not attempt to meet God, except through the merit of this sweet savor.

Take care, dear Friends, that you never doubt your acceptance when you once have it. You cannot be accepted without Christ. But, when you have once gotten His merit, you cannot be unaccepted. Notwithstanding all your doubts and fears, and sins, Jehovah’s gracious eyes never look upon you in anger. Though He sees your sin and perceives it since He is Omniscient—He looks at you through Christ and sees no sin—for He answers the prayer of that hymn—

*“Him, and then the sinner see,  
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”*  
You are always accepted in Christ, you are always blessed and beloved, always dear to the Father’s heart!

Therefore lift up a song and as you see the smoking incense of the merit of the Savior coming up perpetually before the sapphire throne let the incense of your praise go up also—

*“Now to the Lamb, that once was slain,  
Salvation, glory, joy remain!”*

II. It is certain from the connection that the text means that THE LORD WILL ACCEPT THE OFFERINGS OF HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE HAS ACCEPTED THEIR PERSONS. He will not only receive them into His love but all that they do for Him He will likewise receive. Before a man is accepted his best works must be unacceptable—they come from a fountain that is impure—and they are defiled. Moreover, a man who is not reconciled to God offers nothing to God. He may seem to do so, but he has always some sinister motive which renders all his doings selfish. He has something to gain thereby or some misery to escape, and therefore he does not serve God out of a pure motive.

But as soon as the man knows that he is saved, being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then God becomes his God and he worships Him as such—and his offerings are really presented to the Most High. These are accepted. Those things which we offer to God must be such as He has appointed. The sweet smelling savor must not be made of cassia and cinnamon, and calamus—it must be made of stacte and onycha, and galbanum and frankincense. Many persons serve God sincerely, but from lack of serving Him according to His ordained method their services cannot be accepted.

God has given us a Statute Book, let us follow it. Let us not bring before God, as the Papist does, works of superstition, or works of supererogation—but let us bring such as are commanded—for to obey is better than sacrifice, to hearken, than the fat of rams. Let our lives be lives of obedience, not lives of fancy, superstition, and inventions of our own. Prayer, praise, consecration, giving, holy living—these are all ordained. Let us be diligent in the mixing up of these sweet savors. We must bring before God, if we would be accepted in our works, something of all the virtues. It must not be all galbanum nor all stacte—not all intrepid courage without any subdued reverence, nor all the simplicity of affection without any of the sublimity of faith—it must not be all self-denial though there must be some of it.

Gravity itself must be tempered with cheerfulness. There must be something of every form of virtue to make up the blessed compound! We must endeavor to bring something of all exercises—not prayer without praise, nor works without prayer—not mental energy without spiritual gifts, nor gifts without holiness—it must be a mixture, a compound of the whole. We must bring something of all our powers—not all intellect, not all heart. It must be something of intellect in judgment and understanding—something of the heart in enthusiasm and joy—something of the body, for the members of the body are members of Christ.

It must be much of the soul, for the soul’s service is the soul of service. We must bring to God a compound of excellencies from all the powers which He has renewed and consecrated to Himself. Oh it were matchless if God the Holy Spirit should graciously enable us to imitate Christ in this that we might have some of all the Divine Graces, not lacking in any respect, but as a man of God thoroughly furnished unto every good work! We must, above all, pay great attention to small things. “You shall beat some of it very small.” If we would bring a holy life to Christ we must mind our fireside duties as well as the duties of the sanctuary. We must be attentive as servants to our service, as masters to managing the household.

We must look to our private devotions. We must look to our hearts’ secret longings—there must be the ejaculation as well as the long prayer. There must be the grateful spirit as well as the song of praise. Oh, that we could bring to God a life beaten small so that even in little things the Holy Spirit might be manifest, working in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure! We must take care that this sweet incense of ours is not made for man nor used by man. Accursed is that life, however good, which lives only for man to gaze upon! But blessed is that life which is lived for God’s sake and for Christ’s sake—for higher motives than man’s eye could suggest—and for a nobler reward than man’s hand can ever give.

To be holy unto God is the grand thing, my Brothers and Sisters! To truly feel that you are not living for self, that you are not even living for your country nor for your fellow man so much as you are living to the Most High God—the marks of whose ownership in yourself you desire to bear in your body and in your spirit! May it be yours and mine to have a life which, both in its prayer and praise, its giving and its ordinary living shall be redolent with the fullness of the Spirit of God—a perfume that may make our life like walking through a garden, a fragrance that may make us like the king’s storehouse where all manner of precious fruits are laid up, and all manner of sweet frankincense stored away!

You will say, “But there will be so much imperfection notwithstanding.” Ah, that there will! “There may be much defilement when we have done our best.” Ah, so it is! The best of men are still men at the best. But the word comes very sweetly—“I will accept you with your sweet savor.” When God accepts you, He accepts what you do for His sake. He sees you no longer as a mere fallen man but as a man renewed by His Spirit. He counts you a vessel to honor! He puts these sweet things into you and loves them as He sees them in you. I know the prayer is broken, but it is the prayer of His own dear child—and therefore He whom we call “Abba, Father,” accepts it! I know the praise has little of music in it to the tutored ear, but it is the praise of one whose heart loves God, and He hears no discord there.

I know your gifts to His church and His poor are necessarily but little, for yours is the poor widow’s portion perhaps, and you can give only your two mites. But I know that as they fall into the treasury, Jesus sits over against the treasury and hears sweet sounds in the dropping of your gifts. I know your life is such that you mourn over it every day, but still you serve God in it, and you long to serve Him more—and that love of yours is written in the Book of the King’s record and you shall be His in the day when He makes up His jewels—and your works shall be His, too, for your works shall follow you to the skies when you rise in Jesus—and your reward even for a cup of cold water shall be as sure as it will be gracious! And your entrance into the joy of your Lord shall certainly be bestowed upon you according to the Divine Grace which is in Christ Jesus by which He has accepted you.

Desire, dear Friend in Christ, to be such a savor! Make it your grand ambition that your life really may be fragrant to the Most High. Do not be satisfied to be an unbroken alabaster box. Do not be willing to be a flower that “wastes its sweetness on the desert air,” or “a gem of purest ray serene” that is hidden in the caverns of seclusion. Seek to do something— seek to serve Christ! Pray that you may be a sweet savor of Christ unto God in every place where Providence may cast your lot. And if you are such a sweet savor, rejoice that you are so—rejoice that your name is written in Heaven!

What? Though men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ’s name sake, rejoice that you are numbered with the honorable multitude who have suffered for Jesus’ sake! And though you are not knights that ride first in the battle, be thankful that you may be as the esquires that follow at their heels, willing for the fray and able to bear the buffeting which the Lord may appoint you! Care less and less for man’s esteem. Remember that your holiness will never shield you from calumny. Rest assured that the most strict walking will never preserve you from the envenomed tongue of slander.

If your life should be as pure as the crystal river that springs from beneath the throne of the Most High, there will be found some that will muddy that stream and mire it with their feet. Coals of juniper, hot coals of juniper shall be given unto you, O you false tongue! But as for you, Believer, care not for that tongue, though it is sharp as a razor, and though every cut of it is poisonous as the poison of an adder. Bear it! Bear it! For do you not understand that your incense was never meant for man’s approbation, but for the Most High? It must be for God, and for God only! And if man cannot smell it, or appreciate its savor, what shall I say but, though it was meet that my pearls should not be cast before swine, if they have happened to be where swine may trample on them, the swine acts but according to its nature, and the pearl is not hurt by the swine’s feet— it is still a pearl when trampled in the mire—a pearl that God’s eyes will see and fetch out, notwithstanding all.

And oh, dear Friends, bless the Lord Jesus day by day that your works are made accepted with yourself through Him! When you have done anything that is right, and good, and pure, bring it and lay it at His feet! Come here, you that toil with holy industry, and bring your sheaves to store in the garner of your Boaz whose fields you have reaped. Come here, you that have found jewels diving into the depths of human sin to bring them up, and lay these pearls at the feet of Solomon, who is master of the seas into which you have dived. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. The world and they that dwell therein.” And especially are we, the blood-besprinkled ones, the sacramental host of God’s elect ordained as priests to offer sacrifices acceptable unto God.

Oh, let us praise the love that bought us, the blood that redeemed us, the power that sustains us, the Grace that smiles upon us, the righteousness that covers us, the arm which supports us and the whole Redeemer who is able and willing, and before long will receive us to Himself and to our great reward! May we all look to Jesus and to His merit, and then go forth, for the love we bear His name, to show Him afresh in our own persons to the sons of men! The Lord accept this morning’s offering for His name’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2286 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

AN ANCIENT QUESTION MODERNIZED  
NO. 2286

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1890.

**“And the people said unto me, Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?”  
Ezekiel 24:19.**

EZEKIEL’S wife died. His heart was bleeding, but he received orders from his Divine Master that he should not mourn, nor weep, nor make any sign of mourning whatever. It was a strange command, but he obeyed it. The people understood that Ezekiel was a Prophet to them in all that he did—his actions did not only concern himself. He was a teacher, not only by his words, but by his actions, so the people gathered round him and said to him, “What is the meaning of this? It has some bearing upon our conduct; tell us what it has to do with us.” He soon explained to them that, before long, they, also, would lose by sword, pestilence and famine, the dearest that they had, and they would not be able to have any mourning for the dead. They would be in such a state of distress that the dead would die unlamented, the living having enough to do to mourn over their own personal sorrows. It was a terrible lesson and it was terribly taught.

Now, dear Friends, just as Ezekiel, at his Lord’s command, did many strange things entirely with a view to other people, we must remember that many things that we do have some relation to others. As long as we are here, we can never so isolate ourselves as to become absolutely independent of our surroundings. And it is often well, when we note the behavior of other people, to say to somebody, if not to them, as the people did to Ezekiel, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us?”

I am going to use the text at this time thus. First, this should be your question to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Divine Prophet. When we see Him taken forth to die outside the camp, may we not solemnly say to Him, “Will You not tell us what these things mean to us, that You behave so?” When I have spoken a little upon that, I shall then say to the people who will see us gathering at the Table of our Lord, tonight, this may be your question to the Church, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” After I have explained that matter, I shall need to speak to our friends who are not coming to the Communion Table with us, but are going home, or going to sit in the upper gallery, and I shall say to them, this is our question to you, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?”  
First, then, THIS SHOULD BE YOUR QUESTION TO THE LORD JESUS. Very reverently, though, as far as I am concerned, very feebly, let us approach our Divine Master and, looking at Him in His wondrous passion, let us earnestly ask Him, “Will You not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” Do you see Him? There He is, amid the dark shadow of the olives, bending low, and pleading with God. He pleads, and pleads, and pleads again till He is covered with sweat. Sweat, did I say? ‘Tis blood—and it is so plenteous that it falls to the earth, “great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Man sweats for bread, which is the staff of life, but it needs a bloody sweat to win life, itself, and Jesus pours it out! Dear Master, while that bitter cup is at Your lips, can You stay a minute to tell us what these things mean to us that You behave so? His answer is, “Sin is an exceedingly bitter thing and, to remove it, costs Me the agony of My Soul. It is not easy to bear the wrath of God. I have cried, ‘If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,’ but if I would save you, it is not possible.” Hear that, my Brothers and Sisters, listen, and learn it well! Never trifle with sin! Never make a spot which will need a bloody sweat to wash it away! Never laugh at that over which Christ had to agonize. And never count redemption a trifle when to Him it was a pouring out of His soul unto death!

But do you see the lanterns twinkling through the trees? Men are coming, evil men, with rough voices, with torches, and lanterns, and staves to take the blessed pleading One. He rises to meet them. He speaks a word and down they fall! He can release Himself, there is no need for Him to be captured, but He yields Himself up without a struggle and they take Him to do unto Him according to their wicked will. Dear Master, while the traitor’s kiss is still wet upon You and You are being led away bound to Caiaphas, tell us, I pray You, what do You mean by all this? What has this to do with us? He answers, “I go willingly. I must be bound, for sin has bound you—sin has bound your hands, sin has hampered and crippled you and made you prisoners. You are the bond slaves of Satan and I must be bound to set you free.” O Beloved, learn the lesson well! Sin always enslaves you. Free thought, free love, free living, in the highest sense, are to be found only in the service of God! Sin brings no freedom— it binds! As Christ was bound and delivered up to die, so does sin bind man and lead him forth to the second death. This is what Jesus Christ’s resignation to His captors means to us.

But now they have taken Him before His judges. He stands before Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate. His enemies accuse Him violently, but He answers them not a word! Pilate says to Him, “Do You answer me nothing?” Blessed Sufferer, like a lamb in the midst of wolves, tell us, if You will speak a word, why this silence? And He whispers into the hearts of His beloved, “I was silent for there was nothing to say; willing to be your Advocate, what could I say? You had sinned, though I had not. I might have pleaded for Myself, but I stood there for you, in your place. What could I say, what excuse, what apology, what extenuation could I urge?” All that could be said was, “Guilty, Lord, guilty.” That is all that you may dare to say God, for you have nothing to plead when you stand upon the ground of your own merits! And so the silent Christ was eloquent in the condemnation of sin—and we thank Him that He answered not a word when wicked men clamored against Him.

But now, do you see, they are scourging Him, they are crowning Him with thorns, they are mocking Him, blindfolding Him and then smiting Him with the palms of their hands? What scorn, what shame, they poured on Him. Blessed One, blessed One, will You not tell us what these things mean to us? I think I hear Him speak from that sacred head, once wounded, and He says, “I must be put to shame, for sin is a shameful thing. No scorn is too great for sin. It deserves to be loathed, to be treated with contempt, to be dashed over the walls of the universe as a thing unclean, mean, despicable.” Christ, in that great shame of His, teaches us to hate sin, to treat it with contempt, turn away from it with loathing, for it is a mean thing for a creature to rebel against His Creator, for a man to be an enemy of His God!

But now, you see, they take Him out through the streets of Jerusalem— along the Via Dolorosa He pursues His weary walk, drops of blood falling on the pavement, Himself staggering beneath the load of the Cross. Why do they not let Him rest? Those weeping women could have found Him shelter. No, He must not rest, Jerusalem cannot hold Him, there is not a house that can retain Him, there is not one who can give Him shelter, for He is going out to die. He must go outside the city gate. I do not know whether there was, or was not, “a green hill far away,” but I know that it was “outside the city wall.” My Master, my Master, why go You outside the city wall? Tell me, Jesus, why go You out there, to the place of public execution, the Old Bailey, the Tyburn of Jerusalem? Why are You here? And He answers, “I suffer outside the gate because God will not tolerate sin in His City. Sin is an unclean thing and I, though not Myself unclean, yet standing in the place of the unclean, must die outside the city gates.”

And so I see Him, as they throw Him on His back, and nail His hands and feet to the Cross, and then lift Him up as a gazing stock for guilty men! Oh why, oh why, Son of God, are You lifted up like the bronze serpent of Moses? Why are You lifted up between earth and Heaven? And He answers, “That I may draw all men unto Me. Earth refuses Me and Heaven denies me shelter. I hang here, the Just for the unjust, that I may bring men to God.” How I wish that I could speak this explanation of my crucified Master in more piercing and penetrating, and yet more tender tones! My Hearers, you must understand this sublime mystery, or you cannot be saved! Jesus dies that we may not die! He is made a curse that we may have the blessing! He is treated as a felon that we may be treated as the children of God! Blessed be His name, thus has He told us what these things are to us that He behaves so!

They take Him down from the Cross, for He is dead, but before they take Him down, they pierce His heart, and even after death that heart pours its tribute for us. Somewhere, among the matter of the globe, is the very blood and water that flowed from His side! And though, perhaps, nobody agrees with me, yet I set it over against the fact that somewhere on the earth are the pieces of the two tablets of stone which Moses broke beneath the mount. Better still, Christ’s wondrous Atonement is always here, always operating, always reconciling men to God, always opening a way of access for guilty men to the righteous Lord. Again I say, blessed be His holy name!

But they have buried Him and He lies alone in His cell through the long, dark night of death. But the third morning sees Him rise. Before the sun is up, the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, with healing in His wings! Jesus has left the tomb and I invite all sinners to say to the risen Redeemer, “Will You not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” This is what I understand that His Resurrection means to us— He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them!

He not only rises from the dead, but He ascends to His Father. He has gone Home now—the cloud received Him out of the sight of His followers. With the sound of the great trumpets of Glory He has returned to His Kingdom and to His Throne. Ask Him what He means by that and He will tell you that He has led captivity captive and, “received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also.” What a word is that to every heart that is conscious of rebellion! Christ has received gifts for you! Learn that lesson, I pray you. Believe on Him and live! Cast yourself at His feet and be forgiven! Yield yourself up to Him and be His servant henceforth and forever!

This is a wide theme, but my strength will not enable me to say more upon this part of it, namely, our question to the Lord Jesus.  
II. Now, dear Friends, in a few minutes we shall lift the damask covering from the Communion Table, and you will find upon it a supply of bread and wine. We are coming to that Table to think of our Lord, and I think that I hear some of you ask, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” THIS MAY BE YOUR QUESTION TO THE CHURCH. That will be our second point.  
We are coming here, tonight, to keep Christ’s death in remembrance. I love to see our dear friends come to the Lord’s Table as often as they can. I am very sorry if I cannot be here every week, for, if there is a time appointed for the breaking of bread, it is the first day of the week. Every first day of the week, if you can, come to the table as a part of your Sabbath worship. This service is intended to be a memorial of Christ’s death. The best memorial of an event is not to rear a column, or erect a statue, or engrave a record on brass. All these things are frail and pass away. The tooth of time eats up the brass and the foot of the ages dashes down the statue or the column. The best memorial of any event is to associate with it the observance of some rite, or some ceremony frequently repeated. This will cause it to be a perpetual memorial.  
Now, as long as a half-dozen Christians meet together for the breaking of bread, Christ’s death can never be forgotten. However poor you may be, or however illiterate, when you come to the breaking of bread, you are helping to record, as in eternal brass, the greatest fact in all human history, the fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures! If this were all, it would be no little thing. It means to you who do not come, just this—that some of us mean to keep this memorial before our eyes. You may forget it, but to you our action is so far significant, that, whatever you may do, we mean to perpetuate as long as we live—and we trust that our children after us will perpetuate this which we esteem to be a priceless fact—that the Son of God died for guilty men, the Sinless One for the sinful, to bring them to God! That is what this memorial has to do with you.  
We are not, however, coming to the Table merely to look at the bread and the wine. We are coming here to eat and to drink, to show our personal benefit by Jesus Christ’s death. We wish all who see us to know that we enjoy the result of Christ’s death. We have a life that feeds upon His Sacrifice. We have a hope that makes Christ to be its very meat and drink. There is a something about Christ who died that is, indeed, life-giving and that is sustaining and strengthening to our new-born spirit. If you are up in the gallery as spectators of the ordinance, you say to us by your actions, “Tell us what these things mean to us.” And we have this to say to you, that if you will not have these emblems of Jesus Christ’s death to be your meat and drink, at any rate, we will! And we ask you, if you do not feed on Christ, why do you not feed on Him? Have you any better bread? Have you any firmer faith than the faith we have in His atoning Sacrifice? Have you a deeper peace than Jesus gives to us? Have you a surer hope of Heaven than faith in Christ gives? Have you a brighter hope? We know you have not and, therefore, while to us His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed, we say that these things are to you a rebuke, a question, a suggestion concerning something lacking in you!  
But, beloved Friends, we not only come to the Table to eat and to drink, but there is this point about the communion that we come together to declare our unity in Jesus Christ. If I went home and broke bread, and drank of the juice of the vine by myself, it would not be the observance of the Lord’s Supper. It is a united participation. It is a festival. It is a token and display of brotherhood. Those who will come to the Table, tonight, will practically say, “We are one. We, being many, are one body of Jesus Christ, and everyone members, one of another.” I think that I hear you say, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” Well, they mean to you, this—if you do not believe in Christ, you are not of the brotherhood. If you do not feed upon Christ, you are not one with Him, you are not one of His people.  
There is another brotherhood and if you do not belong to the brotherhood of Christ, you belong to the other fraternity. They who are not with Isaac are with Ishmael. They who are not with Jacob are with Esau. They who are not the seed of the woman are the seed of the serpent. Tonight, as with a drawn sword, Christ divides this congregation into two parts. If you believe in Him, you are His. But if you believe not in Him, there is a present condemnation resting upon you. It is well that you should know this fact! When God’s people come together for the Communion, it incidentally means that they leave the rest of the congregation behind.  
Once more, when this Communion is over, if we live, we shall meet again next Lord’s Day, and when that is over, if we are spared, we shall meet again the following Lord’s Day. We meet continually to show our belief in Jesus Christ’s coming again. More than 52 times in the year is this Table spread in our midst, for, frequently, in different parts of the Tabernacle, the elders and deacons and other friends meet and commune with the Lord, doing this often in remembrance of Him. Here is the point to which I call your attention—we are to do this “until He comes.” Every celebration of the Lord’s Supper speaks, not with the voice of a trumpet, but still, with a clear sound, and it says, “The Lord is coming. He is on the way back. This is one of the tokens that He is coming again.” As for Himself, before He went away, He took the great Nazarite vow. He said that He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine till He should drink it new with His disciples in His Father’s Kingdom. And He remains the great Abstainer, who has sworn never to drink of the cup till He should pledge them again in the new wine of His Father’s Kingdom. But He bids us go on drinking it until He shall come again to receive us unto Himself—that where He is, there we may also be.  
Perhaps you still enquire, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?” Well, they are this to you, that, whether you remember Jesus Christ’s coming or not, He is coming! He is coming quickly. When you read, “Behold, I come quickly,” it does not mean, “I shall be here soon,” but it means, “I am coming quickly.” A man may be coming quickly from New York, tonight, and yet he may not be here tomorrow. He may not be here for another week, but he is coming quickly, all the same. Christ is coming as quickly as He can—long leagues of distance lie between Him and us—and He is covering them with the utmost speed. The glowing wheels of His chariot, whose axles are hot with the haste of His journey, are hurrying over the weary way. He is coming quickly. I should not be surprised, certainly I should not be distressed, if He came before I have finished this sermon! Could you all say as much as that? Oh, how some of us would stand up and welcome Him with glad acclaim if He should make His blessed Presence manifest upon this platform before this evening’s service is over! I know no reason why He should not come tonight.  
The times and seasons are all unknown to us. We venture upon no prophecy, but as often as we come to the Communion Table, we say to you, “He will come.” When He comes, the Day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light, to every unbeliever. When He comes, woe unto His adversaries! How will they face their Judge? Now, Judas, come and kiss Him! Now, Pilate, ask Him “what is truth?” Now, you Jews, come and spit in His face! Now, impenitent thief, come and cast bitter sayings in His teeth! Where are they? See how they try to slink away—they have not a word to say! No, I hear them burst into agonizing shrieks, crying to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great Day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Ah, you who used to brag and boast, sing another tune, now, that Christ has come! You who despised Him, you who would have nothing to do with Him, what would you not give if He were now your Friend? Make Him to be your Friend, tonight, by putting your trust in Him and then you will be ready for His coming! Let Him come when He may, His coming will be full of love and joy to all who have trusted Him.  
Thus I have answered two sets of questions, first for my Master, and then for my Brothers and Sisters in the Church.  
III. Now, in closing, THIS IS OUR QUESTION TO YOU, “Will you not tell us what these things mean to us, that you behave so?”  
First, there are some of you who are here, tonight, who do not often go to a place of worship. I know you. Shall I tell you what you do on Sunday morning? Well, I do not know that it would do anybody any good if I did, so I will not. Shall I tell you how you generally spend the afternoon and evening of the Lord’s Day? You know as well as I do, perhaps better, so I will not tell you. But here you are, now, for once in a while. By seldom coming to the Lord’s House, you teach us your utter indifference. Your carelessness seems to say to me, “God is nobody! Put Him in a corner. Get on in business. Mind the main chance. God and eternity are only for fools. Gospel? Salvation? Oh, they are trifles, not worth anybody’s consideration!”  
What about the Sabbath, which God appoints to be His own? “Well, He has given us six days out of seven, so we will steal from Him the other one. We will not give Him even an hour, if we can help it, for who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?” You seem to say, “What is Heaven, and what is Hell?” O Sirs, this is the practical teaching of your lives! If you are living in indifference, you are teaching your children this, you are teaching your neighbors this, you are teaching me this, as far as I am willing to learn it—but I am not willing to learn it, for I cannot believe that Hell is a thing to be trifled with! You can trifle yourself into it, but you cannot trifle yourself out of it! There is no opening of the iron gate when once it has closed behind you. And Heaven is not a thing to be trifled with. How many have I seen die with the light of Heaven on their faces! How have I heard them talk of already beginning its endless joys while yet they were here! Have we not often rejoiced at the deathbeds of Believers who have died with glory flowing into their souls? I have seen too much of this to think Heaven a trifle!  
I expect to go there, myself, before long, and I mind not how soon it may be. I read, the other day, that one called on my old grandfather and said to him, “Mr. Spurgeon, you are getting old.” He replied, “Yes, I am. I am eighty-seven, and I should like to go Home next week, but I should like better to go Home, today, for I have been here as long as I want to be, and I am not as equal to preaching as I used to be. I should like to go Home and do some of the singing up above.” Well I cannot trifle with that Heaven where my grandfather has gone! I have too many friends there to run any risk of not going there myself! Perhaps you think in your own mind, “I do not want to be lost.” Then, I pray you, cease your indifference! Give God your Sabbaths! Go and hear the Gospel preached and when you hear it, think it over, read your Bibles, begin to pray and talk to your children about God and Jesus Christ and Heaven. Why do so many of you forget your God? How can you live without Him? How can you live without a Savior? These things are grievous to me and they ought to be very grievous to you—and you ought to have done with this indifference at once. God help you to have done with it even now!  
There are others of you who are not indifferent. You come to the services, and you are attentive listeners, but just observe what you are going to do, tonight. We shall need all the ground floor and the greater part of this first gallery for communicants, but you are going home, and so telling us that you have no part in the Communion. Yes, the Lord’s Table is spread, Christ is to be remembered, fellowship is to be had with Him—and you are going home! I know, my Friend over yonder, that you do not quite like it, because you have to leave your wife behind you. My dear boy up in the gallery, you do not quite like it, for your mother will stay behind and you will stop about somewhere, I dare say, to walk home with her. I do not like your departing from God’s people, for it makes me think of a hymn that I used to hear sung years ago—  
*“Oh, there will be weeping  
At the judgment seat of Christ!”*  
When the last parting comes, when mother is caught up to dwell with Christ, and her boy, whom she loved so well, is driven away into outer darkness, there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! A dividing day must come. You may grow with the wheat, but the time will come when the tares must be separated from it, when the Lord will say to His reapers, “Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn.” I hope that you will not go home many Sundays, leaving dear ones at the Communion Table, but that, having trusted Christ as your Savior, you will remain with them to show forth His death in His own appointed way.  
I hear another say, “I am not going home. I shall remain at the ordinance as a spectator.” I always like to see you look on, I like to see the birds come where the chickens are being fed! They will always do so, you know. If you feed your chickens well, there will be sure to be sparrows in the trees near, waiting while the chickens are feeding, and afterwards the sparrows will come and have their portion. So I expect it will be with you—when you have been looking on for a little while, you will drop down from the gallery and you will get in among the birds Christ came to feed. You are getting into a place of happy danger! Get where the shots fly and one of them may make a target of you! Oh, that it might be so!  
But tonight you are going to be only a spectator. Will you tell me what that means, only a spectator?—  
*“There is a Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains,”*  
but you are only a spectator! There is my Father’s House and prodigals returning are clasped in His arms, the ring is on their finger, and the shoes are on their feet, but you are only a spectator! In Paris, during the siege, when it was shut up, there were meals given at certain times in appointed places, but what would you have thought, if you had been there, and had been allowed to come to the window and see the feeding, and yourself remain only a spectator? I pity the poor shoeless urchins, on a cold winter’s night, who stand against a London cook-shop, flattening their noses against the great plate of glass, and looking in, and seeing all the steaming food, while they are only spectators! Do not be so, I pray you—there is room for you at the Gospel feast—and a hearty welcome, too!  
Do not be merely spectators! But if you mean to be so, then I say this to you, there will be no spectators in Heaven. They will all partake of the feast above, or they will not be there. And, I grieve to add, there will be no spectators in Hell. You will have to participate in the award of vengeance, or else in the gift of mercy! Therefore have done with being spectators— *“Come guilty souls, and flee away,  
Like doves, to Jesus’ wounds.”*  
Come and put your trust in Him who died for the ungodly! He that believes in Him is not condemned! Would to God that you would believe in Him tonight! I feel that God has helped me to speak to you. It has been no small task to me in my weakness—and now I want the Lord to give me some souls. I expect to be paid for this service. When one preaches with joy and comfort, and is full of health and strength, there is a great delight in the work. But now, tonight, when it is heavy work to get a thought and to utter it, I expect my wages in another form and I shall go home to my Master, and say, “Lord, give me my wages!” If He asks me what I want, I shall say to Him, “Lord, I should like the soul of that young man who sits in the aisle, there, and of that old man in the top gallery who has been so interested while he has been listening. And I should like half a dozen of those young women over there.”  
I believe that, when I once began to plead with my Lord, I should ask for every one of you! At any rate, why should I leave anyone out? Which one should I leave out? When I was preaching, once, in the great plowshed of Mr. Howard, of Bedford, (they had cleared out all the plows to make room for a large congregation), His dear old father was sitting on the platform with me, and in the afternoon I prayed that the Lord would give us some souls. I asked that a few might be converted. After the service, the good old saint said, “I enjoyed your preaching, but I did not enjoy your praying. I did not say, ‘Amen,’ when you asked the Lord to give us a few souls. My dear Brother,” he said, “I would not be content unless He gave us hundreds! Go in for it tonight,” he added, “pray for hundreds to be converted.” I thought, what a good thing it was to have a Brother with larger faith than one’s own! Now may the Lord make some of you, who have great faith, like good old Mr. Howard, to pray the Lord to save the whole ship’s company here tonight! Why should they not all be brought in to the praise of the glory of His Grace? God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **EZEKIEL 33:1-20; 30-33.**

Verses 1-4. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he sees the sword come upon the land, he blows the trumpet, and warns the people; then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet, and takes not warning; if the sword comes, and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. In that case the watchman is quite clear. He has done his duty, he has sounded an alarm, and a fitting alarm, upon the trumpet. He has sounded it immediately, without loitering or delaying. He has not been afraid of giving uneasiness to men— he has done his duty, fearless of remark, and he is clear. Happy also is he in knowing that, by heeding the trumpet’s warning blast, many have escaped the threatened danger. Still, even then it seems that there are some who hear the trumpet and will not take the warning. That is the sad part of our service—it makes the most successful ministry to be fringed with black. It cannot be all joy for him who wins the most souls for God, for at times he can sympathize with his Brothers, the Prophets, in their sorrowful enquiry, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Listen to this, you who hear the Gospel and yet do not repent! If you heed not the warning, your blood will be on your own head!

5, 6. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that takes warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman sees the sword come, and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned; if the sword comes, and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hands. This is a very solemn Truth of God. It not only concerns me, and the many ministers of Christ who are here, but it is for all of you who know the Lord, for you, also, are set as watchmen to your families, to your neighbors, to the class which you teach, or which you should teach, in the Sunday school. May God grant that we may, each one of us, be delivered from other men’s sins, for we may become partakers with them in their iniquity unless we bear our testimony against them and give them warning of the consequences of their evil-doing!

7. So you, O son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel. It is not merely the people who took a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman, but, “I have set you.” Oh, the solemn ordination of a true servant of Christ! It is not by laying on of hands of man, nor by a pretended descent from the Apostles—it is a call from God!

7. Therefore you shall hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me. That is the way to preach, to get the sermon from the mouth of God and then to speak it as the mouth of God! Dear teachers, wait upon God for that which you are to teach—take it warm with love out of the very mouth of God—and then speak it for God out of your own mouth. Good will surely come of such teaching as that!

8. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hands. Even as God required Abel’s blood at the hands of Cain and pronounced him cursed because he was guilty of that blood, so will He require the blood of perishing men at the hands of those set over them, and a curse shall come upon them if they are found negligent.

9, 10. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Therefore, O you son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? This is as much as to say, “We cannot get away from our sins; there is no hope of our living.” When men get into the iron cage called, “Despair,” there really seems to be no hope that they will turn from their sin. There is no hope in themselves—their only hope is in the Lord.

11, 12. Say unto them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his ways and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? Therefore, you son of man. Notice how often God calls Ezekiel the “son of man.” He had many wonderful visions, but he was to be kept humble by being constantly reminded that he was nothing more than a son of man. He was to be kept sympathetic with the people—they were men, and he was one of them—a “son of man.” It seems hard that any mother’s son of ours should die and perish. The thought that he will perish forever is terrible, indeed, to one who recognizes his union with the race as a “son of man.”

12. Say unto the children of your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sins. It is not merely what we have been, but what we are, and what we shall be, that will have to be taken into account. If we have been righteous in our own esteem, what of that if we turn from it? If we have been sinful, yet if, by God’s Grace, we turn from it, the past shall be blotted out!

13. When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live; if he trusts to his own righteousness, and commits iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he has committed, he shall die for it. There is no salvation for any man without final perseverance, and if that final perseverance were not secured to us in the Covenant of Grace, there would be no salvation, even, for the brightest Believer, or the most sparkling professor! What are our lights in themselves? Will they not soon burn dim unless the secret oil of God’s Grace shall keep them bright? Whatever point any of you have reached, do not begin to put your confidence in that. If you have seemed to be righteous through a lifetime of 70 years, yet, unless the Grace of God keeps you, even to the end, you will perish! The mercy is that we have many precious promises concerning the eternal safety of all who are in Christ, and God will not fail to fulfill every one of them.

14-17. Again, when I say unto the wicked, You shall surely die; if he turns from his sin, and does that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restores the pledge, gives again what he robbed, walks in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him: he has done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. Yet the children of your people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. Sinners are very fast in judging God! Oh, that they would judge themselves! It is not the Lord who is unjust—it is the balances and weights of men that are unjust. Oh, that they did but know it!

18-20. When the righteous turns from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Now let us read at the 30th verse.

30, 31. Also, you son of man, the children of your people still are talking against you by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that comes forth from the LORD. And they come unto you as the people comes, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they will not do them: for with their month they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. This is another of the great sorrows of the prophetic calling, that however accurately we report the Lord’s message, however earnestly we try to drive it home to the consciences of our hearers, it must often be said, “They sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness.”

32. And, lo, you are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear your words, but they do them not. Preaching seems to such people to be only a song, or a piece of acting for their amusement—but it is not so. They that can find sport in the things of God will find it dull sport in Hell when they shall be forever driven away from the Presence of God, and from the glory of His power!

33. And when this comes to pass, (lo, it will come), then shall they know that a Prophet has been among them. But then it will be too late for them to know it, for they will have missed their opportunity of profiting by the message that the Prophet delivered to them! God grant that it may not be so with any one of us, for His abounding mercy’s sake! Amen.

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“YOUR ROWERS HAVE BROUGHT YOU INTO GREAT WATERS”

NO. 1933

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1886,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10 1885.

**“Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” Ezekiel 27:26.**

THIS was spoken by the Prophet concerning Tyre, that great mercantile city where all the commerce of the East found its outlet towards the West. Tyre, when the Chaldeans invaded Palestine, had greatly rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem. She said, “Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: I shall be replenished now she is laid waste.” It was a cruel and selfish exultation. After a while the city in the sea came to feel the weight of the great oppressor’s arm, for thus said the Lord, “I will bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north. He shall set engines of war against your walls and with his axes he shall break down your towers.” For 13 years the city endured a siege under Nebuchadnezzar and it was concerning this calamity that the Prophet said, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” The merchant princes of Tyre had so managed the affairs of the State that they brought the Tyrians into desperate straits. They had incited them to stand out against the great king and they discovered, in due time, that they were striving against a power too strong for them. Their policy had been a mistake. Comparing Tyre to one of its own galleys propelled with oars, the Prophet declares, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

All the glories and the woes of Tyre are now over. “What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?” That page of history has long ago been turned over to give place to the rise and fall of other cities and empires, but the prophetic expression is still full of power. To many persons in our own day we may well cry with Ezekiel, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

I. First and foremost, this is truly applicable to SINNERS WHO ARE BEGINNING TO TASTE THE RESULT OF THEIR SINS—ungodly persons who have chosen their own ways and followed their own devices—and now, at last, are finding that the way of transgressors is hard. Sinners may go unpunished for many a bright hour of the morning of life, but as the day grows older, the shadows fall and their way is clouded over. I meet with many who may be well assured that God will ultimately punish sin because the first flakes of the endless fire shower have begun to fall upon them and they cannot escape. They are now beginning to reap the first ripe ears of that awful harvest whose sheaves of woe shall fill their bosoms, world without end. In those who sin with the flesh, the result of their vices is seen and felt to a horrible degree in their own bodies. Many a man bears in his bones the sins of his youth. Around us are many who already wish that they had never been born because of the condition into which their wantonness has brought them. The sin which at first seemed a dainty luxury, sweet to their palate, has now developed into a corrosive poison in their heart, eating their flesh as with fire and burning up their spirits. Lust was their pilot—the siren of pleasure lured them on and now they are wrecks—breaking to pieces on the rocks. Despondent, ashamed, haunted with nameless terrors, afraid to hope, they dare neither live nor die. They are overcome with alarm as they look forward, for if it is darkness behind and night around, tenfold blackness lies before them by reason of their transgression and their sins. O sinner spent with sin, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

Certain transgressors are beginning to feel the result of wrong-doing in their circumstances. They have brought themselves from wealth to poverty by drunkenness, dishonesty, or vice. The owner of a fair estate is compelled to herd with the lowest of the low in a filthy lodging. He who was educated for a profession and is skilled in learned languages—employs his superior knowledge to beg and cheat—and even then remains in loathsome rags. Not even in this world does sin pay its servants good wages! Drunkenness and idleness clothe a man with rags—these are the livery of sin. Those godly men who spend their lives in the painful business of seeking out the fallen often harrow our feelings with the dread stories of those who are truly prodigals, not merely in parable, but in literal fact, who have wasted their substance in riotous living and now, if it were possible, would be glad to fill their belly with the husks that swine eat and no man gives to them.

Many a broken-down sinner has, in this house, found his way back to the Great Father. Oh, that it may be so during this service! Sorely tossed about in sickness and in need, both of them the result of your sin, you are in a sorry plight at this hour. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” You would not take Christ to be your Pilot in your youth—you were too proud to accept your father’s God, your mother’s Savior—you must have your own way and follow your own devices! And now the desperate tugging of your passions have brought you into deep waters, indeed. You said in your pride, “I will not be tied to my mother’s apron strings,” but you are now a captive, fastened with bonds of steel to one who will be no mother to you, but a destroyer! You gave up your boat to pirate rowers and now look where they have brought you! The waters about you are dark and tempestuous and no port is near. One thing you can do, and I would have you do it—warn others lest they come into your place of danger! With broken health and lost estate, at least be humane— when you are most in your misery, call to yourself the young who have not yet known your evil ways and charge them to shun your course! If you cannot be an example, I would use you as a beacon. “Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked be unpunished”—and you are a proof of the same. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

Others who have not yet been afflicted by any outward Providence are beginning to feel the sting of sin upon their conscience. This will, I trust, be used for their good. I trust the Lord has a kind intent towards them and is condemning them in the inward court of conscience that they may not be judged and condemned with the godless world at the Last Great Day. The Lord’s eyes perceive many that once were at ease in their iniquities who are now sorely troubled by their own reflections. Like the troubled sea, they cannot rest. Their memories are constantly casting up the mire and dirt of their former transgressions. There is no peace for them, day or night. They know that they must die. They have also heard of judgment to come—the blast of the trumpet of doom is sounding in their ears and, therefore, they cannot sleep at night, nor be at rest by day. A tempest is hurrying up. Black masses of clouds hang overhead. Thunder mutters from afar and the lightning lights up the sky. Sin is always before them. It casts ashes into their bread and gall into their drink. Their merry comrades cannot make them out, for they were once as wild as any. Men wonder why it is that for them there seems to be no music in the lute, no pleasure in the bowl, no joy in the dance. They know not the voice which cries to the troubled one—“Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

O Soul, you have now come where your sins compass you about and shut you in on every side! They seemed as if they were all forgotten, like dead men, out of mind, but they have risen again and in their rising you have fallen! As a man pursued by wolves in the steppes of Russia seeks to escape from the hungry pack which hurry on so swiftly, so are you trying to escape from your sins—but all in vain! You hear their howls behind you as they chase you with untiring feet—what can you do? The sins of 20 years ago are upon you! Fierce sins of your hot and youthful blood which seemed so harmless then—they are demons now from which you can not hide! What would you give to forget them? But they will not be forgotten! The devourers are near you; their hot breath comes upon you! Their fangs are in your flesh! They taste your blood! Verily, you have made a poor business of life to become the prey of such horrors! At a time of life when many a Christian man is in full vigor of usefulness, you are worn out and near death—and near Hell! Your sins are upon you. Even now they overtake you and what will you do? O gallant boat of the silken sail and the painted hull, where are you now? “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

Listen to me, then, while I speak to you words which may seem harsh, but they are all meant in love to you. Listen, I say, and take warning from your present sorrows.

If the waters are great, today, what will they be before long? If now you cannot bear the wages of sin, what will you do when they are paid to you in full? “What will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” What will you do when they wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and tell you that a few more gasps will send you into eternity? O man, woman, however great the waters are now, they are as nothing compared with what they will be at the last! You are only running with the footmen now and yet they weary you! What will you do when you contend with horses? When the Lord shall walk through the sea with His horses, through the heap of great waters—what will become of you? Your case is lamentable. My heart weeps for you. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

Learn, I pray you, this piece of timely wisdom. Your rowers have brought you into no quiet waters. They have found you no harbors of delight—shall they any longer be your rowers? Do this one thing to your own soul if you have any sense left, or any pity for yourself—cry out against those who are ruining you! Now say, “I will go no further with these rowers. God helping me, the helm shall be reversed.” If such is your resolve and the great Pilot shall come to your help, you will never drink again of the accursed cup and you will shun the company which has lured you to your present wretchedness! Hear me while I cry to you, “Escape for your life! Look not behind you!” for maybe you will never have another hope of escaping—but you will, from this day on, drift from bad to worse, till the worst of all shall come. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters”—have no more to do with them! Oh that the Spirit of the Lord may help you to break the oars and cast the rowers into the sea!

Remember, also, that they have rowed you into the stormy waters, but they cannot row you out of them. You can find no rest by continuing in sin, neither can you save yourself from your present forlorn condition. O man, cry mightily unto God! He will hear you! He has revealed a way of deliverance for you in the Person of His dear Son—all your hope lies there! Have you not heard of Jesus, who can still the wind and bring your vessel into an instant calm? While there is life in you, there is hope in Christ for you! You are not yet in torment—not yet in Hell—still does His good Spirit strive, with the chief of sinners dwell. Therefore, though the sun is gone down for this day, I pray you suffer it not to rise again until you have committed your soul into the hands of your Redeemer! In desperate jeopardy of eternal destruction, cry unto the mighty God for succor and He will make bare His arm and rescue you from your destructions! Despair not! There is a Savior, and a great one, and He has come here to seek and to save that which was lost! Trust in Him who is mighty to save. By the terror of your destruction, I beseech you believe in the great salvation. Cry—

*“Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to Your bosom fly, While the nearer waters roll, While the tempest still is high! Hide me, O my Savior, hide, Till the storm of life is past!  
Safe into the haven guide  
Oh receive my soul at last.”*

I have spoken very feebly, but I pray the Lord to bless it to every unconverted person within these walls.

II. And now, secondly, I think that I see another ship. It is not black with the grime of the world. It resembles the gilded barge of a mighty prince, but still, for all that, its rowers have brought it into great waters. This represents THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS BROUGHT INTO DISTRESS. Many men are fondly persuaded that either they need no saving or that they can save themselves. Either in whole or in part, their natural goodness, or their benevolent actions, or their careful attention to external religion will secure their safety. They suppose that by going to hear the Gospel, by participating in sacraments, by contributing towards Church work and the like, they will find themselves borne securely towards the desired haven. This ship is rarely built. It resembles that to which Ezekiel likens Tyre—“They have made all your planks of fir trees from Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made your oars; they have made your benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood, from the isles of Kittim. Of fine linen with embroidered work from Egypt was your sail, that it might be to you for an ensign; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was your awning.” There is no end to the gallant show which self-righteousness can exhibit! No ship of Tyre can excel it.

Yet to this glorious ship a trying voyage is appointed. Alas, my Friend, your rowers have brought you into great waters. I would like you to think of the difficult journey which lies before you. The proposal is that you shall row yourself by your good works across yon sea of sin to the Port of Glory. Before you enter upon a matter, it is well to count the cost. Do you not know that if you are to be saved by obedience to the Law of God, your obedience must be absolutely perfect? If there is a breach of one single commandment, although all the others should be scrupulously kept, yet the Law is broken and the course of it descends. If you have a chain and you break one link, it is of no further use. It is idle to say, “All the other links are strong.” The miner would not risk his life upon a chain with one dangerous link—and the strength of the whole chain must be measured, not by its strongest, but by its weakest part! Do you think, my Friend, that you can perfectly keep the Law of God? Can you do it as long as you live? I should like you to think what great waters the rowers are proposing to take you into if you are to win salvation by an obedience which shall never fail or falter! You see from Holy Scripture that God gave His Son Jesus Christ to die for us that we might be saved by His Grace. Do you suppose that this gift of Jesus was a superfluity? There would have been no need for that great offering on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ if men can save themselves by their own merits! Calvary is a blot upon the Character of Deity if salvation by self is possible! His own Son put to death without a stern necessity for it were the grossest charge that could be brought against the Great Father! You certainly are attempting a very singular work if you are to perform that which cost the glorious Son of God His life! Great waters, dear Friend—waters too great for your frail vessel.

Look, Sirs, you who have been resting in your own righteousness, have you never once sinned? Take even today to pieces—has no evil thought, or wrong desire, or wanton imagination defiled its hours? Have you never spoken a sinful, unkind, untruthful, or proud word? Do you claim to have been absolutely perfect before your Maker from your childhood? Surely, you must have a brow of brass to make such a boast! What does He say to you? “There is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sins not.” “All we like sheep have gone astray.” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Verily, my Friend, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” If you are to be saved by your works, look where you are! Any day you may slip and stumble—and then what becomes of all your past life? For, “When the righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, all his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die.” If this is your style of standing before God, it is a poor standing, indeed! Can you ever be sure that you will be safe in an hour’s time? Come, my Friend, can you be sure that you have done enough, felt enough, prayed enough, given enough alms and gone a sufficient number of times to the Meeting House, or to the Church? Can you be sure that it is well with you even now? And if your faith is in a priest, can you be sure that he who baptized you and confirmed you had the apostolic succession? Can you be sure that he that gave you the sacrament was truly ordained? When you lie dying, a thousand questions will haunt you! You will have to ask yourself about this, that and the other—and on your present way of going to work you can never be sure!

The religion of self-righteousness never proposes such a thing as security. It does not give the quiet of faith, much less the deep repose of full assurance. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” Uncertainty follows uncertainty and the wind of fear tosses the billows of doubt. You will have to slave your fingers to the bone with incessant efforts and then never have done. Your life will be one perpetual treadmill and you will never be an inch the higher. You might as well attempt to sail across the Atlantic on a sere leaf of autumn as hope to reach Heaven by your own works! You have no good works—you are incapable of good works! Your motive is tainted and it pollutes all you do. Self-salvation is your aim and, therefore, you are serving yourself and not your God. The motive is the essence of the deed. Now, the grand motive which makes virtue, virtue, is absent in the selfish heart. The motive of love is necessary to acceptance with God and you know nothing of it. As of now all your labor comes of a joyless servitude—it is slave’s work for a slave’s wage—and the wage you will get, because you are a sinner—will be no more than death when all is done. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

I remember when I reached those same terrible seas. I used, as a youth, to think, sometimes, that I was as good as other lads and, perhaps, I was, for I had not fallen into the grosser vices. I fancied that if anybody was saved by a moral life, I might be. But oh, when God lifted the veil of my nature and I saw what my heart really was, I sang another tune! I had been down into the cellar of my heart a great many times in the dark and it seemed pretty fair, but when the Holy Spirit opened the shutters and let in the light, what loathsome abominations I saw there! My life, too, no longer appeared to be the goodly thing I had imagined it. Ah, no, my comeliness was turned into corruption! Let but a man get the Light of God streaming into His soul, convicting Him of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come—and all reliance upon self, in any form, will seem to him to be the most hateful of crimes! What crime is there that is more like the pride of Lucifer than the pride of a wretched rebel who talks about meriting Heaven and finding entrance among glorified spirits without washing his robes in the blood of Jesus—under the pretence that they were never foul? Does he imagine that he will be admitted to the courts of the Eternal King to sing his own praises and thus insult the Lord? While others come there through rich and free and Sovereign Grace and, therefore, rapturously adore almighty love, is he to reach the blissful shores to magnify his own excellence?

I tell you, Sir, that if you have put to sea in the boat of selfrighteousness, however strong the rowers who tug those three banks of oars and make the vessel leap through the waves, the day shall come when you will hear a voice across the waters crying, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters: the east wind has broken you in the midst of the seas.” The voyage is too great for you! Shipwreck is sure! May God give you Grace to shun the attempt! Flee from your own works to Christ’s work! Place your trust where God has placed His love, namely, in the Lord Jesus! Then shall you have good works, indeed, but they shall be the cargo which you carry, not the ship which carries you. They shall then be grounded upon the motive of gratitude and not of selfishness. And then shall real virtue be possible to you—virtue based on love to God. When you are delivered from your sin and safe in the righteousness of Christ, then will you say, as each Believer does when his heart is warm with affection—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn!  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
I choose Him in return.”*

Thus have we seen two gallant ships in grievous straits and we have hearkened to counsels by which we may avoid their dangers. May God bless my simple words!

III. But now, very briefly, there is a third case, THE ERRORIST IN HIS DIFFICULTIES. This is a very common sight in these wayward times. I might say to many a man who has ventured out to sea under the strong impulse of curiosity, trusting to his own proud intellect, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” The only safe course for a thoughtful man is to trust in God and to accept the Scriptures as Infallible Truth of God. There is our anchor! Every mind needs a fixed point—we must have Infallibility somewhere—my Infallible Guide is Holy Scripture. I know of no other anchor. The Revelation of God to man, in the Person of the Son of God, even Christ Jesus, is the one and only hope of men. And the Word of the Lord in which we have the Divine testimony to the appointed Savior is our oracle and court of appeal.

But there are men who cannot abide this and, first of all, I think that they begin to get into great waters when they resolve to be guided by their own judgment and their own intellect, without submitting to the teachings of Christ. It is proud and dangerous work to set up to be your own guide. You are undertaking a very large responsibility when you refuse to sit at Jesus’ feet and prefer to assume the teacher’s chair. If you will rely upon your own wisdom, wit and will, you choose a highland road—rough, rugged and full of perils. You cast away the possibility of that sweet peace which comes of reposing on superior wisdom. You miss, in fact, that joy of faith, that sweet rest of mind which is the reward of the lowly of heart. Simple trust in Christ is, to me, the wellspring of comfort. To believe because the Lord speaks is rest to my heart! I could not live except as I leave questions with God and accept His Word instead of all reasoning.

O my wise and thoughtful Friend, do you know what will soon happen to you? You will probably fall under the domination of another’s intellect— you will become the shadow of some greater man. The man who will be guided by nobody is usually guided by someone more foolish or more knavish than himself. I have seen both cases. I have seen a man of superior abilities crouching at the feet of a semi-idiot who seemed, to the other, to be a profound mystic! And I have also seen the deep, designing man of brazen impudence towering above an abler man and cowing him into submission. He swore that he would be independent and to be so he cast off all old beliefs and fettered himself to foolish lies. He would not stay at home with his father to partake of the joyous heritage, for he longed for freedom. Alas, before long a master sent him into his fields to feed swine. He could not believe the simplicities of the Truth of God, but now he groans beneath the monstrosities of superstition!—

*“Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies! He that hates Truth shall be the dupe of lies, And he that will be cheated to the last,  
Delusion, strong as Hell, shall bind him fast.”*

The man has given up the old doctrine because it was difficult and has accepted new doctrine which is 10 times more difficult! He would not be credulous and now he is a hundred times more so. Creation staggered him and he tries to believe in evolution! Faith in Jesus seemed hard, but he must now accept Agnosticism. The difficulties of unbelief are 10 times greater than the difficulties of faith. We may require a great stretch of faith to accept all that the Holy Spirit teaches, but once believe in His faithful Word and you have found a way of life! If you do not do this, you have continually to enlarge the gullet of your credulity and remain forever receptive of mere wind which can never fill the mind. Unbelief calls you to go from improbability to impossibility, from extravagance to romance, from romance to raving! I appeal to candid persons who have ventured from the moorings of faith to sport upon the waves of modern speculation, whether they are not conscious of a great loss? When faith evaporates, there is a speedy departure of spiritual power. The new notions intoxicate, but they do not sustain. The near approach to God is gone when the old faith in the Atonement is shaken—and the enjoyment of hallowed communion ceases when the din of perpetual controversy frightens away the dove of peace!

I have heard it remarked that the modern “apostles,” when they preach, often discourse very prettily—for they are clever men—but all sense of enjoyment of what they preach is lacking. They are not, themselves, feeding upon what they hand out. There is no beaming light upon their faces as of men who are enamored by the doctrines they proclaim! Small delight can their teachings cause them and you see that it is so. They are not heralds arrayed to adorn a banquet, but surgeons gathered to an operation! Well may they be without enjoyment, for there is nothing to enjoy. Who smiles as he sits down to a meatless, marrowless bone? Who rejoices as he lifts a shining cover which has nothing beneath it? In the dogmas of modern thought, there is not enough mental meat to bait a mousetrap! As to food for a soul, there is none of it—an ant would starve on such small grain! No Atonement, no regeneration, no eternal love, no Covenant—what is there worth thinking upon? “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.”

They have taken away the light, the life, the love, the liberty of Free Grace and they have given us nothing to replace them but pretty toys which they, themselves, will break before many days are past. O Sirs, it is all very fine to be amused in the heyday of our health with “bubbles from the brunnen” of superior intellects, but times will come when the soul will have to do business on great waters and then it will need substantial help. When a man comes face to face with eternity, he demands certainties about which his heart has no shadow of question.

I have lain by the hour together consciously looking into death in as bitter suffering of body and mind as a man might well endure and I tell you nothing will then satisfy the heart but the atoning Sacrifice! Nothing will avail to clear the sky but a distinct view of Jesus as a Substitute and a vicarious Sacrifice for human sin! Nothing cheers me at such times but the Eternal Covenant, ordered in all things and sure; promises founded upon the faithfulness of God; Grace given by the Sovereignty of God to guilty and undeserving men! You may do with lighter things, but I must have these and nothing less! Grace, with Omnipotence and Immutability to back it, will bear my spirit up and nothing else! But if you will let go the old Gospel. If you will go from one new theory to another—after a short time you will come into misery of the direst order! I have seen men give up, first of all, the communion of saints. Then all belief in the Word of God. After that, they have gone into the common pleasures of worldlings and so they have drifted and drifted till, at length, the seat of the scorner, the song of the drunkard, or the stews of the unchaste have afforded them carrion suited to their taste. How many who only meant to go a little from the old ways of the Truth of God have gone too far aside even for themselves? Truly, my speculative Friend, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.”

I am not intending to follow you. You are so wise that I am satisfied to be a fool, because I would wish to be the reverse of what you are. I am content to be weak, for your strong mind is bringing you small profit. I would not, at any time, rest my soul’s eternal hope upon a theory, or upon the workings of my own brain. I need a firmer foundation. On the Truths of God revealed in this Book, on the clear and certain verities of Holy Scripture I dare risk my soul for time and for eternity, without the shadow of a doubt! I would earnestly entreat you to do the same, lest, by-and-by, your rowers bring you into great waters!

Why, to me it seems very great waters to be brought into to be forced to say that I know nothing! One walking with me observed, with some emphasis, “I do not believe as you do. I am an Agnostic.” “Oh,” I said to him “that is a Greek word, is it not? The Latin word, I think, is ignoramus.” He did not like it at all. Yet I only translated his language from Greek to Latin! These are strange waters to get into, when all your philosophy brings you is the confession that you know nothing and the stolidity which enables you to glory in your ignorance! As for those of us who rest in Jesus, we know and have believed something, for we have been taught eternal truths by Him who cannot lie! Our Master was not known to say, “It may be,” or, “It may not be,” but He had an authoritative style and testified, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of what He has taught us shall cease to be the creed of our souls! We feel safe in this assurance but should we quit it, we should expect, soon, to find ourselves in troubled waters.

IV. Now I pass on to dwell for a moment upon another sight which is as sad as any of the others—perhaps more sad. Behold THE BACKSLIDER FILLED WITH HIS OWN WAYS. O wanderer from the Lord your God, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” I have seen and talked with some to whom this text has become an awful truth. There are some here, tonight, who, if I brought them upon this platform and they had the courage to speak, could unfold a tale of measureless misery which they have brought upon themselves by departing from the Lord! Look at yonder woman! She once rejoiced in the Gospel as one that finds great spoil. It is 30 years ago, but at that time she knew the Truth of God and loved it. She was the joy of the pastor who brought her to Christ, for she was earnest, intense, devoted. There were years of gracious walking and then there came a temptation. She grew cold in heart. She was poor. She was infatuated. She turned aside—she was wretched and found comfort in the glass. Drop the veil. It is many years ago since that fall and she plunged on in suffering, misery and sin such as I will not attempt to describe. She became a mere wreck! Death stared her in the face. She returned to us and said, “Let me be taken into the Church before I die, for I have never lost, after all, the life of God in my soul but, oh, I stepped aside and from that day sorrow has pursued me. Restore me to the Church, for I am, by Grace, restored to God.” As you looked at her, you said, “Poor weatherbeaten boat! It was an ill day for you when your rowers brought you into these great waters.”

You know how it begins—first of all, that holy, joyful walk with God is lost. You used to sing from morning to night for joy of heart, for, like Enoch, you walked with God! Alas, that music came to a close. It did not seem much—merely to lose rapturous enjoyment—but it was much in itself and it meant more. Then there came a loss of relish for the means of Grace. The services were long and the ministry grew dull. The Prayer Meeting was not worth attending and weeknight services were too much of a good thing. Secret prayer was neglected and the Bible was unread. The forms of religion were kept up longer than the enjoyment of it, but there was no life, no power in them. After that there came a general faultfinding with Brothers and Sisters in Christ—a constant quibbling at this and that. Nothing was good enough. The soul was drifting and it fancied that the Church and the world were no longer what they were, just as men in a boat fancy that the shore is moving. How many endeavor to be blind to their own declensions by pretending to see fault and falsehood in other people! Then there came a distaste for Christian company—godly people were too commonplace and prosaic. The love of something “brighter” called them away from solid conversation. Occasionally they were found in places doubtfully virtuous and unquestionably irreligious. Songs other than those of Zion began to be relished and teachings not of the Bible were listened to.

All the while there was an inward unrest and there was a yearning of the spirit for better things. The man felt, every now and then, that he was losing sight of shore and floating into dangerous places. He was uneasy as to where the currents would carry him and he did not feel safe under his new pilot. Then on a black day there were rocks ahead—rocks from which, in former years, his vessel had steered clear with ease. And now a current and a wind drove the ship that way and before he was well aware of it, the man was wrecked! To quit our figure, the sin which the man once hated he now played with. He did not mean to yield, but he gave way a little and soon became the slave of appetite. He that sat at the sacramental table was now to be seen intoxicated. She that would have communed only with believers in Christ was now found in very dubious society.

At last it went further—it came to actual and open sin—and ruin followed. I cannot tell how long that sinner may remain in his sin. How long David continued impenitent I need not mention, but oh that he had never fallen into it! Oh that he had never idled that day away upon his bed so as only to rise at eventide to see a sight that led him to rush headlong into foul transgression! O Brothers and Sisters, when you begin to get a little away from Christ, you do not know how far you may yet go, nor how soon you may commit the grossest crimes! There may be some here, tonight, who once were preachers of the Gospel, or earnest Sunday school teachers, or Christian women devoted to the cause of God, but now, alas, they are separated from the fellowship of the Church, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, outcasts from the communion of saints!

O Friend, “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” Oh that He would come who owns your boat, who shed His blood for you! Oh that He would step into your vessel and take the helm and turn you around, tonight, by a great stroke of His almighty Grace, and turn your head to the Port of Peace! Do you ask, “Will He receive me again?” Listen to His voice! He says to you, “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you.” Take with you words and come to Him at once, for He is ready to receive you. Do not linger! But O backslider in heart, before you become filled with your own ways, come home, come home and say, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul.” Remember that if you are a child of God you will never be happy in sin! You are spoiled for the world, the flesh and the devil. In the day when you were regenerated there was put into you a vital principle which can never die nor be content to dwell in the dead world. You will have to come back if, indeed, you belong to the family—prodigal as you are, you are still a child! Though you return with every bone broken, you will have to return!

He that is married to you has not forgotten the marriage bond. Though you have forsaken Him and defiled yourself with many lovers, yet it is written, “He hates putting away.” He cannot endure divorce! His almighty love will win you back. He cannot and He will not give you up. Read those memorable passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where the Holy Spirit uses that simile which I scarcely dare use tonight, where the most defiled and corrupt of adulterous souls are still bid to come back to their first husband because the marriage bond still holds good and the Lord will neither let them go nor suffer them to continue in sin. “Your rowers have brought you into great waters.” Oh for a steersman to guide you into port! Return, return! I leave my text and those to whom it applies with the God of all Grace. May He bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE WARNING NEGLECTED  
N0. 165

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 29, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“He heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him.”  
Ezekiel 33:5.**

IN all worldly things men are always enough awake to understand their own interests. There is scarce a merchant who reads the paper who does not read it in some way or other with a view to his own personal concerns. If he finds that by the rise or fall of the markets he will be either a gainer or a loser, that part of the day’s news will be the most important to him. In politics—in everything in fact—that concerns temporal affairs, personal interest usually leads the van. Men will always be looking out for themselves and personal and home interests will generally engross the major part of their thoughts.

But in religion it is otherwise. In religion men love far rather to believe abstract doctrines and to talk of general truths than the searching inquiries which examine their own personal interest in it. You will hear many men admire the preacher who deals in generalities—but when he comes to press home searching questions by-and-by, they are offended. If we stand and declare general facts, such as the universal sinnership of mankind. Or the need of a Savior, they will give an assent to our doctrine and possibly they may retire greatly delighted with the discourse, because it has not affected them. But how often will our audience gnash their teeth and go away in a rage because, like the Pharisees with Jesus, they perceive concerning a faithful minister, that he spoke of them?

And yet, my Brethren, how foolish this is. If in all other matters we like personalities—if in everything else we look to our own concerns, how much more should we do so in religion? For surely every man must give an account for himself at the Day of Judgment. We must die alone. We must rise at the day of resurrection one by one and each one for himself must appear before the bar of God—and each one must either have said to him, as an individual, “Come you blessed”—or else he must be appalled with the thundering sentence, “Depart you cursed.”

If there were such a thing as national salvation—if it could be possible that we could be saved in the gross and in the bulk, that so, like the sheaves of corn, the few weeds that may grow with the stubble would be gathered in for the sake of the wheat—then, indeed, it might not be so foolish for us to neglect our own personal interests. But if the sheep must, every one of them, pass under the hand of him that counts them. If every man must stand in his own person before God, to be tried for his own acts—by everything that is rational, by everything that conscience would

dictate and self-interest would command—let us each of us look to ourselves, that we are not deceived and that we find not ourselves, at last, miserably cast away.

Now, this morning, by God’s help, I shall labor to be personal. And while I pray for the rich assistance of the Divine Spirit, I will also ask one thing of each person here present—I would ask of every Christian that he would lift up a prayer to God that the service may be blessed. And I ask of every other person that he will please to understand that I am preaching to him and at him. And if there is anything that is personal and pertinent to his own case, I beseech him, as for life and death, to let it have its full weight with him and not begin to think of his neighbor, to whom, perhaps, it may be even more pertinent, but whose business certainly does not concern him.

The text is a solemn one—“he heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him.” The first head is this—the warning was all that could be desired—“he heard the sound of the trumpet.” Secondly, the excuses for not attending to the startling warning are all of them both frivolous and wicked. And therefore, in the third place, the consequences of inattention must be terrible, because man’s blood must then be on his own head.

I. First, then, THE WARNING WAS ALL THAT COULD BE DESIRED. When in time of war an army is attacked in the night and cut off and destroyed while asleep—if it were impossible for them to be aware of the attack and if they had used all diligence in placing their sentinels—but nevertheless the foe were so wary as to destroy them, we should weep. We should attach no blame to anyone, but should deeply regret and should give to that host our fullest pity. But if, on the other hand, they had posted their sentinels and the sentinels were wide awake and gave to the sleepy soldiers every warning that could be desired, but nevertheless the army were cut off—we might for common humanity regret the loss thereof. Yet at the same time we should be obliged to say, if they were foolish enough to sleep when the sentinels had warned them—if they folded their arms in presumptuous sloth after they had had sufficient and timely notice of the progress of their bloodthirsty enemy, then in their dying, we cannot pity them—their blood must rest upon their own heads.

So it is with you. If men perish under an unfaithful ministry and have not been sufficiently warned to escape from the wrath to come, the Christian may pity them, yes, and methinks even when they stand before the bar of God, although the fact of their not having been warned will not fully excuse them, yet it will go far to diminish their eternal miseries, which otherwise might have fallen upon their heads. We know it is more tolerable for unwarned Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment, than it is for any city, or any nation that has had the Gospel proclaimed in its ears.

My Brethren, if on the other hand we have been warned, if our ministers have been faithful, if they have aroused our conscience and have constantly and earnestly called our attention to the fact of the wrath to come—and if we have not attended to their message, if we have despised the voice of God, if we have turned a deaf ear to their earnest exhortations—if we perish, we shall die warned. We shall die under the sound of the Gospel and our damnation must be an unpitied one—our blood must fall upon our own heads. Permit me then, to try, if I can, to enlarge upon this thought—that the warning has been in the case of many of you all that could have been needed.

In the first place, the warnings of the ministry have been to most of you warnings that have been heard—“he heard the sound of the trumpet.” In far off lands the trumpet sound of warning is not heard. Alas, there are myriads of our fellow creatures who have never been warned by God’s ambassadors, who know not that wrath abides on them and who do not yet understand the only way and method of salvation. In your case it is very different. You have heard the Word of God preached to you. You cannot say, when you come before God, “Lord, I knew no better.” There is not a man or a woman within this place who will dare then to plead ignorance.

And moreover, you have not only heard with your ears, but some of you have been obliged to hear it in your consciences. I have before me many of my hearers whom I have had the pleasure of seeing now for some years. It has not been once or twice, but many a time I have seen the tear guttering your cheeks when I have spoken earnestly, faithfully and affectionately to you. I have seen your whole soul moved within you. And yet, to my sorrow you are now what you were—your goodness has been as the early cloud and as the morning dew that passes away. You have heard the Gospel. You wept under it and you loved the sound of it. You came again and wept again and—many marveled that you did weep—but the greatest marvel was that after having wept so well, you wiped away your tears so easily. Oh, yes, God is my witness, there are some of you not an inch nearer Heaven. You have sealed your own damnation doubly sure unless you repent—for you have heard the Gospel, you have despised prophesying, you have rejected the counsel of God against yourselves. And, therefore, when you shall die you must die pitied by your friends, but at the same time with your blood on your own heads.

The trumpet was not only heard, but more than that, its warning was understood. When the man supposed in the text heard the trumpet, he understood by it that the enemy was at hand and yet he took not warning. Now, my Brethren, in your case, the sound of the Gospel warning has been understood. A thousand faults your minister may have, but there is one fault from which he is entirely free. And that is, he is free from all attempts to use fine language in the expression of his thoughts. You are all my witnesses that if there is a Saxon word or a home phrase, a sentence that is rough and market-like that will tell you the truth—I always use that first. I can say solemnly, as in the sight of God, that I never went out of my pulpit, except with the firm belief that whatever might have happened, I was perfectly understood.  
I had sought at least so to gather wise words, that no man might mistake my meaning—gnash his teeth he might, but he could not say, “The preacher was misty and cloudy, talking to me of metaphysics, beyond my comprehension.” He has been obliged to say, “Well, I know what he meant, he spoke plainly enough to me.” Well, Sirs, then if it is so and if you have heard warnings that you could understand, so much the more guilty you are —if you are living this day in rejection of them. If I have preached to you in a style above comprehension then on my head must be your blood, because I ought to have made you understand. But if I come down to men of low estate and pick even vulgar phrases to suit common people, then if you understood the warning and if you then risked it, mark you, my hands are clean of your blood. If you are damned I am innocent of your damnation. I have told you plainly, that except you repent, you must perish—and that except you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is for you no hope of salvation.

Again, this trumpet sound was startling. The trumpet’s sound is ever considered to be the most startling in the world. ‘Tis that which shall be used on the resurrection morning to startle the myriads of sleepers and make them rise from their tombs. Yes, and you have had a startling ministry. You have sat, some of you, under ministers that might have made the devil himself tremble, so earnest have they been. And they have made you tremble sometimes, so much, that you could not sleep. The hair of your head was well near moved to stand upright. They spoke as though they never might speak again—as dying men to dying men. They spoke as if they had been in Hell and knew the vengeance of the Almighty—and they spoke as if they had entered into the heart of Jesus and read His love to sinners.

They had brows of brass, they knew not how to flinch. They laid your iniquity bare before your face and with rough language that was unmistakable they made you feel that there was a man there who told you all things that ever you did. They so declared it, that you could not help feeling under it. You always retained a veneration for that minister, because you felt that he at least was honest with you. And you have sometimes thought that you would even go and hear him again—because there at least your soul was moved—and you were made to hear the Truth.

Yes, you have had a startling ministry, some of you. Then, Sirs, if you have heard the cry of fire, if you are burned in your beds, your charred ashes shall not accuse me. If I have warned you that he that believes not must be damned, if you are damned, your miserable souls shall not accuse me. If I have startled you sometimes from your slumbers and made your dances and your pleasure parties uneasy because I have sometimes warned you of these things, then, Sirs, if after all you put away these warnings and you reject these counsels, you will be obliged to say, “My blood is on my own head.”

In many of your cases the warning has been very frequent. If the man heard the trumpet sound ONCE and did not regard it, possibly we might excuse him. But how many of my audience have heard the trumpet sound of the Gospel very frequently? There you are, young man. You have had many years of a pious mother’s teaching—many years of a pious minister’s exhortations. Wagon loads of sermons have been exhausted upon you. You have had many sharp providences, many terrible sicknesses. Often when the death bell has tolled for your friend, your conscience has been aroused. To you warnings are not unusual things. They are very common. Oh, my Hearers, if a man should hear the Gospel but once, his blood would be upon his own head for rejecting it. But of how much sorer punishment shall you be thought worthy who have heard it many and many a time? Ah, I may well weep when I think how many sermons you have listened to, many of you, how many times you have been cut to the heart.

A hundred times every year you have gone up to the house of God, and far oftener than that you have just added a hundred billets to the eternal pile. A hundred times the trumpet has sounded in your ears and a hundred times you have turned away to sin again—to despise Christ—to neglect your eternal interests and to pursue the pleasures and the concerns of this world. Oh, how mad this is, how mad! Oh, Sirs, if a man had but once poured out his heart before you concerning your eternal interests and if he had spoken to you earnestly and you had rejected his message, then, even then, you had been guilty. But what shall we say to you upon whom the shafts of the Almighty have been exhausted? Oh, what shall be done unto this barren ground that has been watered with shower after shower and that has been quickened with sunshine after sunshine? What shall be done unto him who being often rebuked, still hardens his neck? Shall he not be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy and shall it not then be said, “his blood lies at his own door, his guilt is on his own head”?

And I would just have you recollect one thing more. This warning that you have had so often has come to you in time. “Ah,” said an infidel once, “God never regards man. If there is a God, He would never take notice of men.” Said a Christian minister, who was sitting opposite to him in the carriage, “The day may come, Sir, when you will learn the truth of what you have just said.” “I do not understand your allusion, Sir,” said he. “Well, Sir, the day may come when you may call and He will refuse. When you may stretch out your hands and He will not regard you, but as He has said in the book of Proverbs, so will He do, ‘Because I called and you refused, because I stretched out My hands and no man regarded, I also will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear comes.’ ”

But oh, Sirs, your warning has not come too late. You are not warned on a sick bed, at the eleventh hour, when there is but a bare possibility of salvation. You are warned in time—you are warned today—you have been warned for these many years that are now past. If God should send a preacher to the damned in Hell, that were an unnecessary addition to their misery. Surely, if one could go and preach the Gospel through the fields of Gehenna and tell them of a Savior they had despised—and of a Gospel that is now beyond their reach—that were taunting poor souls with a vain attempt to increase their unutterable woe. But oh, my Brethren, to preach the Gospel now is to preach in a hopeful period—for “now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation.”

Warn the boatman before he enters the current, and then, if he is swept down the rapids, he destroys himself. Warn the man before he drinks the cup of poison, tell him it is deadly. And then, if he drinks it, his death lies at his own door. And so, let us warn you before you depart this life. Let us preach to you while as yet your bones are full of marrow and the sinews of your joints are not loosed. We have then warned you in time and so much the more shall your guilt be increased because the warning was timely. It was frequent, it was earnest, it was appropriate, it was arousing, it was continually given to you—and yet you sought not to escape from the wrath to come.

And so even this morning would I say to you, if you perish. I am free from your blood. If you are damned, it is not for want of calling after, nor for want of praying for, nor for want of weeping over. Your blood must be on your own heads, for the warning is all that is needed.

II. And now we come to the second point. MEN MAKE EXCUSES WHY THEY DO NOT ATTEND TO THE GOSPEL WARNING, BUT THESE EXCUSES ARE ALL FRIVOLOUS AND WICKED. I will just go over one or two of the excuses that people make. Some of them say, “Well, I did not attend to the warning because I did not believe there was any necessity for it.” Ah, you were told that after death there was a judgment and you did not believe there was any necessity that you should be prepared for that judgment? You were told that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified and that only through Christ can sinners be saved. And you did not think there was any necessity for Christ? Well Sir, you ought to have thought there was a necessity. You know there was a necessity in your inner consciousness. You talked very large things when you stood up as an unbeliever, a professed unbeliever—but you know there was a still small voice that while you spoke belied your tongue.

You are well aware that in the silent watches of the night you have often trembled. In a storm at sea you have been on your knees to pray to a God whom on the land you have laughed at. And when you have been sick near unto death, you have said, “Lord, have mercy upon me.” And so you have prayed—you have believed it after all. But if you did not believe it, you ought to have believed it. There was enough in reason to have taught you that there was an hereafter. The Book of God’s revelation was plain enough to have taught it to you and if you have rejected God’s Book and rejected the voice of reason and of conscience, your blood is on your own head. Your excuse is idle. It is worse than that—it is profane and wicked— and still on your own head is your everlasting torment.

“But,” cries another, “I did not like the trumpet. I did not like the Gospel that was preached.” Says one, “I did not like certain doctrines in the Bible. I thought the minister preached too harsh doctrines sometimes. I did not agree with the Gospel, I thought the Gospel ought to have been altered and not to have been just what it was.” You did not like the trumpet, did you? Well, but God made the trumpet, God made the Gospel and inasmuch as you did not like what God made, it is an idle excuse. What was it to you what the trumpet was, so long as it warned you? And surely, if it had been time of war and you had heard a trumpet to warn you of the coming of the enemy, you would not have sat still and said, “Now I believe that is a brass trumpet, I would like to have had it made of silver.” No, but the sound would have been enough for you and up you would have been to escape from the danger. And so it must be now with you. It is an idle pretense that you did not like it. You ought to have liked it, for God made the Gospel what it is.

But you say, “I did not like the man that blew it.” Well, if you did not like one messenger of God, there are many in this city. Could you not find one you did like? You did not like one man’s manner—it was too theatrical. You did not like another’s—it was too doctrinal. You did not like another’s—it was too practical. There are plenty of them—you may take which you do like. But if God has sent the men and told them how to blow—and if they blow to the best of their ability, it is all in vain for you to reject their warnings, because they do not blow the way you like. Ah, my Brethren, we do not find fault with the way a man speaks, if we are in a house that is on fire. If the man yells, “Fire! Fire!” we are not particular what note he takes. We do not think what a harsh voice he has got. You would think anyone a fool, a confounded fool, who should lie in his bed, to be burned, because be said he did not like the way the man cried, “Fire.” Why his business was to have been out of bed and down the stairs at once, as soon as he heard it.

But another says, “I did not like the man himself. I did not like the minister. I did not like the man that blew the trumpet. I could hear him preach very well, but I had a personal dislike of him and so I did not take any notice of what the trumpet said.” Verily, God will say to you at last, “You fool, what had you to do with that man? To his own Master he stands or falls. Your business was with yourself.” What would you think of a man who has fallen overboard from a ship and when he is drowning, some sailor throws him a rope and there it is. Well, he says, in the first place, “I do not like that rope, I don’t think that rope was made at the best factory. There is some tar on it, too, I do not like it. And in the next place, I do not like that sailor that threw the rope over. I am sure he is not a kind-hearted man, I do not like the looks of him at all.” And then comes a gurgle and a groan—and down he is at the bottom of the sea. And when he was drowned, they said that it served him right, if he would not lay hold of the rope, but would be making such foolish and absurd objections, when it was a matter of life and death.

Then on his own head is his blood. And so shall it be with you at last. You are so busy with criticizing the minister and his style, and his doctrine, that your own soul perishes. Remember you may get into Hell by criticism, but you will never criticize your soul out of it. You may there make the most you can of it. You may be there and say, “I did not like the minister. I did not like his manner. I did not like his matter.” But all your disliking will not get one drop of water to cool your burning tongue—nor

serve to mitigate the unalleviated torments of that world of agony.

There are many other people who say, “Ah, well, I did none of those things, but I had a notion that the trumpet sound ought to be blown to everybody else, but not to me.” Ah, that is a very common notion. “All men think all men mortal but themselves,” said a good poet. And all men think all men need the Gospel, but not themselves. Let each of us recollect that the Gospel has a message to each one of us. What says the Gospel to you my Hearer? What says the Word to you? Forget your neighbors and ask this question—does it condemn you? Or does it assure you of your pardon? For remember, all you have to do in the hearing of the Word is to hear with your own ears for your own soul and it will be idle for anyone to say, “I did not think it applied to me,” when we know that it is to be preached to every creature under Heaven and therefore there must be something in it for every creature or else it would not be preached to every creature.

Well, says another, “But I was so busy. I had so much to do that I could not possibly attend to my soul’s concerns.” What will you say of the man who has so much to do that he could not get out of the burning house, but was burnt to ashes? What will you say of the man that had so much to do that when he was dying he had not time to send for a physician? Why, you will say then he ought not to have had so much to do. And if any man in the world has a business which causes him to lose his own soul for want of time, let him lay this question to his heart, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

But it is false—it is false—men have got time. It is the want of will, not want of way. You have time, Sir, have you not, despite all your business, to spend in pleasure? You have time to read your newspaper—have you no time to read your Bible? You have time to sing a song—have you no time to pray a prayer? Why, you know when farmer Brown met farmer Smith in the market one day, he said to him, “Farmer Smith, I can’t think how it is you find time for hunting. Why, man, what with sowing and mowing and reaping and plowing and all that, my time is so fully occupied on my farm, that I have no time for hunting.”

“Ah,” said he, “Brown, if you liked hunting as much as I do, if you could not find time, you’d make it.” And so it is with religion—the reason why men cannot find time for it is because they do not like it well enough. If they liked it, they would find time. And besides, what time does it want? What time does it require? Can I not pray to God over my ledger? Can I not snatch a text at my very breakfast and think over it all day? May I not even when I am busy in the affairs of the world, be thinking of my soul and casting myself upon a Redeemer’s blood and atonement? It wants no time. There may be some time required—some time for my private devotions and for communion with Christ—but when I grow in grace, I shall think it right to have more and more time. The more I can possibly get, the happier I shall be and I shall never make the excuse that I have no time.

“Well,” says another, “but I thought I had time enough. You do not want me, Sir, to be religious in my youth, do you? I am a lad and may I not have a little frolic and sow my wild oats as well as anybody else?” Well—yes, yes. But at the same time the best place for frolic that I know of, is where a Christian lives. The finest happiness in all the world is the happiness of a child of God. You may have your pleasures—oh, yes, you shall have them doubled and trebled, if you are a Christian. You shall not have things that worldlings call pleasures—you shall have some that are a thousand times better. But only look at that sorrowful picture. There, far away in the dark gulf of woe, lies a young man and he cries. “Ah, I meant to have repented when I was out of my apprenticeship but I died before my time was up.” “Ah,” says another by his side, “and I thought, while I was a journeyman, that when I came to be a master, I would then think of the things of Christ, but I died before I had got money enough to start for myself.”

And then a merchant behind wails with bitter woe and says, “Ah, I thought I would be religious when I had got enough to retire on and live in the country. Then I should have time to think of God, when I had got all my children married out and my concerns settled about me. But here I am shut up in Hell and now what are all my delays worth and what is all the time I gained for all the paltry pleasures in the world? Now I have lost my soul over them.” We experience great vexation if we are unpunctual in many places. But we cannot conceive what must be the horror and dismay of men who find themselves too late in the next world! Ah, Friends, if I knew there was one here who said, “I shall repent next Wednesday,” I would have him feel in a dreadful state till that Wednesday came—for what if he should die? Oh, what if he should die! Would his promise of a Wednesday’s repentance save him from a Thursday damnation?

Ah, these are all idle excuses. Men make not such excuses when their bodily life is concerned. Would God that we were wise, that we would not make such pitiful pretences to apology when our soul—our own soul—is the matter at stake! If they take not warning, whatever their excuse, their blood must be upon their own head.

III. And now I come most solemnly to conclude with all the power of earnestness. The warning has been sufficient, the excuse for not attending to it has been proved profane. Then the last thought is “HIS BLOOD SHALL BE ON HIS OWN HEAD.” Briefly thus—he shall perish. He shall perish certainly, he shall perish inexcusably. He shall perish. And what does that mean? There is no human mind, however spacious, that can ever guess the thought of a soul eternally cast away from God. The wrath to come is as inexpressible as the glory that shall be revealed hereafter. Our Savior labored for words with which to express the horrors of a future state to the ungodly. You remember He talked of worms that die not. Of fires that are never quenched, of a pit without a bottom—of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness.

No preacher was ever so loving as Christ but no man ever spoke so horribly about Hell. And yet even when the Savior had said His best and said

His worst, He had not told us what are the horrors of a future state. You have seen sicknesses, you have heard the shrieks of men and women when their pangs have been upon them. We, at least, have stood by the bedsides even of some dear to us—and we have seen to what an extent agony may be carried in the human body. But none of us know how much the body is capable of suffering. Certainly the body will have to suffer forever—“He is able to cast both body and soul into Hell.” We have heard of exquisite torments, but we have never dreamt of any like unto this. Again, we have seen something of the miseries of the soul. Have we ever noticed the man that we used to know in our childhood who was depressed in spirits?

All that ever could be done for him never could evoke a smile from him—never did the light of cheerfulness light up his eye—he was mournfully depressed. Yes, and it was my unhappy lot to live with one who was not only depressed in spirits, but whose mind had gone so far amiss that it did brood fancies so mournful and dismal, that the very sight of him was enough to turn the sunlight of summer into the very darkness of a dreary winter. He had nothing to say but dark, groaning words. His thoughts always had a somber appearance about them. It was midnight in his soul—a darkness that might be felt. Have you ever seen yourselves what power the mind has over us to make us full of misery?

Ah, Brethren, if you could go to many of our asylums and to our sick wards—yes, and dying beds, too—you might know what acute anguish the mind may feel. And remember that the mind, as well as the mortal frame, is to endure damnation. Yes, we must not shirk that word—the Scripture says it—and we must use it. Oh, men and women, except we repent, except we do each of us cry for mercy to Him that is able to save, we must perish! All that is meant by that word “Hell,” must be realized in me except I am a Believer. And so all that is meant by, “Depart, you cursed,” must be yours, unless you do turn unto God with full purpose of heart.

But again, he that turns not at the rebuke of the minister shall die and he shall die certainly. This is not a matter of perhaps or chance. The things we preach and that are taught in Scripture are matters of solemn certainty. It may be that death is that journey from which no traveler returns, but it is not true that we know nothing of it. It is as certain as that there are men—and a world in which they live—that there is another world to come and that if they die impenitent, that world will be to them one of misery. And mark you—there is no chance of escape. Die without Christ and there is no gate out of which you can escape—forever, oh, forever lost and not one hope of mercy—cast away and not one outlet for escape, not one solitary chance of ransom.

Oh, if there were hope that in the world to come, men might escape, we need not be so earnest. But since once lost, lost forever—once cast away, cast away without hope, without any prospect of a hope—we must be earnest. Oh, my God, when I remember that I have today some here present who in all probability must be dead before next Sabbath, I must be earnest! Out of so large an assembly, the chances are that we shall not all of us be found pilgrims in this world within another seven days. It is not only possible, but probable that someone out of this vast audience will have been launched upon a world unknown. Shall it be myself and shall I sail to the port of bliss or must I sail over fiery waves forever, lost, shipwrecked, stranded, on the rocks of woe? Soul, which shall it be with you? It may be you shall die, my gray-headed Hearer. Or you, young lad, you boy, you may die—I know not which nor can we tell—God only knows. Then let each one ask himself—am I prepared, should I be called to die? Yes, you may die where you are, on the benches where you are sitting— you may now die—and where would you go? For recollect that where you go, you go forever.

Oh, Eternity—Eternity—Eternity must I climb your topless steeps forever and never reach the summit and must my path be ever misery or joy? Oh, Eternity, you depth without a bottom, you sea without a shore, must I sail over your boundless waves forever in one undeviating track—and must I either plow through seas of bliss, or else be driven by the stormy wind of vengeance, over gulfs of misery? “Then what am I?” “My soul awake and an impartial survey take.” Am I prepared? Am I prepared? Am I prepared? For prepared or not, death admits of no delay—and if he is at my door, he will take me where I must go forever—prepared or not.

Now, the last thing is the sinner will perish—he will perish certainly, but last of all, he will perish without excuse—his blood shall be on his own head. When a man is bankrupt, if he can say, “It is not through reckless trading—it has been entirely through the dishonesty of one I trusted that I am what I am,” he takes some consolation and he says, “I cannot help it.” But oh, my Hearers, if you make bankrupts of your own souls after you have been warned, then your own eternal bankruptcy shall lie at your own door. Should ever so great a misfortune come upon us, if we can trace it to the Providence of God, we bear it cheerfully. But if we have inflicted it upon ourselves, then how fearful it is!

And let every man remember that if he perishes after having heard the Gospel, he will be his own murderer. Sinner, you will drive the dagger into your heart yourself. If you despise the Gospel you are preparing fuel for your own bed of flames—you are hammering out the chain for your own everlasting binding. And when damned, your mournful reflection will be this— I have damned myself, I cast myself into this pit. For I rejected the Gospel, I despised the message. I trod under foot the Son of Man. I would have none of His rebukes. I despised His Sabbaths. I would not hearken to His exhortations—and now I perish by my own hand—the miserable suicide of my own soul.

And now a sweet reflection strikes me. A good writer says, “There are, doubtless, spots in the world that would be barren forever if we recollected what had happened there.” Says he, “I was once in St. Paul’s cathedral, just under the dome, and a friend just touched me gently and said, ‘Do you see that little chisel mark?’ and I said ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘That is where a man threw himself down and there he fell and was dashed to atoms.’ ” The writer says, “We all started aside from that little spot, where a fellow creature’s blood had been shed. It seemed an awful place when we remembered that.” Now, there is many a street, there is many a wayside, there is many a house of God, where men have taken the last decision and damned their own souls. I doubt not, there are some here this morning, standing or sitting, to whom the voice of conscience says, “Decide for God,” and now Satan and the evil heart together are saying, “Reject the message. Laugh it off, forget it. Take a ticket for the theater tomorrow. Do not let this man alarm us—it is his very profession to talk to us like this. Let us go away and laugh if off. And let us spend the rest of this day in merriment.”

Yes, that is the last warning you will ever have. It is so with some of you. There are some of you that will this hour decide to damn yourselves and you will look forever throughout eternity to that place under the gallery of the Surrey Music Hall. And you will say, “Alas, woe was the day I heard that man. I was half impressed—almost he persuaded me to be a Christian, but I decided for Hell.” And that will be a solemn spot to angels where you are standing, or where you are sitting, for angels will say to one another, “Stand aside, that is a spot where a man ruined his own soul forever and ever.”

But the sweet thought is, that there are some places just the reverse. Why, you are sitting, my Friend, this morning, on a spot where some three weeks ago one sat who was converted to God! And that place where you are sitting you ought to venerate—for in that place there sat one who was one of the chief of sinners, like yourself, and there the Gospel message met him. And far back there behind the door many a soul has been brought to Christ. Many a piece of good news have I heard from some in yonder upper gallery. “I could not see your face, Sir, all the sermon through, but the arrow of the Lord found its way round the corner and reached my heart notwithstanding that, and I was saved.” Ah, well, may God so bless this place that every seat of it this day may be solemnized by His own grace and a spot to be remembered in your future history by reason of the beginning of your blessedness, the dawn of your salvation.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus and be baptized, and you shall be saved.” This is the Gospel we are told to preach to every creature—“he that believes, and is immersed, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”

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TURNING FROM DEATH  
NO. 3324

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, JULY, 22, 1866.

**“Turn you, turn you from your evil ways;  
for why will you die, O house of Israel?”  
Ezekiel 33:11.**

IT is a token of the great mercy of God that He is very earnest in His pleading with men to turn from their sins that He may not be compelled to punish them, as He must do if they go on in their iniquities. A cruel governor is glad of an opportunity to show his severity and, therefore, not especially anxious to prevent offenses. But a kind, tender-hearted monarch He must be who leaves His Throne and comes down among the rebels and, with tears in His eyes, cries to them, “Oh, do not this wicked thing that I hate! Offend not against Me! Do not compel Me to take the sword out of its scabbard! Do not force Me to say that I will have no mercy upon you, but turn you, turn you from those evil courses which will certainly bring you mischief!” Sinner, God speaks to you tonight out of His Infinite Mercy. He has no pleasure in your death! It will give Him no satisfaction to cast you into Hell! He has taken an oath concerning it. “As I live,” says the Lord God, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies,” and to prove the sincerity of the oath, He cries, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways: for why will you die, O house of Israel?” If you are not spared, but perish, it will not be because God is not merciful to you but because you are not merciful to yourselves!

The text as it stands is a very earnest exhortation from God. It is directed, I doubt not, to all sorts of sinful men. And it is directed to such in all sincerity and honesty, for albeit we believe without reserve in the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace, we do not for a moment desire to lessen the force or explain away the reality of so earnest an appeal as this! We can preach from such a text with all sincerity and intensity—indeed, as much as if we did not believe in any Election of Grace!

We would seek to give to all and every Scripture, the genuine meaning which it contains. But, dear Friends, solemnly penetrating and heartsearching as His exhortation is, and given as it is by God, Himself, if a man rejects it, he thereby adds to his sin. God calls to the sinner to turn, but turn he never will unless there is something more than the call! By the public ministry, by sickness, by the Bible, by conscience—yes, and by the common and universal operations of the Holy Spirit, God calls to men—“Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” But they seem determined to die and, therefore, they go over hedge and ditch to destruction—and this against all the warnings and rebukes of the Most High!

So they will continue in their sins and aggravate them by the rejection of the very exhortation which was meant to deliver them from them—and so make themselves yet more guilty before God by turning against His Word which was meant to have a blessing in it for them. I do not intend, therefore, being the means of adding to your guilt tonight. When I took the text, I felt as if I dared not preach from it. It shook me, though it may not shake you. As I read it, and read it, and read it again, I thought, if I deliver it as I find it there, I shall very likely only have to come back and say, “Who has believed our report?” And the most of my Hearers who are unconverted will only go away and say, “What care we for those alarming words?” So I remembered that when the Holy Spirit comes effectually to work upon the souls of men He uses the very same means and instruments which in our hands seem powerless. If I say to you, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” you will take no notice of it. But if the Holy Spirit shall come and say this to you, then you shall certainly be obedient to it, for He has the key of the heart and He knows how, without violating the free agency of man, to make man willing in the day of His power! So that when He says, “Turn you, turn you,” they do turn, and when He says, “Why will you die?” they begin to reason with themselves and they see it is an ill thing that they should perish and, therefore, they turn to God!

Now, I will earnestly hope and pray that God the Holy Spirit will use these words upon some heart. And I intend to preach upon them, not as they stand in the Book, but as they will then stand in your hearts! Let me try, if I can, to picture what will take place in the man’s heart in whom God the Holy Spirit shall say by His effectual Grace, “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” I shall try, therefore, to give an outline sketch of the spiritual experience which will be known in the human breast in which the Holy Spirit is now pressing home this solemn question.

There will be three things there—first the fears will be awakened. That word, “die,” will come like the point of a dagger to slay the soul’s false peace. In the second place, the heart will be affected. “Turn you, turn you,” will cause the heart to turn away from its former lusts and turn towards God. And then, in the third place, the understanding will be set vigorously working, for the question, “For why will you die?” if pressed home by Divine Power, will turn reason into right reasoning—the man will begin to consider his ways and to ask himself seriously, why he should throw away his soul—why he should lose his most precious possession for which nothing can ever be given in exchange, or at its purchase price.

Solemnly then, as before the Lord, let us deal in turn with these three things. If, my dear Hearer, it should be your happy lot to have this question brought home to your inmost soul by the power of God’s Holy Spirit you will tonight—  
I. HAVE YOUR FEARS AWAKENED.  
This is how it will operate. You will begin to say within yourself, “This

text tells me that I must either turn or die. I must change my present state, habits and ways—and I must turn with full purpose of heart in another direction or else I shall die—a deserved sentence, a capital sentence is passed against me. Not that I shall be imprisoned, not that I shall be transported for such-and-such a time, but that I shall die! The most terrible sentence of the Law of God, it seems, will come upon me unless I turn.” Oh, heart, look that in the face! Oh, you fears, endeavor to awaken yourselves and on those dull and leaden eyes to see what it is to die!

First, my Hearer, if this test should come home to you, you will say, “Why, I am not ready to die in the common sense of that term.” If you were called to die tonight, my Hearer, your house is not in order. You could not go home to your bed with anything like joy if you knew that you were about to lie down upon it, never to rise from it again! I recollect when the cholera was here the last time that I was going to a house on Blackfriarsroad where a man had just put up a bedstead. He had moved only that very morning from another district which was unhealthy. He had only just put up the bed, and he lay there, fast dying, and I knelt by his bedside. Now, suppose that were to be your case?—

*“Should swift death this night overtake you, And your bed become your tomb—  
Would the morn in Heaven awake you  
Clad in light and deathless bloom?”*

Can you hope so? Ah, there are many of you who have no such hope! The thought of death is very unpleasant to you just now! That hot blood does not like to think of the chill cold hand—and those happy eyes do not welcome the thought of the bleak pall, the cold vault and the sad refrain— “Dust to dust, ashes to ashes.” So then, my Soul, if you are afraid even to die, which is but the beginning of sorrows, do let yourself be affected with that awful fact that there is another death far more terrible than this first death, and a doom more fearful by far! Do let these thoughts come home to you, my Hearer—you must either turn or die—and in that death of the soul, there is an emphasis of unutterable woe!

Then, again, if I am not prepared to die and this text is brought home to me with power by the Holy Spirit, I shall see that I am still less prepared to take my last trial before the great Judge.

It is certain that when my soul leaves my body, it will not die, but will be summoned into the august Presence of the Great King and then, during the time that will elapse between death and resurrection, your soul and mine, if they are guilty, will begin to suffer under an apprehension of the wrath which is yet to come! Am I prepared to face God as a disembodied spirit? May we not well start at the thought? May not even the true Christian feel it to be no child’s play to think of his spirit coming before the bar of God? But much more the man who is without God and without hope!

Oh, Soul, what will you do when this poor flesh is left behind and you must pass that solemn test? But before long, how soon we cannot tell, the body which has been moldering in this grave shall rise again! The trumpet of the archangel, shrill and loud, shall be heard over hill and dale. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels shall descend and in the midst of them shall come the cloud, the Great White Cloud, and on the cloud shall be the Throne, and on the Throne, the Son of Man who once was crucified—no longer with His hands pierced with nails, but grasping the scepter of all worlds! No longer “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,” but now—

*“With rainbow wreath and robes of storm, On cherub wings and wings of wind,  
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”*

If the heart is properly affected by this text it, will say, “I am not ready to meet Him! I am not ready to be in that great assembly! I am not ready to hear the cry—‘Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!’ I am not ready be to put into the scales! I am not prepared to be brought up before those eyes of fire! I am not ready to have my secrets read before assembled men and angels! I am not ready to hear the Judge say, ‘Depart you cursed!’” Well, but if the mere dying, which is only the leaving of this world. If the mere coming before the bar of God, if ultimate coming before Him at the Last Great Day is terrible. Oh, if the text should come home with power, my dear Hearer, and I pray God it may!—you will recollect that all this is not dying—it is only being tried and sentenced, but it is not the execution! Oh, if judgment is so terrible, what must execution be? If merely to be brought up and committed for trial is terrible, what will it be to be taken out to the Mount of Doom? If we are afraid of the Judge, how much more of His sentence being carried out! Why, before condemned souls hear their retribution fixed, you hear them crying, “Rocks, hide us, mountains fall upon us!” Christ has not smitten them— He has only looked at them—but its condemnation of them for the rejection of His saving mercy makes them appeal to the flinty rocks to yield them a shelter, for they cannot find a place of refuge! I say again, if the Judgment is so awe-inspiring, what will the execution of that judgment be? Guilty Soul! Where will you fly or hide, then? Shall my soul ever be there? If God the Holy Spirit applies this text of mine with power, we shall ask ourselves, “How can I bear to die the second death?” What is that second death? Surely it means this—that just as the first death takes away man from all earthly sources of life and joy, so the second death separates from all sources of spiritual peace and pardon, Grace and salvation!

No more your feasts, the dance, and the sound of the violin! No more the jest or song of ribaldry. You die and all these are over! But the greater death means no more the house of God, the opportunity to pray, to repent, to believe, to receive God’s free and full salvation! It means—that second death—the anguish more than these lips could dare to speak even if this mind knew! Oh, the anguish of a soul that is withered beneath the curse of God! Oh, the anguish of a spirit that is banished forever from the Presence of the Mast High!—

*“To linger in eternal death,*

*Yet death forever fly!”*  
Here comes the worst of it, that this death is forever! What says the Scripture? “Eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord”—not a moment, and then it is all over—but eternal destruction. The Scripture has put the two side by side, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal.” The same word applies to both. As long as Heaven shall shine so long Hell shall burn! As long as saints are happy, so long shall those whose impenitence has made them castaways be wretched!

How I recall the time when this Truth of God came home to my heart with power! And I can only say of it, that I bless God I ever felt it! I think I would never have hated sin. I would never have fled to Christ if I had not been shown the flower that springs out of the seed of sin. Sinner, do not turn your head away and be angry! If you love sin, look at the child of this ill mother! Sinner, you love sin, that is but the seed—come and see the flower that springs out of it! No, Man, look at your own work! Sin is the spark and this is the flame. If you would escape Hell, escape sin! If you are afraid of Hell, O Sinner, be as afraid of sin! May the Lord drive this home! I know I cannot. It is a topic so distasteful that it is not likely that the mind will linger on it. I know you will try to shake it off and dismiss it. “Die,” you say, “what is there in that? Or what care we about it?” But I tell you in deepest love, that if the Holy Spirit presses home the question of my text, there will be no sleep for you until you have found the Savior! There will be no rest in you until you find it in Jesus Christ! You will then begin to cry out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner. Help me to flee from the wrath to come, enable me to hide in the Rock of Ages cleft for me.”

Thus I have strived to make plain to you the first point. The soul’s fears are awakened when it sees that it must either turn or die, must look these two things in the face, “I must give up my sin, or I must be cast away eternally.”

The second truth of the text is this—that where this solemn question is pressed home by the Holy Spirit—  
II. YOUR HEART WILL BE MOVED.  
“Turn you, turn you,” says the text, twice over. It is earnest, emphatic, importunate. “Turn you, turn you.” It looks as if it had been wetted with tears, or as if a sigh and a groan were in the very sound of it. “Turn you, turn you.” It seems to have the plaintive love of a mother about it and yet the majesty and authority of a Divine command, “Turn you, turn you.” Now, if this shall be brought home to you by God the Holy Spirit, you will begin to say, “Then I must turn from all my evil practices. I must be done forever with my drinking and my cursing if I have been guilty of these. I must now be done with Sabbath-breaking, with coarse and evil talk. I must be done with all these sins and lusts of the flesh!” “Turn you, turn you.” But, more than this, you will say, “I must have done with my evil thoughts—‘let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.’ I must have done with proud thoughts. Lying thoughts. Vain thoughts. Murmuring thoughts. God calls me to turn from them all! I must have done with skeptical notions. I must have done with boastful utterances. I must have done with everything that is contrary to the pure mind of God. But that is not all. The text says, ‘Turn you, turn you.’ It means that I must turn altogether from my natural enmity to God. I must love Him whom I hated! The very things at which I have laughed, I must now reverence. It must by such a complete turning round that the things I despised I must love, and the things I loved I must hate. I hear God saying concerning all my darling pleasures, ‘Turn you, turn you!’ It will make me change my companions. It will change my way of talking. It will make a new man of me altogether if this text comes with force to me, ‘Turn you, turn you.’”  
But I think I hear you say, “Oh, but this is too hard a task, if to turn is to be so thorough as this! If it were merely a turning from drunkenness to abstinence, or a turning from open vice to morality, I could manage it.” Ah, that you might, and a very good thing it might be, my Hearer, but it would not save you! The turning that is needed is more than this. “Except you are converted and be as little children you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” “You must be born-again.” “Well,” says one, “then I am bid do a task that is impossible!” Yes, that is true—most true. The exhortation that comes to you is meant to teach you something of your powerlessness. “Turn you, turn you.” You can turn from your outward sins, from many evil ways, but if ever you are to be turned from wicked thoughts and evil nature, it will be by something more than your own strength—you will need to look to a stronger arm and a mightier power than a merely mortal one! Listen to me, then, for I think this word will drop like the balm of Gilead, or the honey from the honeycomb. “Turn you, turn you” to Christ, for He can do for you what you could never do for yourself! You cannot resist your sins in your own power. And you cannot change your sinful nature and renew it in purity and holiness! But there is One who can do it for you!  
I think I see your history. You are like the vessel that is in the stream. It is a mighty stream—so strong, so swift, that no vessel ever came within its tremendous force and escaped there from. The vessel is floating on and the passengers on board are frivolous and happy. They are wondering where the wind came from that makes them sail softly and so swiftly. They dance upon the deck, they drink, they laugh, they sport the happy hours away. They know not that the maelstrom is but a little way ahead—that there is an awful whirlpool that will suck in the vessel and all its passengers and crew—and take them down to sure destruction! As the vessel sails gaily along there is heard a Voice above the wind, “Turn you, turn you,” and the captain looks about and wonders from where it came. “Turn you, turn you,” comes the cry again, and the passengers go to the helm. A mysterious impulse comes over them all and then, as they look beyond they can see the gulf, they can see the maelstrom, they can see the danger—and now they are all ready to obey the Voice that sounds mysteriously in the air! They rush to the helm, but—O God! O God—it is gone! There is no power to turn it and the vessel is drifting on! She goes more swiftly than ever! She flies upon the stream. “Turn you, turn you!” the Voice still sounds, but every passenger is crying, “We are mocked! It must be a demon voice that mocks us, for how can we turn? The helm is gone! In same unguarded hour of ribaldry we unshipped the helm and lost it, and now we cannot turn!”  
Just then there is seen descending from the skies a bright Spirit. They know Him by the pierced hands and feet, and He comes upon the deck. They cast themselves down before Him, and cry, “Help us! Help us!” and with a touch he refits the helm and turns the vessel around and, against the stream, with many a struggle, she begins to make her way, while a heavenly breeze comes and fans the sail and the vessel is safe! Thank God, she is safe, with all on board! Now, that is your case tonight, my dear Hearer! You have got into the stream of sin and your habits have got too strong for you. If it were for you, and for you only, to turn the vessel around, I would despair, but while the Voice sounds, “Turn you, turn you!” oh, lift up your eyes to Heaven and say, “Master, Jesus, turn us and we shall be turned! Come into our hearts! We trust You, You bleeding One! Your hand was once outstretched to be wounded and made to bleed for sin—stretch it out now to save us from sin, and turn our boat, and make her sail by Your good Spirit in the way of righteousness.”  
Now this cry, “Turn you, turn you,” will be of no use, then, it seems, unless it is attended with the Divine Power, but when it is, what a great blessing it is! Alas, there are many who hear us who will not turn for all that, but they that are wise will obey the command. My friend, Sir John Burgoyne, once told me that in the Peninsular War he and some other officers were entering—I think it was the town of Salamanca, which stood upon the side of a hill in such a way that a church which was built on the slope would have its roof level with the earth higher up the hill. He went, not knowing anything of danger, in at the door of the church—and there were Frenchmen with guns on the roof to defend the place. He said he could not forget how the courtesies of those brave men, anxious not to shoot officers who were more civil than military, made them to call out “Retire, retire,” and how he did retire fast enough and was not anxious to tempt a gun when entreated to retire! Now something like that appears to me to be the position of the ungodly man. He goes where he should not be. He trespasses, but a Voice from above which might have been silent—and there might have been a deadly cannonade of Divine Resentment—calls out, “Retire, retire,” tempt Me no longer, Sinner! Provoke Me no more! My anger has long been held in! I have restrained Myself! I have sent My Son to you! I have bid you trust Him and love Him! I have called unto you by My servants. I have bid you, repent, but you have not repented—are you still My enemy? You are going on in your sins, but I charge you once again, by My eternal mercy, turn, turn, turn, for why will you die?” This, then, seems to me to be what the text will do in the heart if God the Holy Spirit sends it home.  
And so we shall close with the third point. Should the text be made by God the Holy Spirit to be as an arrow fixed in the heart—  
III. IT WILL MAKE AN APPEAL TO THE UNDERSTANDING.  
The understanding, being thus appealed to, will begin to ask questions like this—“Why should I die? I know that this death is terrible, indeed. Why should I have to suffer it? What reason is there why I should be subject to it?” And, my dear Hearer, if God the Holy Spirit awakens you, you will not be able to give a good answer to that! On the contrary, you will begin, one by one, driving out as foolish all the answers you used to give. You will say, “Oh, I used to say, Let well enough alone. What is to be will be. I used to be quite indifferent to it, but I cannot be indifferent now. Indifferent when I am in danger of death? Indifferent when I may, within the next few minutes, know all that is to be known of eternal things? Careless where eternity is concerned? No, my God, my madness is now over! Behold, I turn to You! I cannot thus answer the question.”  
Once, too, the sinner could say, “I hated to be troubled. I said do not bother me with any of your religion! Keep it away.” But now, “I wish to be troubled—the more troubled I can be, the better, so that I may not be troubled at the last. Once I liked a fashionable preacher who spoke in fine and gaudy words, but who never seemed to insinuate that he had a sinner in his congregation or that there was perdition for the ungodly— but now let me know the worst of my state. Let me be dealt with honestly and faithfully, and if I am in great danger, God grant that I may know it, so that I may escape from it. The more a man can cut open my heart and send the arrow direct into my conscience, the better! I am only afraid lest mortification should set in and that I may die before I can be awakened and healed and saved.”  
Moreover, if God the Holy spirit has awakened you, you will have given up all your other excuses. Once you said, “I cannot give up my pleasures.” Now you say, “I cannot afford to sell my soul for an hour or two of merry effervescence! I cannot give reality for shams. I have tried the world’s pleasures and all I can say is, there is nothing in them that is real and satisfying! I am sick and weary of them”—  
*‘I cannot sell my soul so cheap,  
Nor part with Heaven for you.’”*  
Once you used to say, “I cannot turn. I could not face my old companions. I could not bear to hear that man that I shall meet tomorrow say, ‘Ah, so you have become religious, have you?’” “Now,” says the conscience, “I could meet the very devil! I feel as if I would be afraid of no man if I might but be saved.” They may laugh who will, but they will not laugh you to destruction if the Holy Spirit should really send home the text! Mark you, I am only speaking on that supposition, and then the soul will say, “Afraid of man? No, I am too much afraid of God! Afraid of being laughed at? No, I am too much afraid of hearing the Voice, ‘Depart you cursed.’ I may well bear the laughter of men so that I may escape the wrath of God!”  
You used to say, “Time enough yet,” but if this text comes home, you will not say that. You will feel as if every moment were important and as if every tick of the clock might be your last. You will be asking that you may hide in Jesus, and that you may hide there at once! You used to say, “Pshaw! Religious people are all hypocrites!” But you will not say that now, or if you do, you will say, “That is no reason why I should not be sincere. If every minister should be a canting pretender and every professor should be a hypocrite, what will that matter to me? Must not I escape personally from the wrath to come? Their being condemned, as they justly must be if they are hypocrites, will not make my doom any more light and, therefore, I will not hide behind an accusing of others, but I will accuse myself.”  
I do not know how it is, dear Friends. I did want to bring home this text to the heart, but I am conscious now, more than ever, that it is not for me to bring it home, but for the Master to do it. I can say, “Turn you, turn you,” but He can turn you! I can tell you of this death, but He can enable you to feel its terrible power. I can tell you of the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, but He can make you to pant and thirst after them! And remember, if you want them, you may have them! If you desire Christ, you may have Him! If there is a sinner here that would to saved, let him flee to Jesus! Let him, sitting where he is, look to Christ with his soul’s eyes as He hangs upon the Cross. Rest your soul upon Him, Sinner! Black as it is, trust Him to cleanse it. Though you are altogether ruined and undone, if you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes! Never did a soul rest on Christ and find Him fail him. Come to Him! Come to Him! The doors of His heart are opened! He is waiting to receive you! You need not wait until you are prepared—come as you are! Come in your loathsomeness if such is your state. Come in spiritual ruin and depravity if such is your condition. Come now! Come now! “Why will you die?” Mercy provides the means of life. Christ died. Why will you die? Christ lives, why should not you live?  
I remember a powerful preacher once finishing a sermon which God had helped him to deliver with extraordinary force, by turning to his congregation and asking, “Why will you die?” Then he paused and continued, “What reason have you? What motive, what argument, what apologies, what excuses? Why will you die?” Then he stopped a moment, and said, “Why will you die? Why will you? Why this desperate resolve? Why this firmness? You vacillate elsewhere—why be so obstinate here? Why will you? Why is your heart set fast like iron? You can bend like a willow towards the wrong—why are you firm as granite against the right? Why will you die?” Then looking round his congregation, and picking out certain members of it, he said, “Why will you die? You gray-heads who have had such an experience of the vanity of the world, why will you die? You young people to whom there is such happiness offered, why will you die? You chief of sinners, whose doom will be so terrible, why will you die? You moralists, you amiable ones, you who seem to have some desire towards God, why will you die? So he put it to each one. And then he came to the last, “Why will you die? Why will you be driven from God’s Presence? Why will you receive His curse? Why will you make your bed in Hell? Why will you dwell with the devouring fire? Why will you abide in everlasting banishment from God? Why will you die? Do you see anything so tempting in the face of doom? Is there anything so sweet in that grim Lake of Fire? Why will you die?”  
Oh, may the force of this exhortation come home to you—“Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, house of Israel?” May the Lord put His arm to this work and then great good shall be done— and His shall be the Glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 3:12-25.**

Verse 12-14. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, backsliding Israel, says the LORD; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not stay angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, says the LORD; for I am married unto you. There is a mixed figure here, but there is no mixed sense—children and yet married unto Him. The bond was a double one—they were begotten and betrothed. God cares little about the rules of human oratory and formal eloquence. If His meaning can only be made perfectly plain, He freely breaks through all such rules and regulations as we properly make for our talk. “O backsliding children I am married unto you.”

14. And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. That is, “two of a tribe,” for the word, “family,” was used in a very large sense in those times and comprehended perhaps the whole of one of the twelve tribes.

15. And I will give you pastors according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. The backsliders, when they come back, shall not be left outside the fold, but they shall have shepherds to watch over them. And they shall not be left to a lean pasture, but they shall be fed with knowledge and understanding. This is fine fare for the hungry soul! Knowledge is good, but understanding is better. To know may be of little service unless we have the inner and deeper knowledge with it and understand what we know. These pastors shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. They shall not only teach, but teach so that you cannot fail to learn!

16. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall say no more. The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD; neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. Ceremonial retreats into the dim background when the spiritual is in full vigor! They have come to God for themselves and they now need not that sacred Ark of gopher wood lined within and without with gold. In the present day those that walk near to God think but little of the eternal. That which God commands they obey, but their confidence lies in Him. True religion is not a form, but a life—and the soul living near to God is the main, the really essential thing.

17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. This is, I believe, yet to be literally fulfilled in Jerusalem, itself, and also spiritually to be fulfilled in the Church, when she shall not be behind the nations but become their head and take the lead in all of blessing for mankind!

18, 19. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your father. But I said, How shall I put you among the children? As if God, Himself, were at a pass and brought to a nonplus! These people had sinned so much and had been driven, consequently, to the ends of the earth. “I said, How shall I put you among the children?”

19. And give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations and I said, You shall call Me, My Father. When God gives us the spirit of children, then it becomes easy for Him to put us among the children! Where the nature of children is given by Divine Regeneration, the rights of children may well be given by adoption! “I said, You shall call Me, My Father.”

19. And shall not turn away from Me. I always look upon that second part of the blessing as being perhaps the richer of the two! The final perseverance of the saints forms the cluster of crown jewels that is found in the casket of the Covenant. “You shall not depart from Me. You shall not turn away from Me.” Oh—

*“If ever it should come to pass  
That sheep of Christ could fall away  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall ten thousand times a day!”*

But He that has begun the good work has promised to carry it on. There is our safety and our rest! “You shall call Me, My Father, and shall not turn away from Me.”

20-21. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD. A voice was heard upon the high place, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God. The worst of crimes—that a wife should be false to her marriage vows and turn aside from her husband whom she is bound to love! And very seldom is it that a husband calls a treacherous wife back again—but God, in infinite mercy, hates putting away. He cannot bear divorce. He still holds to the object of His love and, therefore, complains with a sweet fidelity of affection, of the treachery of Israel. And while He is doing it, a voice is heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel, for they have perverted their way and have forgotten Jehovah their God—and, therefore, what was there for them but sorrow? They were on their high places offering sacrifice and incense to their new gods! And instead of joy and holy Psalms and hymns of delight, they were crying like the priests of Baal and cutting themselves and torturing themselves! God heard it—weeping and supplications—but not to Him, for they had perverted their way. Their sorrow did not come from Him, for they had forgotten the Lord their God. But that sorrow had something hopeful about it. They found no joy in their new gods and derived no comfort from their backslidings.

22. Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Oh, the wonderful mercy of God! He treats sin as a disease. It was a grand thought, that, on God’s part, that He would not so much look upon sin as being a willful deed and crime, but would look upon it as a malady of the mind and soul. “I will heal your backslidings.” And see the sweet answer that Israel gives to this—

22. Behold, we come unto You, for You are the LORD our God. Oh, that that answer might come from every backsliding heart that is here tonight—that there might be a restoration of the wanderer to his God!

23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. See, they were trying to get it from their high places! They lifted up their voices to their gods, but they only learned to mourn and weep. “In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains.”

23-25. Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. May such repentance as that fall to the lot of any wanderers who listen now to my words!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3290 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GOD’S HAND AT EVENING  
NO. 3290

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1866.

**“Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.” Ezekiel 33:22.**

PERHAPS in the special senses in which Ezekiel uses this expression, we shall not expect to feel “the hand of the Lord” upon us. God may not call us to prophesy as Ezekiel did, although in the Scriptural use of the word, “prophesy,” the preacher of the Word is still called to deliver the message which he has received from his Lord’s lips. The days of special visions and voices and prophesying have passed away, but we can still say with Peter, “We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arise in your hearts.”

I think, however, that we may use our text with some profit in other senses—“The hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.” So we will enquire, first, what hand was this? Secondly, what time was this? And then, thirdly, what teaching is there for us in this incident?

I. So first, let us ask, WHAT HAND WAS THIS? The answer is very clearly stated in the text, “the hand of the Lord.” We will examine this expression, first, in its connection with the Lord’s people, and then in its relation to sinners in whom a gracious work is beginning.

First, then, looking at this expression in its connection with the Lord’s people, I remark that sometimes, “the hand of the Lord” is laid very heavily upon them in chastisement. It is no unusual thing for a child of God to say, “The hand of the Lord was upon me”—and often he has not merely to add, “in the evening”—but he can truthfully say, “All day long His hand has been heavily laid upon me.” There are some of God’s children who are very frequently the subjects of His chastening, and if any of you have come here smarting under the blows of His rod, you must not murmur, for this is the treatment that is meted out to all the rest of the Lord’s family. It is through much tribulation that they enter the Kingdom, so let not any one of us take up the lamentation of Jeremiah, “I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath”—but let us all expect to follow in the footsteps of the flock, well knowing that—

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

Be not astonished, therefore, if “the hand of the Lord” is laid upon you, thus, for, “if you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?” Yet while you feel the weight of God’s hand upon you, never forget that it is your Father’s hand. Whatever form your trial may take—whether it is the loss of a child or of a parent, or the withdrawal of temporal prosperity, or the smiting of the body with aches and pains—the rod is never in any hand but the paternal one and even while the Father smites, He loves. Let this be your comfort, that it is not the hand of an enemy that is upon you—you are not suffering from a crushing blow from the foeman’s mailed hand, but the stroke, whether it is heavy or light, is wholly caused by your loving Father’s hand!

“The hand of the Lord” is also a humbling hand. When God lays His afflicting hand upon us, He takes away much of our fancied beauty and lets us see the ugliness of our natural deformity. We thought we were very patient until we had need of patience—and then we found what a murmuring, discontented spirit we had within us! Perhaps you, my Brother, thought you were a strong Believer until your present trial came. But now you have proved how feeble your faith really is. You imagined that you were better than the rest of God’s saints because you could sing when they could only groan. But now you have hard work to keep from groaning yourself! It is a blessed thing when the blows of God’s rod lay us low at our Father’s feet. The safest option for all children of God is to lie flat upon the Rock of Ages. With all the joy and confidence that I trust we feel when we reflect upon our Lord’s promises and His solemn oath and Covenant, yet when we think of our own imperfections and unfaithfulness, we are compelled to bow very humbly before the Throne of Grace.

Turning to another side of the subject, let me say that there is no reason why the hand of the Lord should not be upon us without our having any particular trouble. When we have come up to God’s House to worship Him, I trust that we have often felt “the hand of the Lord” upon us, pressing us down very low in a sense of our own weakness and unworthiness. There are other things beside affliction that can humble us beneath the mighty hand of God! When Peter’s boat began to sink because it was full of fish, Peter, too, went down and he cried to Jesus, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” When we think of all the Lord’s goodness to us, we cry out, somewhat as David did, “Who are we, O Lord, and what is our house, that You have done such great things for us?” If we have “the hand of the Lord” upon us in this sense, it will not crush us, nor drive us to despondency or death—it will make us realize our own nothingness while it will also give us a grateful sense of our Lord’s loving kindness and condescension in dealing so graciously with us!

Yet this humbling “hand of the Lord” is also at the same time an uplifting hand. The Christian is often a riddle to himself—he cannot understand how it is that the lower he sinks, the higher he rises! Then he sings, with Dr. Watts—

*“The more Your glories strike my eyes,  
The humbler I shall lie.  
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise  
Immeasurably high!”*

The truest joy is the joy of the creature in being made nothing that God may be All-in-All—the joy of emptiness in receiving of the Divine fullness—the joy of utter weakness laying hold upon the Divine strength! Have you never, dear Friends, in the worship of God, felt His hand gloriously bearing you aloft that not merely were worldly cares forgotten, with all the things that concern time and sense, but you seemed to forget that you were still in the body and that the body was upon the earth? There have been times with some of us when “the hand of the Lord” has been so blessedly upon us that He has seemed to open the pearly gates and bid us enter! We have stood awe-stricken and yet full of joy in the Presence of the Eternal, and we have worshipped Him with cherubim and seraphim—and have anticipated the day when we shall join the heavenly throng to go no more out forever! “The hand of the Lord” when it is upon us thus is so uplifting that we feel as though the joys of our spirit are more than our bodily frame can bear—and we cry with the spouse—“Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am love-sick.” May we often feel this downcasting and yet uplifting power of “the hand of the Lord” upon us!

Further, “the hand of the Lord” is a healing hand as well as a smiting and wounding one. Whenever it is laid upon a poor troubled conscience, it brings peace at once. There is no furrow in the brow which God’s finger cannot smooth away. There is no burden upon the shoulders which God’s hand cannot remove. Perhaps your heart was so heavy that you thought you would never be able to rejoice again—yet the Lord did but touch you and your depression was gone in a moment! There is an old fiction about the touch of a royal hand curing disease, but the royal hand of the King of kings really does what the other was only fabled to do! Let Him but touch the suffering soul and healing comes at once. It is useless for us to go to war with our besetting sins at our own charge—but when the Lord stretches forth His hand against them, it is another matter! Beloved friends may sometimes seek to set us right, yet through their lack of wisdom they may only aggravate the evil. But when God lays His hand upon the sin, drags it to the light, tries and convicts it—and hangs it up to die—then are we most blessedly delivered from it. If our besetting sin is a fiery temper, or a slothful nature, or a strange temptation to some other evil, may “the hand of the Lord” be so graciously upon us this evening that it shall heal us even before we go to our homes!

The Lord’s hand is also a strengthening hand to all His children. Let Him but lay His hand upon you and then, as your days, so shall your strength be. Isaiah trembled when he saw “the King, the Lord of Hosts,” but one of the seraphim touched his lips with a live coal from the Altar, and then, in answer to the Lord’s question, “Whom, shall I send, and who will go for Us?” he said, “Here am I; send me.” So surely, when God touches the lips with His finger, power goes into the messenger whom He sends forth on His mission of mercy! Moses was very hesitant to go as God’s ambassador to Pharaoh—and among his many excuses he urged that he was slow of speech, and of a slow tongue—but the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth?”—as much as to say, “He who made your mouth knew what He was doing and He did not make a mistake when He gave you a slow tongue! Go you in His strength and you shall be mighty enough to deliver His people out of the land of Egypt.” God worked through the weakness of Moses and so glorified Himself over the mighty Pharaoh. And so shall it be with us, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, ministers, Sunday school teachers, tract-distributor, or whatever you may be—if “the hand of the Lord” shall be upon us, God shall be glorified in our weakness and we shall be mighty through Him, to the pulling down of strongholds. Tarry in the Jerusalem of your prayer closet until you are endued with power from on High, for, “they that wait upon the Lord shall remember their strength”—and then in His name and in His might go forth to the service to which He has called you.

I may also add that, to many of you, “the hand of the Lord” is a wellknown hand. You have been receiving from it all your days. You have gone to it thousands of times so that it has become very familiar to you. And there is one mark in that hand which has made it especially dear to you, for, “the hand of the Lord” from which you receive everything is a nail-pierced hand, for it is the hand of the Man, Christ Jesus, as well as the hand of the Almighty God! And hard by the print of the nail is your own name, for He has said to you, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” When that Divine-Human hand, once outstretched upon the Cross for our redemption, is laid upon us, then do we rejoice with exceedingly great joy!

Now for a little while let us look at this expression in its relation to sinners in whom a gracious work is beginning. And here I must remind you that if “the hand of the Lord” is ever laid upon you, then it will come, first, as a creating hand. It is the hand of God and that hand, alone, which can create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you! Nothing but the Divine touch can ever make “a new creature in Christ Jesus.” If all the angels had united all their powers, they could never have created a world and if all the ministers in the world were to combine their efforts, they could never create a new creature in Christ! Creation is the work of God, alone, so may He graciously lay His hand upon you tonight! Though there is nothing in you for Him to begin with, remember that He made the world out of nothing and He can make a new man of you out of nothing. It is true that your whole being, spiritually, is without form and void—and darkness is upon the face of the deep—but He who brought order out of chaos and said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, can do the same for you! May you become a new proof His creating power, so that the angels may sing over you as they once did over a newly made world!

Yet let me tell you that wherever “the hand of the Lord” comes, it always comes at first as a breaking hand! As soon as God’s hand is laid upon us, down go the images of our pride as Dagon fell upon his face before the Ark of God! And our self-righteousness, our self-conceit, our carnal confidence and everything else that is displeasing to the Most High are dashed in pieces by the blows from His almighty hand! It is a blessed thing to be put into God’s mortar that He may pound us with the pestle that He holds in His hand until He has crushed and bruised us so as to bring us to self-despair—for then it will not be long before that same blessed hand of His shall bind up what He has broken and heal what he has wounded! It is His prerogative to say, “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.” If you could go to some eminent surgeon, it would be a strong argument if you could say to him, “O Sir, I pray you to heal me, for you did, yourself, cause this gaping wound! It was by your sharp knife that this gash was made, so will you not bind it up?” So go to God, Sinner, with that poor broken heart of yours, and say to Him, “Lord, You did break it, will You not bind it up? You are Jehovah-Rophi, will You not heal me?” You know how David prayed, “ Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice.” God is a bone-breaker and He is also a bone-mender! He is also a heartbreaker, yet He delights to bind up the hearts that He has broken! So go to Him, Sinner, and ask Him to lay His hand upon you, first breaking, and then binding up—first killing, and then making alive!

Further, to sum up briefly, “the hand the Lord” is a receiving hand. And if you go to Him, Sinner, He will receive you graciously and love you freely! It is also an upholding hand, and it will hold you up so that your feet shall not slip. It is an enriching hand, with which the Lord will give generously to you both in Providence and in Grace. It is a guiding hand with which the Lord shall direct your steps. And at last it shall be an opening hand, with which the Lord shall open the gates of Glory, that you may enter them to go no more out forever!

II. Our second question was to be WHAT TIME WAS THIS? “The hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.” There is a congruity in meditating upon this text in the evening, so let us think upon it for a while in connection with our own inward experience.

And first, Beloved, when you and I have felt “the hand of the Lord” upon us in the evening, I think it has come very seasonably to remind us of the day’s sin. Evening is a good time for casting up the sum of the day—there ought to be set seasons for balancing our accounts. I am afraid that most us are so busy that we neglect this important duty. But it is well to devote a few minutes at night to review the day that has gone by. Recall your actions, your words, your thoughts. Look at your sins that you may repent of them. Look at your follies that you may avoid them in the future. Look at your mistakes that you may not fall into them again. As you turn over all these things in your evening mediation, what a blessed thing it is to feel “the hand of the Lord” upon you making your conscience tender, not allowing you to play with sin as though it were a trifle, but assuring you, by a gentle pressure, that all your sin is put away through the great Atoning Sacrifice of Christ Jesus your Lord and Savior!

It seems to me that evening is also a very blessed time for feelings of gratitude. How many are God’s thoughts concerning us during a single day? When we rose this morning, I suppose that most, if not all of us, found that our food and raiment had been provided for us. We have been busy all day and have had just enough strength to get through our work. We have been preserved, perhaps, in the midst of temptations to which others have yielded. Where they have stumbled and fallen, we have been graciously upheld! And now at evening we are thinking of the many mercies which “the hand of the Lord” has bestowed upon us during the day. If we are delivered from some accident, we say what a merciful Providence it was that we escaped—yet we are apt to forget the merciful Providence when there is no accident! I have heard of a father who, in the days when there were no railways, needed to see his son who lived a long way off. They agreed to meet at a place half-way between their two houses. Each had to ride about 50 miles. And when they met, the son said to his father, “I have had a very special Providence, for my horse stumbled three times yet it did not fall.” “Well,” said the father, “I also have had a very special Providence, for my horse did not stumble once, all the way.” This was quite as notable a Providence as the son had experienced, but it is one that is often left unnoticed. Our mercies which pass unobserved are probably ten times as numerous as those which we perceive! It is well, therefore, at least at the close of every day, to look back upon all the mercy that has been given to us during the day—and to realize that “the hand of the Lord” is still upon us in the evening, shielding us from all harm, guiding us in His own good way and providing most generously for all our needs!

Evening is also a special reminder of the evening of life. We sometimes say that we—  
“**Long for evening to undress,  
That we may rest with God”—**

and to a Christian, dying is very much like going to bed. Being buried is just having our clothes put away while we are asleep in Jesus. Therefore, as evening is a reminder and type of dying, it is especially appropriate for us, then, to feel “the hand of the Lord” upon us and to realize that He has brought us there, to the margin of the river, and that He says to us, “You will have to cross that river some day, so dip your foot in it, now, and try to get used to dying.” Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I die daily.” He was rehearsing his part every day, so that when the time came for him to actually die, he was fully prepared and was not taken unawares. It would be well if we could hear one say, “As I stood by my bedside, and took off my clothes, I felt that if I were now called to put off my body, which is the clothing of my soul, I couldn’t do it with as much complacency as I removed my garments. And when I laid my head upon my pillow and closed my eyes, I felt as easy in the thought of that being my last sleep as I have felt when simply going to my bed.” If this is how we are able to talk, we may confidently say, “The hand of the Lord lay upon me in the evening.”

I like, too, the thought of this manifestation of God in the evening because the evening is usually the quiet time that is specially suited to meditation. The morning is the time for action. The day is the time for work. But the evening is the time for mediation. It is well if we then have the inclination as well as the opportunity for communing with God, though I am afraid that our hearts are not always ready for this high privilege even when the season is peculiarly favorable for it. May you, dear Friends, feel “the hand of the Lord” upon you every evening—and may you feel it very specially this evening! We are in the midst of a most gracious work in this congregation. We began with earnest prayer and we are now receiving the blessing that we have asked at the Lord’s hands. During the past week we have had a most blessed fulfillment of that promise, “While they are yet speaking, I will hear.” While we have been asking the Lord to bless, He has been blessing! And tonight we want again to feel “the hand of the Lord” upon us. When the preacher feels the Lord’s hand on him, there is no lack of power or energy in his sermons! When the Deacons and Elders feel it, there is no lack of attention to the duties of their important offices! When the members feel it, there are no dull, lifeless Prayer Meetings! And when any individual Christians feels it, his heart is made to burn within him while his Master talks with him by the way. May it be so with everyone of us!

III. Our third question was to be, WHAT TEACHING IS THERE FOR US IN THIS INCIDENT?  
The text seems to me to teach us, first, to look above man. Ezekiel says, “The hand of the Lord was upon me”—not the hand of the king, nor the hand of the priest—but the hand of the Lord! The first question with many persons, when the service is over, very often is, “Well, how did you like the minister.” But really, dear Friends, that is a very unimportant question—the vital matter is—Did you see Jesus as the preacher sought to lift Him up before you? Was “the hand of the Lord” upon you, pressing you down to the ground under the weight your many sins and then setting you gloriously at liberty by casting all your sins behind His back into the depths of the sea to be remembered against you no more forever? That is the chief business of our coming together in these great assemblies—that we may be brought into real, close, personal contact with God and see His power and His Glory in the sanctuary! As for the Preacher, he is of no more account than the lad with the five barley loaves and two small fishes! But if the Master will add His blessing, the multitudes shall be fed spiritually even as the thousands were then fed literally—and He shall have all the Glory! I pray you, dear Friends, never to be content with a sermon unless it brings you into yet closer fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and lifts your eyes above man unto Him to whom you are bid to look!  
Then, as you are to look above other men, much more are you to look above yourselves. In one sense, it is hard work to keep a Christian’s eyes looking up. But in another sense, it is equally difficult to keep them looking down. You may rake over the dunghills of your own corruption to try to find something good, but you will only find what Paul calls dung! But if you look up to the Most High, you will not search in vain for treasures that will endure forever! If you will persist in looking within, look there till you are tired and then do not look any longer. One look at Jesus Christ will remunerate you far better than 20 looks at yourself! No doubt there are certain marks and evidences of the Christian life for which it is quite right to talk, yet it is better to look at the marks of the Savior’s wounds and to see the evidences of God’s Love manifested in the Person and work of His well-beloved Son. It is much more profitable to look at the Creator than at the creature. If you must bring self in at all, let it only be as Ezekiel did when he said, “The hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening.”  
This text should also encourage us to remember previous Divine visitations. I suppose Ezekiel had often felt the hand of the Lord upon him, but this time he recorded it. David called to remembrance former manifestations of God’s mercy when he wrote, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” Sailors keep a logbook in which they enter the principal incidents of the voyage. And Christian, you ought to keep a log of your voyage to Heaven! And you should especially record the visitations of God to your soul. There may come times when you will not have these visits and then, if you turn to your diary, you will be able to call to remembrance the joyous seasons of the past—and it will be a great comfort to you to recollect the experiences you passed through on Mizar’s hill and Hermon’s mount. There are certain occasions that some of us can never forget—and in our dark hours we think of them and say, “Lord, by all that we have felt in the past, we are assured that You will not let us go, but that You will hold us fast to the end.”  
And to close, I think that this should encourage us in our darkening hours to expect the Light of God’s Presence. It was the evening, the sun was going down, but the Sun of Righteousness was still shining upon Ezekiel! The stars began to sparkle in the heavens, but the promises of God were brighter still! The night was coming on, but the Prophet did not dread it, for although he could not see his Lord’s face, he could feel his Lord’s hand upon him! It is one of the enjoyments of faith to walk with God in the dark. It is not the enjoyment of sight because it comes in the evening when strength is declining, and life, itself, is dying out. Ah, that evening will soon come to everyone of us when we shall have to bid farewell to the fond pursuits of the day—that “night” of which our Savior said that then, “no man can work.” And when that night comes on and we begin to feel its chilly dews settling upon our dying brow. When the hoarfrost of death shall be upon every limb, how blessed it shall be to have a bright and glowing lamp within our soul which will owe none of its brilliance to sun or moon, but to the Lord God who gives us the Light that shall last forever!  
“At evening time it shall be light.” In some parts of the world there is no twilight—as soon as the sun sets, night follows immediately. But here in England our long evenings are a great delight, and certainly so is the long evening of a well spent life, when you have, to a great extent, finished with the toil and turmoil of earthly service and your soul has a blessed season of resting, as Bunyan’s pilgrims had in the land Beulah until the summons came for them to cross the river and go into the Presence of the King. It will be a blessed thing to feel the hand of the lord upon us in that evening! And whether it is long or short, all will be well with all who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! Even though we have to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, we will fear no evil, for He will be with us. His rod and His staff shall comfort us! And when we get to Heaven, we will tell the angels that “the hand of the Lord” was upon us in the morning of our days when we gave our young hearts to the Lord! That His hand was upon us in the noontide of middle life while we were toiling for Him with all our might! That His hand was upon us in the afternoon helping us still to gather the precious grain into His garner, and that His hand was upon us, as it was upon Ezekiel, in the evening! As the Lord God walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, so will He be with us in the evening of our lives! And though we must go to bed and sleep in the tomb, we shall awake in His likeness and then shall we be satisfied—and His hand shall still be upon us in the morning—that morning which will be to us without mourning, that day which shall never have a night—that blessedness which shall last forever! God grant that this may be the portion of each one of us, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 92.**

Verse 1. It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High. It is good in itself. It is good for those who hear it, but it is especially good for our own hearts to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High. Sometimes when we are very heavy in spirit, if we would take care not to defraud the Lord of the revenue of praise that is due Him, we should find that the readiest way to bring comfort to ourselves is to sing praises unto His holy name. Brother and Sisters in Christ, it is not very notable work to praise God when all things go well with us—it is far grander work to praise Him when everything seems to be against us! It is because the nightingale sings by night that he has such excellence among the birds. And if you and I can praise God in the dark, then we shall find that it is a good thing for ourselves to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises unto the name of the Most High.

2. To show forth Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faith  
fulness every night. [See Sermon #1138, Volume 19—MORNING AND EVENING SONGS— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Begin the

day by setting forth the Lord’s loving kindness. It was His loving kindness that watched over you when you lay unconscious and defenseless and could not, therefore, protect yourself. It was His loving kindness that drew wide the curtain of the night, that touched your eyelids and awakened you out of that sleep which was the image of death and bade you look out upon the rising sun. Therefore take the key of the morning to open the day, and let it be the golden key of praise! Show forth the Lord’s loving kindness in the morning.

And when night comes again, let us then sing of God’s faithfulness. We have experienced it through another day, let us praise Him for it. Now we see how He has borne with us, pardoned us, preserved us, supplied our needs and continued to educate us throughout another day. Let us, therefore, praise and bless His holy name and so close the day and commit ourselves to sleep again under His Divine protection.

3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. Under the old dispensation, instrumental music seemed more congruous than it does now with the spiritual worship into which we have been introduced. If we must ever have instrumental music in our worship, let it be the same—the very same as David had. And then I, for one, though I should still think it we going back to the old dispensation long since superseded, would put up with it! I could never get much further than that, I think, for what instrument is there that is equal to the human voice? What music can be compared with it? All other sound is but the poor attempt of man to rival the creation of his God— but the human voice is full of charming melodies and harmonies! And if it is controlled by a true heart, there is nothing like it even to our ears, while it seems to me that it must be far more acceptable to God than the product of mere mechanism.

4. For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work: I will triumph in the works of Your hands. There is a blessed verse to come from the heart and mind of a happy man who is praising God and who looks on all the works of the Lord in Creation, Providence, and Redemption—and makes them all the subject of his joyous song!

5. O LORD, how great are Your works! And Your thoughts are very deep. There is little that we know of the thoughts of God except as we gather them from His works or learn them from His Word, “for what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.” It is by Divine Revelation that we must know the thoughts of God—and the more we know of them, the more shall we realize that they are very deep.

6. A brutish man knows not; neither does a fool understand this. He looks at Nature and as he sees its varied operations. He observes certain eternal laws, as he calls them, but he does not see the power at the back of those laws which makes the laws potent for the government of the world! No, he lives and walks where God has displayed His power to the fullest, yet he fails to see Him! It would be a strange proceeding for anyone to go into an artist’s house and look at his pictures and his sculptures and yet never to think of him—but this is what the brutish man does with regard to the works of God, and with regard to God Himself!

7. When the wicked spring as the grass—Numerous, fresh, vigorous—  
7. And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever. That is the end to which they will surely come, no matter how much they boast, nor how they grow and flourish till they seem like the grass in the meadow, to cover everything so that you can go nowhere without seeing them! Yet “they shall be destroyed forever.”  
8. But You, LORD, are Most High forevermore. The Psalmist began by calling the Lord, Most High, and now he says that He is “Most High forevermore.” Yes, this is our joy that God never passes away—He abides forever. Myriads of the ungodly have come and gone. Empires of wickedness have risen to great power and in due time have passed away like dreams—but we can still say, with the Psalmist, “You, Lord, are Most High forevermore.”  
9, 10. For, lo, Your enemies, O LORD, for, lo, Your enemies shall perish as the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. But my horn have You exalted like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. [See Ser

mon #1649, Volume 28—FRESHNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The Believer, though he is very weak in his own consciousness, and utterly insignificant in his own esteem, shall receive fresh power from God! And when the wicked melt away, he shall grow stronger and stronger.

11. My eyes shall also see my desire on my enemies, and my ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me. The translators put in the words, my desire. In both cases they are printed in italics to show that they are not in the original. No doubt the Psalmist means that his eyes should see the end of his enemies and his ears should hear of their total overthrow.

12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. The palm tree flourishes amidst the desert sunshine, growing straight upright towards Heaven without a branch that deviates to the right or the left and bearing its great masses of fruit as near Heaven as ever it can! It is a fine type of Christian life and growth and fruitfulness! A Christian should also be “like a cedar in Lebanon,” firmly rooted in his appointed place and defying the winter’s snows which threaten to bury him out of sight.

13. Those that are planted in the House of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our Lord. Like trees planted in the courtyard, screened and protected, such are true Believers! God is their defense and they are screened within the court of the Lord’s House.

14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. When Christians decay, they shall still be fruitful. They shall not feel as so many others do, that their age is a cure—it shall be to them a blessing, ripening them for eternity, and it shall be a blessing to all by whom they are surrounded.

15. To show that the LORD is upright: He is my rock. Can each one of you say that concerning the Lord, “He is my rock, my foundation, my refuge, my shelter”?

15. And there is no unrighteousness in Him. Say that when you have lost the dearest one you ever knew! Say that when your property has melted like the hoar frost in the morning. Say that when every bone in your body is aching and some fell disease is hastening you to an early grave! “There is no unrighteousness in Him.” How long have you known Him? If it is 70 years, or more than that, He has never been unfaithful to you, nor allowed a single promise of His to fail! Write this down as the testimony of the experience of all God’s people, “There is no unrighteousness in Him.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3528 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A PROMISE AND A PROVIDENCE  
NO. 3528

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1916. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord.” Ezekiel 34:15.

BEFORE this can be done there are certain preliminaries. A flock cannot be fed until it is in existence. It cannot be fed, as a flock, until all the scattered sheep shall have been brought together. Hence, in the context, other promises supply this deficiency! We find, for example, the Lord declaring that He will search out His sheep and seek them. They have gone far astray. Some of them seem to have so exhausted their patience in wandering that they have invented new forms of sin and new methods of transgression. Yet the Lord will seek them till His eyes of mercy shall rest upon them and His hands of power shall grasp them. If the Lord has an elect soul in the center of Africa, He will find him out. Or should there be one for whom Jesus died who frequents the house that is infamous and has plunged into the most detestable sin, yet the Lord will not lose him! Having set His heart upon him, He will seek him till He finds him and follow him up till He reclaims him. You remember one of the Lord’s sheep— a woman who had forsaken the paths of virtue. She had had five husbands and was then living with one who was not her husband. Yet He must go through Samaria to meet with her! He must—such was the Divine necessity that this sheep, which had wandered as far as it well could, should be brought back!

Cheer up! Be of good courage, preacher of the Word. You may not find the sheep, but your Master will! Take heart, you that wait upon the Lord in prayer—you may see some of your agencies fail and success may not wait upon all your efforts, but God’s purposes must stand—He will do all His pleasure and at the last it shall be seen that not a single sheep was left for want of being sought out. Nor is it enough to seek the sheep and to find them—they must be delivered from the dangers into which they have fallen. There is a promise to this effect. They had been scattered in a cloudy and dark day. Some of them had slipped from the crag and fallen into crevices, from which it seemed as if no hand could reach them. Others, skipping from rock to rock, had reached some lofty pinnacle where it seemed certain that the next move would dash them down the dizzy depth to ruin. But the Lord has said it, “I will bring them out from all places where they have been scattered.” High up there in pride, in blasphemy, in persecution, or low down there in shameful degradation and infamy, they shall be brought, every one of them, from all the perils of evil within and evil without, and be gathered safely into the fold! But when, one by one, they have been delivered, they are not a flock till they are gathered by the Shepherd. They must, therefore, not only be brought out of the danger, but brought into the flock, safely housed, and collected into one fold. So the promise runs, “I will gather them altogether into one place.” Beloved, this great work of gathering is going on today! By this man and by that, by this agency and by the other, the Lord is separating His chosen people from among the ruins of the Fall—fetching His Israel out of Egypt and His captives out of Babylon and Chaldea—so that the whole company of the faithful may be a people separated unto the Lord! Let us entertain no fears as to the Lord having a Church in the world! With Omnipotent Power, directed by Infallible Wisdom and moved by Immutable Love, those whom God has chosen to be His sheep shall be sought out, rescued from their danger and numbered with the living people of the living God! Do I not now address a section of this great flock? Are there not many in this dense crowd who belong to that Seed which the Lord has blessed? Can there fail to be a rich vein of comfort to such in this promise, “I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord”?

Our text has in it a double blessing. By way of division, we will emphasize each word and endeavor to draw out the fullness of its meaning. To take the last word, first, “My flock” is—

I. A NOTE OF DESCRIPTION.  
It describes God’s people distinctively, separating them from all other people. They are not ravenous like lions. They are not crafty like foxes. They are not swift like the hare. They are not foul like the swine. They love not carrion like the raven. They are timid, trembling, weak, but they are clean and they love clean feeding. They are gentle. They have no guile. When Sovereign Grace has renewed and changed them, you may easily distinguish the Lord’s sheep from the world’s goats. Naturally, these sheep of the Lord have the infirmities of sheep—prone to go astray they are fearful, weak and liable to disease. It is said that man, a horse and a sheep are liable to more diseases than any other creatures. Certainly sheep have many contingencies. They are prone to infect others with their ailments. As to going astray they are so gregarious that if but one sheep leaps the wall, the whole flock must go after him! The Lord’s people, in a state of nature, are very much like sheep as to their infirmities and, when converted, they are like sheep for their meekness and gentleness. Then they can suffer without repining—they can follow the Shepherd, for they know His voice, and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. This word is thus distinctive—it sets out a people who are no more to be mistaken for any other people than sheep are to be mistaken for wolves or lions! Question yourself, my Hearer, whether you are one of the Lord’s sheep. Have you given yourself up to His care? Do you follow at His bidding? Do you desire to be washed in His sheep-washing? Are you desirous that He should make you to feed and to lie down in His green pastures?  
Nor is the word merely distinctive—it is likewise collective. It is not said, “I will feed My sheep one by one,” but, “I will feed My flock.” The Lord has only one flock, and so in this world He has only one Church. “Well,” says one “we see 20 denominations.” Thank God for it! I am not one of those who would deplore the fact that different Brothers are set for the defense of different parts of the Truth of God. Can you doubt that when Christ prayed that His people might be one, He was heard? It were almost blasphemy to think that His petition was denied! Very well, then, they are one. If the intercession of Christ prevailed, then today the Church is one! I do not believe for a moment that the oneness which Christ intended was ever a oneness of opinion, or a oneness of form of worship any more than a oneness of association, congregating them together in the same building! It was a mystical, secret, vital unity which exists in the Church of God at this very day! Brothers and Sisters, all Believers are really and truly one! When their souls are in a glow with Divine Love, and their hearts speak out of the fullness of their emotion, the unity of the one flock becomes perceptible! The little divisions in the Church of God that challenge your notice are like little cracks upon the surface of the earth—the rock is not cracked. The divisions that we have in the churches are only little skin wounds—the body is not divided. “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” The great body of Christ still remains indissolubly one! And here tonight, be we Independent, or Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Methodist—if we are one with Christ, we must be one with one another! After all, the Catholic is right in the expression, while he is wrong in the meaning he attaches to it, when he says there is no salvation out of the pale of the church. Referred to any worldly policy, it is a lie, but in sober truth, outside of the one indivisible Church of Christ lightly defined, there can be no salvation! But, thanks be unto Christ, every soul that knows the voice of God, the Good Shepherd, and follows at His beck and call, belongs to the one flock, soon to be gathered into the one fold. Note, then, the distinctive and the aggregate description—they are sheep individually and they are, collectively, a flock. But here is—  
II. A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION, as well as a word of description—“I will feed My flock”—“My flock.” Oh, that sweet word, “My”! “I will feed My flock,” not the devil’s flock—let those goats browse where they will! Not the world’s flock—let them wander on their own mountains of vanity! But, “I will feed My flock.” Beloved, if we are the Lord’s people by faith, remember we are His by Eternal Election. He chose us before earth’s foundations were laid! He took us unto Himself to be the jewels of His crown and the delight of His soul. Before the channels of the sea were dug, or the sockets of the mountains were formed—long before the sun had scattered the thick darkness—our names were written upon the hands of Jesus! We are His, too, by purchase. Think of the price He paid for us! I am dwelling upon this to make you see how true it is that He will feed us. Did He choose us? Did He buy us—and will He not feed us?— *“Count the purple drops and say,  
‘Thus my sins were washed away.’”*  
Thus I, a captive, was set free! Thus I, impounded by the Law of God, saw the gate of the pound opened and I, the sheep of Christ, came out to lie down in His pastures. You are His by ties of blood, as well as His by purchase—and you are also His by power. He won you, fought for you and made you His lawful captives. You held out as long as you could, but at last you cried, “I yield! Almighty Love, You have overcome me! Now I bow myself to Your silver scepter, willingly Your subject.” Oh, how hard it was for Christ to get some of us! Like wandering sheep, we strayed here, there and everywhere! And when the Shepherd came and began to grasp us, we struggled to get free, struggled for that awful liberty which would have been our ruin! But, glory be to God, He would have us! He took us upon His shoulders, He carried us home rejoicing and this day we acknowledge it was the victorious love of Christ which made us His! Yes, and we are His by our own free consent. Would you be another’s if you could? Oh, if there could be a divorce court held between your soul and Christ, would you sue for a division? Say, my Soul, if the branch could be cut off from the Vine, would you wish to be severed from Him now? For His sake can you suffer shame, spitting, rebuke and poverty? Say, for His sake can you count the world’s treasures to be as dross—and all its pomp and glory but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal? I know you! You say, “Truly, by His Grace, I can, for He is mine and I cannot let Him go! He holds me so fast and He has proved unto me a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it.” Thus you see, Beloved, that that word of discrimination, “My,” has a good and grateful tone about it. “I will feed My flock.” Go, you who do not belong to God, and find such food as you can gather, but you who are the Lord’s own peculiar ones, take this for your consolation, “I will feed My flock.” The next word, going backwards, is—  
III. A WORD FULL OF CONSOLATION—“I will feed My flock.” Yes, He will supply your temporal needs. You may run short, but you shall never want. When the garment has got to be threadbare, then He will find you another. I recollect one instance of Providence of which I was the almost passive agent. It was the case of a Brother Christian and minister. I was staying in a country town and it was requisite to borrow an edifice for the preaching. One Chapel could not be had, for the preacher was not high enough in Doctrine. And another Chapel could not be had for the whim of some of the deacons. But there was one little Chapel which the minister very willingly lent, for he said, “Oh, yes. To a fellow servant of my Lord and Master, I will cheerfully open the doors.” The preacher of that night noticed that the minister of that little Chapel wore a threadbare coat and he observed that in his house there were signs of poverty. Twelve shillings a week was the good man’s income—all that his flock could afford to give him. After the preacher had done his sermon, he said, “Perhaps the minister here will pardon me if I say that his clothes are getting much too shabby, and I think it would be a good thing for us all to contribute and buy him a new suit of clothes.” ‘Twas done and when I said to the minister, “I hope you will pardon me for such an impertinent remark?” “Pardon you?” he said, “why the Lord always finds me fresh clothes when my things wear out, and it is always some such manner as I never dreamed of.” The good man is in Heaven, now. I believe that suit just lasted him till he put on the white garment before the Eternal Throne. Depend upon it, that as it was with him, so, if you believe in your Master, it shall be with you! He will give you food and raiment—that is all He has promised you—and if you get that, He will be as good as His bargain, so you must not murmur at your fare.  
“I will feed My flock.” The sense, however, is mainly spiritual. It does not say the Shepherd shall feed them, but, “I will feed them, says the Lord,” and He says that He will feed them with good pasture. Good Doctrines, comfortable promises, sweet encouragements, tender words of exhortation, gentle notes of warning—these shall be their daily food! And, mark it, He says He will feed them on the high mountains. Some of His sheep do not like to go up such lofty heights. Dear me! How many faithful souls are frightened at the very mention of High Doctrine! Election is one of those mountains where grass grows of the very sweetest kind, but there are some of the flock who do not like to go there to feed. But the best food is on these high mountains. If your feet shall know how to stand on the craggy heights of Immutable and Eternal Love, if you shall know how to climb up yonder into the great Decrees of God, if you can take hold of His Covenant, if you can contemplate the Divine Purpose which is sure to all the Seed, you will find those to be the very sweetest and most satisfying spiritual food that is to be found on this side the Jordan! “I will feed My flock.” Ah, sometimes God’s people are placed where they have a very innutritious ministry, and then He feeds them in some other way. Their own private readings become a consolation to them. When, at times, some of the Lord’s people are sick, laid on their beds, unable to go up to the House of Prayer, this promise, “I will feed My flock,” proves quite as true to them at home in their seclusion as it is here in our joyous gatherings! If you neglect the means of Grace, in vain can you expect a blessing! But if you are lawfully detained from them, plead the promise and expect its fulfillment—“I will feed My flock.”  
Are you just going to New Zealand, or are you just about to take a voyage to Australia, my beloved Sister, my dear Brother? God will feed you there. I know not how. You may be up in the back settlements, or in the bush, and have but little opportunity of meeting with the people of God, but still remember, “I will feed My flock.” You are going on a long sea voyage, are you, and there are but few on board to encourage you? Well, take the promise to your God, “I will feed

My flock.” Or are you moving away from this Church, which has been like a hothouse to you, and going into some country village where there is no Gospel preaching? Never mind, Brothers and Sisters—if God sends you there, lay hold on Him by faith with these words, “I will feed My flock”—and He will feed you, and you shall have enough and to spare! In the time of famine you shall be filled, and in the day of scarcity you shall be satisfied. “I will feed My flock.” Again, going backwards, let us take the next—  
IV. A WORD WHICH IS FULL OF ASSURANCE.  
“I will feed My flock.” “I will. I will. I will.” See how positively He speaks. Not, “I think I will.” Not, “I may,” but “I will.” Beloved, these “shalls” and “wills” are the very marrow of the Gospel! They make the strength of it. Take the “shalls” and “wills” out of the Bible and put in conditional “ifs” and “buts” and “perhaps,” in their place—what a desolate appearance it would present! These “shalls” and “wills” stand like Jachin and Boaz, the great pillars of the Temple, right at the entrance, and we must see to it that we never give up these potent “shalls” and “wills,” but hold fast and firmly to them! “I will feed My flock.” “But,” says one, “are not some of the flock lost?” Read the verse! He says, “I will seek them and I will feed them.” “They may be lost, but if they have backslidden I will bring them back. If, like Peter, they have denied Me to My face, I will forgive them. If they have played the harlot, like Israel of old, and gone astray from Me, yet I will bring them back, for I will feed My flock.” He cannot feed them unless He brings them back! But, “I will feed My flock. I will bring back all the wanderers who have been bought with My blood. I will.” The adversary says they shall not be brought! “I will. I will,” says the Lord. “No, but,” says proud flesh, “I will not be brought.” “I will,” says the Lord—and God’s, “I will,” is infinitely mightier than all the hosts of darkness and powers of corruption! But, Lord, there are some of them who have been driven away—legal preachers have driven them from Christ—their doubts and fears, their sins and trespasses have driven them away. “But I will feed My flock, every one of them, for I will bring them back—they shall have all their old comforts back, their joys and hopes shall be restored to them—I will feed My flock.” But, Lord, some of them are broken! Some cruel blow has broken a leg, or some other limb of some of Your sheep. “But I will feed My flock. I will bring them back and heal them.” You may be broken in heart and your faith may be weak, and your Graces spoiled, but this stands good, “I will, I will feed My flock.” But, Lord, they are infected with disease—so runs the passage, “they are weak”—they have got some disease common to Your sheep. “I will heal them,” says the Lord, “for I will feed My sheep.”  
My dear Friends, it is not possible for an heir of Heaven ever to get into such a state that God cannot save him! And should he be allowed in Sovereign forbearance to wander to the utmost excess of sin—if he were even in the very jaws of the destroyer, yet our Savior, like another David, would pluck the lamb out of the jaw of the lion and tear it away from the paw of the bear! As long as you are out of Hell, Sinner, have hope! And, Believer, if you should sink in deep waters and be swallowed up of the Devourer, still, like Jonah, you shall be able to say, “Out of the belly of Hell I cried, and You heard me.” “I will feed My flock.” Oh, that you who are doubting and fearing would lay hold on this, “I will. I will. I will.” Your flesh and carnal reason will doubtless say, “Well, I hope and trust.” Away with your hoping and trusting! Do not halt and hesitate, but believe! If God says He will, who are you that you should entertain a suspicion? You shall be fed—God’s Word cannot fail you! “I will feed My flock.” Moreover, this is—  
V. A WORD OF DIVINITY.  
“I will feed My flock.” Who is this that says, “I will”? When a man says, “I will,” it is often braggart impudence, but when God says, “I will,” and, “you shall,” such words are expressive alike of Sovereign determination and Irresistible Power! Christian, see who it is that makes the promise and mark who it is that will fulfill it! “I will feed My flock.” Do you complain that you cannot feed under such-and-such a minister? The Lord promises, “I will feed My flock.” Here you have Divine Infinity to be your supply! Here you have Divine Immutability to be your guarantee! Here you have Divine Omnipotence to be your aid and Divine Wisdom to be the measure of the supply which shall be afforded to you! Trust in the Lord and do good. When Jehovah says, “I will,” banish every doubt and fear and now, for time and for eternity, cast yourself upon your God. He says, “I will feed My flock”—let us reply, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”  
Passing on to the second clause of the verse, “And I will make them lie down, says the lord,” you will please observe that this further blessing is intended to make amends for the harshness of the false shepherds. They would never let them lie down quietly. Their custom was always to drive, drive, drive, or else to seize, fleece and slay. But the Lord says, “I will make them lie down,” and so redress their wrongs. For all the weariness they have suffered in the past, they shall have calm repose in the future. You know how apt the legal preacher is to whip his hearers with—“Do this!” And, “Do that.” You know how certain Calvinists whip their hearers with, “If you have felt this,” and, “If you have experienced that,” you may be saved. But the Lord Himself always makes His people, when they come fully to confide in Him, to lie down in a good fold and to feed in a fat pasture!  
When the Lord reveals to you that He has loved you with an everlasting love, is not that a good place to lie down in? When He tells you that having so loved you, He will never cast you away, is not that a good place to lie down in? When He tells you that your warfare is accomplished and that your sin is pardoned, is not that a good place to lie down in? Or supposing the message to be that Christ has brought in an everlasting righteousness and that you are accepted in the Beloved, is not that a place to lie down in? Let Him say to you, “You are My sons and My daughters, and I will be a Father to you”—is not that a good place to lie down in? Well, He does say all this to every one of you who has been brought to trust under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty! Your faith in Jesus is the evidence that He loved you before the world was and He will love you when the world shall cease to be! His righteousness is imputed to you and you are saved, completely saved, and Heaven is as surely yours as though you now wore the crown of gold! Is not this a good place to lie down in? Still more, He not only gives you a place to lie down in, but He also causes you to lie down! You know, dear Friends, it is one thing to have a promise, and quite another thing to live on it. Why, I am such a fool, sometimes, that though I know the sweetness of the Covenant, I cannot partake of it! Though I understand the sense and the preciousness of the promises, yet I cannot get a grip upon them! I remember when once talking to a captain on board his vessel, and telling him of the promises, he said to me, “Ah, Sir, the promises of God are very much like those posts by the riverside, strong posts driven in by the corporation of a country town! You see, if I could once get my cable right round them, it would hold my ship—but then that is the job— to get the cable round them.” So it is, but then the promise supplies this need—“I will make them lie down. I will shed abroad the love of Christ in their hearts. I will make their peace like a river. I will come to them with such fullness of mercy, such overflowing of My communion, that their souls shall not dare to be afraid! They shall be sweetly hushed as a child is dandled to sleep upon its mother’s knee. I will not allow a fear to vex them! I will send them such balmy breath from My own loving lips that their fears shall all fly away. I will make them lie down.”  
Ah, and thanks be to God, some of us know what this means, for we have had to lie down. My soul has fed for a whole year on one promise. I know not why it was given to me, but I had it, “His soul shall dwell at ease,” and my soul did dwell at ease! What had I else but to be at ease? My sins forgiven. My Heaven secure. Christ mine! God mine! This world mine! Worlds to come mine! Why should not I dwell at ease? And, Beloved, many of you, too—some of you at least—know what it is to enjoy the same peace! You can walk up and down the world and look into the grave and not be afraid of it. You can stand by a sickbed and long for evening to undress, that you may rest with God. You have such pure calm that business does not fret you—you can leave it with your Lord, casting all your care on Him, for He cares for you! Yes, you have such unspeakable joy that sometimes you could even shout for joy, for the love, the sweet love, the precious love, the unspeakable love, the everlasting love which Jesus has manifested to you!  
But there is another flock. Hear it and tremble! There is another flock. They never get fed at all, or, if they do, it is only on empty husks! It is the devil’s flock! Sinner, you are of his flock and he only feeds you upon mere shams, pretences, delusions, lies! He never causes you to lie down—you know you can never lie down. Your sins never give you any quiet. Who has woes? Who has redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine! Who has uneasiness? Who has pangs of heart? The midnight sinner! Who is he that quivers at the fall of a leaf? Who is he whose cheek turns pale in a storm? Who is he that quivers when but a little sickness gets hold upon him, and flies to the physician? Who is he that dares not think on death? Who is he that goes to the theater or to the ballroom to quiet his terror and to keep his conscience from being heard? Who is he whose end is destruction, whose god is his belly, who glories in his shame? He is here! He is here listening to my voice! Oh, Sinner, it is time that you should change your master!  
I remember an old salt, after listening to a certain sermon, coming with tears in his eyes into the vestry and saying, “Sir, I have served under the black flag for 60 years—and I think it is time I ran it down and had a new one.” I think it is time you did the same, Sinner. The wages of sin is death! Fly from this tyrant master! Immanuel, the bright Prince of Glory, is willing to enlist you into His army! Though there are no conditions, I will tell you the terms. The terms are these, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” To believe is simply to trust, to believe Him to be true. Trust your soul on Him! When you can do that, you are a saved man or woman! Whatever your sins may have been, or now are, the moment you believe in Jesus, you are a partaker of this precious promise, “I will feed My flock, I will make them lie down, says the Lord.” God grant it to every one of you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **DEUTERONOMY 33.**

Verse 1. And this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death. A very beautiful thought, that he should conclude his life with a blessing. Though they had greatly grieved and provoked his spirit, he was always meek and tender. And he had very much to bear from them, but this is the end of it all, that he will dismiss them with his blessing.

2, 3. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery Law for them. Yes, He loved the people; all His saints are in Your hand: and they sat down at Your feet: everyone shall receive of Your words. “Yes, He loved the people.” God’s appearance on Sinai was a token of His love to them, even though it amazed them and distressed many of them. Yet still it was a great thing that God should come so near to these people and should reveal His will to them. Dear Friends, if God should come to you with His fiery Law. If He should humble you, and make you “exceedingly fear and quake,” it would be a token of love! The ungodly are left to go in their sin, but as for you, if you are one whom He loves, He will rebuke you and He will bring His Law to do its work upon your heart and conscience. It seems strange to you, but so it is. “From His right hand went a fiery Law for them. Yes, He loved the people.” Oh, it is so, because He loves them, He reveals to them His fiery Law! “All His saints are in Your hand.” A place of safety, a place of privilege, where they learn how precious they are to Him, for He holds them so dear that He keeps them always in His hand. “All His saints are in Your hand, and they sat down at Your feet.” Another place for saints—they are always learning—they are disciples. They sit with meek humility at their Master’s feet and drink in His words, “Everyone shall receive of Your words.” Those who know not God’s love, trifle with God’s words and reject them. Those whom He loves receive His words and feed upon them!

4-6. Moses commanded us a Law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Let Reuben live, and not die: and let not his men be few. Here is his blessing, “Let Reuben live.” Reuben’s great sin had lost him his birthright, yet Moses gives him as much of his blessing as he can. If we are not allowed to draw the largest blessing, let us go as far as we can!

7-9. And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be You a help to him from his enemies. And of Levi he said, Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one, whom You did prove at Massah, and with whom You did strive at the waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Your word, and kept Your Covenant. Judah was the royal tribe— had to do much with warfare. Lord give him power in prayer! This is the peculiar benediction of those who have to lead the way in the battles of God. In the service of God, Levi was impartial—he did not wink at sin in his dearest relatives. You remember how they took the sword and went through the camp and slew their own brothers when they found them guilty of idolatry. And because of this faithfulness we read, “They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your Law.” Above all things, a teacher of the Truth of God must be fearless and impartial in the delivery of God’s Word! Then God will bless him, and it shall be said of such, “They shall teach Jacob,” etc.

10. They shall teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your Law: they shall put incense before You, and whole burnt sacrifices upon Your altar. True hearts, alone, can be God’s priests—He will not accept sacrifices from those who will dally with His Truth and trifle with His Word.

11, 12. Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders. They that have God near them are safe, indeed! There is no protection in such a world as this like constant communion with God. We have to go out into a world full of all manner of evil. Go not out into the world without your God! Let Him dwell with you and cover you all the day long, and so shall you be safe.

13. And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of Heaven. Oh, in a spiritual sense, what a rich blessing this is! And remember it came upon that tribe whose father was the most afflicted of all Jacob’s sons. If you are an afflicted Joseph, rejoice, for one of these days you shall have the capacity for receiving great blessings!

13. For the dew—The Lord send us that dew tonight to rest upon our branch.  
13. And for the deep that couches beneath. These deep eternal springs out of which we drink the Divine Water!  
14. And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon. They shall have blessings both ways— in the day and in the night. Those whom God blesses, the sun does not smite by day, nor the moon by night, but, on the contrary, they are blessed both in the one and in the other!  
15, 16. And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills. And for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. Oh, that we may always enjoy the good will of God, who wills good to us, who in all His dealings with us has a good will towards us. Oh, that we may have the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush!  
16-18. Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out; and Issachar, in your tents. You that go much abroad in the world, God give you to rejoice in your opportunities of doing good. You that never go abroad, but live at home in the kitchen and the parlor, learn to rejoice in your tents, for there, too, you have a sphere of holy service!  
19-22. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sand. And of Gad, he said, Blessed is He that enlarges Gad: he dwells as a lion, and tears the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there is a portion for the lawgiver; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD and His judgments with Israel. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan. “And of Gad, he said, Blessed be He that enlarges Gad.” God knows how to enlarge His people, give them more Grace, more gifts, more opportunities of usefulness. Which He did. His tribes enlarged their boundaries by a sudden leap. God gives His people sometimes their leaping times—they leap from Bashan—some great purpose is accomplished, some great feat is done.

23. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess you the west and the south. What a condition of heart to be in! “Satisfied with favor; full of the blessing of the Lord.” Beloved, may you enjoy that tonight!

24. And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Then will he leave a mark wherever he goes of holy unction. He possesses it himself, and he will impart it to others.

25. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be. Will not some Believer grip that promise tonight and find it true?

26-28. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the Heaven to your help, and in His excellence in the sky. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew. “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” There is no place for God’s people like a separated place—they must get outside the camp—they must not be numbered among the people. Notice, there is none like unto the God of Israel, and there is none like to Israel.

29. Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellence? And your enemies shall submit to you; and you shall tread upon their high places. As God is by Himself, so all His people are favored beyond all others.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3087 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A TIME OF FINDING FOR LOST SHEEP  
NO. 3087

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1908.  
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.” Ezekiel 34:16.**

IT is a great mercy that God never leaves His Church. He has not made a Church as a watchmaker constructs a watch, which, after being wound up, is left to depend upon the strength and fitness of the machinery, but He has made a Church which, though fitted with the best of machinery, needs His hand every moment to keep it in motion. He has lighted the lamps, but He walks among the golden candlesticks. He has fixed the pillars of the Temple, but His own almighty shoulders are the actual support thereof. He has not left the Church to His ministers, but He, Himself, is the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls. Even if, as some affirm, there were no immediate Divine interpositions in the works of Providence, we know that there are such interpositions constantly in the works of Grace.

We have direct experimental evidence of God’s ever-watchful care over His Church. He does not deal with His people only through instruments, but He Himself takes the Church in His own hands. This is His own declaration, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Thus does He speak of His vineyard. So, too, in this chapter, for a while, the shepherds had domineered over the flock. Evil shepherds had crept into the office, fed themselves, but not the sheep. It would have been an ill day for the Church if Divine interposition were not the rule of His government, but because it is so, God said, “Away, you shepherds! I am against you; and I will require My flock at your hands. Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. Away, you that have dispersed and scattered My flock! I am about to make bare My arm. As you have proved unworthy servants, your Master, Himself, is coming; as you have not fed the people of My pastures and have not gathered together My flock, I Myself will grasp the crook in My own hand.” He speaks in His wrath to the foolish shepherds, yet He mingles His threats with pity for those He elsewhere calls “the flock of slaughter.” He says, “I will feed even you, O poor of the flock! I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.”

Ah, Beloved, if the Lord did not continually interfere in His Church, the Church would cease to exist! If the Doctrines of His holy Word had been left to man’s teaching, they would, by degrees, have so degenerated that the Church would not have had a particle of the Truth of God in its midst. If God had not stretched over His Truth the broad aegis of His own Omnipotence, Truth would have ceased out of the land and those who profess to be its ministers would all have prophesied lies in the name of the Lord! The preservation of the Truth of God in our midst is owing to the direct and immediate interposition of the Almighty. And mark it well, the inward witness of the Truth in the heart of every individual Believer is an instance and evidence of the same unceasing care, inasmuch as only He can apply it to the conscience with quickening power. There is not force enough in the Truth of God to convert souls without the influence of the Holy Spirit. The minister may be a good under-shepherd and he may endeavor to feed the flock, but God’s flock cannot be fed, nor can God’s wandering sheep be gathered home unless the Chief Shepherd, the great and mighty Archbishop, even Jesus Christ, shall interfere and Himself do the work! The Divine interposition of God in the midst of His Church is her great bulwark, her hope, her shield, her stay. What we need just now is not so much more shepherds, perhaps not other shepherds—albeit, when the Lord sends laborers into the field, it is because the crops are to be gathered in—but we need the great Master, Himself, to visit us and say, “I will do My own work; since you will not faithfully and fearlessly preach the Truth, I will come and interfere, that My Word may be fully and boldly proclaimed.”

Now notice what God has promised to do. In this text there is a character very graphically and minutely described—and we shall look at the four sentences as descriptive of that one character—“that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken and that which was sick.” Then we shall look at the sentences, one by one, as being very possibly descriptions of four different characters. We shall also endeavor to speak of the sweet promises appended to each character and conclude with a solemn warning to “the fat and the strong.”

I. First, then, notice the four features of character here—“that which was lost; that which was driven away; that which was broken and that which was sick.” Sometimes we say that all four of these meet in one individual.

To begin with, “THAT WHICH WAS LOST.” Doubtless there are some here who have felt in their hearts the solemn meaning of this word, “lost.” Not only have I no doubt, but I have strong hopes that some souls here present are really and actually lost in their own experience. It may seem a cruel thing that I should wish you to feel yourselves lost, but it is a well-intentioned cruelty because, if you are lost, this promise is addressed to you—that God will seek “that which was lost.” I shall endeavor, therefore, to tell you how men feel when they are brought to know the dreadful word, “lost,” as applicable to themselves.

A man is never lost until he is devoid of all strength. See the mariner who has fallen from the ship—as long as those brawny arms of his can stem the current, as long as he can buffet the waves and hurl them aside with the strong heart of resistance, he gives up nothing for lost. Yes, and should his arms become weary, if he can float a little, and with one hand move himself amidst the billows of the deep, he still thinks it is not yet all over. And while there is one particle of strength remaining, his hopes are too buoyant to give himself up for a lost man. Suppose he grasped a spar? As long as ever those hands of his can, with a deathclutch, keep hold of that floating piece of timber, he does not consider himself lost! Fond Hope still whispers in his ear, “Hold on, you are not lost yet. Some ship may cross this way, Providence may guide its path here and you may yet be delivered. Hold on, you are not lost while a sinew retains its might, while there is any vital force in your frame.”

So, Soul, you can never say you are lost till you feel in your heart an utter departure of all your strength. Have you been brought to feel that there is nothing which of yourself you can do apart from the strength of the Holy Spirit? There was a time when you could pray, when you could repent, when you could believe, after your own fashion, with your own supposed strength—is that time all passed over now? Are you saying, “I have no power to do any of those things without Grace from on high. I would, but cannot pray. I would, but cannot repent—this stubborn heart will not dissolve, although I strive to melt it. This haughty mind will resist the Savior, although I wish to be led in chains of Grace a willing captive to my Lord.” Are you brought to feel that if your salvation depended upon one motion of your soul in the right direction, you would be lost, for you have no spiritual strength? Are you lying down, shorn of all your might, bereft of all help and hope in yourself—and do you confess, “I can do nothing without Christ”? Well then, you are one of those whom Christ has come to save! This death unto the Law is the precursor of your being made alive unto God—and a sure sign that Divine Grace is at work in your soul! So long as you have one particle of carnal strength, God will never show you His salvation. So long as you think to do one solitary good thing of yourself, or rely upon one particle of good works for your redemption, you are under the ban and curse of the Law and are not brought to know the Covenant plan of mercy! But when you are stripped of every rag of self-righteousness, when you say, “Divinity must work, for humanity has failed—God’s will must conquer my will, or else I am lost”—then rejoice, rejoice! Though you give yourself up for lost, it is now that God writes you saved! “I will seek that which was lost.”

Again, a man is never thoroughly lost until not only his strength has failed him, but he has come to his wit’s end. You know how David describes the mariners at sea as rolling to and fro, staggering like drunken men and at their wit’s end. While the captain could devise any scheme for scudding before the wind, or evading the tempest, or nearing the harbor, or arriving at the haven, he gave not up his ship for lost. But when every device had failed—when, after suggesting twenty plans, all laid hold upon as Sovereign remedies, but which all failed, he was at his wit’s end, or, as the margin reads, his wisdom was swallowed up—then he gave himself up to being really lost.

Have I one here who is, in a spiritual sense, at his wit’s end? Once he said, “I will do this, and then I shall be saved. I will forego that lust, I will renounce that crime, I will moderate my conduct, I will behave myself more Christian-like—and then I shall be saved.” Have you tried these high resolves and have they failed you? Perhaps you have sought after ceremonies and said, “I will shelter myself in the church, keep her rituals and zealously obey her rubrics.” Yet that has failed you. You have tried scheme after scheme, only to discover each and all alike abortive. And now you do anxiously enquire, “What must I do to be saved?” Do you say, “I have done all that reason could dictate. I have followed every maxim I could learn as I ran here and there for counsel. I have strained every power mortal can exercise. I have taxed my poor brain till its fitful fancies bewilder me and, alas, all is in vain! What must I do? What shall I do?” Let me tell you.

You are today like a traveler who hast lost his way in a forest. You thought that there was a path and sorely have you been disappointed, until, entangled in the brambles, you have torn your clothes and your flesh. How sure you did make of some way of escape, but, alas, every avenue was blocked up and you could not get out. You have climbed the highest tree in the forest to see where the end of the dark woods might be, but the further you looked, the more intricate did it appear. At length, your hopes extinguished, your plans defeated, your strength exhausted, your tongue parched and your eyes smarting, all that you can do is, like the poor traveler in the desert, when his store of water is spent and his power is gone, lay down in fell despair and die. Are you such an one? Have you tried everything and has everything failed you? Are you now locked up in Giant Despair’s castle? If so, I commend to you this blessed Truth of God—Christ came to seek and to save the lost and oh, could you believe it, what a joyous day this would be to you! You would go out of this house dancing for joy of heart and saying, “I went in there a poor lost one, but the Shepherd of Israel has sought and found me, for Christ came to seek that which was lost!”

Again, a man is not lost until the door of hope is shut fast. No man in the world ever gives himself up for lost as long as he has a grain of hope left. Tell the sick man that he must die, for the physician has pronounced his case hopeless, and will he believe you? No! He will cling to the thought that he may yet rally. Has one case of recovery ever been known? Then he hopes his disease may not prove fatal. Has one miraculous cure been worked? He thinks there may be another or if not, perhaps that his case may be the first! And so he hopes on and does not consider his condition desperate. The poor sinner, when lost, gives all up as hopeless and he says, “I have no reason to hope that Christ will have mercy upon me. He might save all the rest of the world, but upon me He will never look with eyes of compassion. Here have I been lying for weeks and months by Bethesda’s pool—the angel has often stirred the water—I have seen others step in and they have been saved, My mother has been saved, my brother and my sister have found deliverance! Yet here I am just the same as ever. I go to God’s House, but I sit there as an alien. I am not like one of the family and I know I am lost. It seems as if the ears of God were silent against my prayers—when I cry to Him, He disregards the voice of my groaning. Alas, my prayer is like the sacrifice of the wicked, an abomination to the Lord! I feel that He has cast me out of His sight and that I am condemned already!”

What, then, I ask—is your case too hard for Him? “No,” you say, “but He will not save me. I have called so long, I have cried so often, surely God has forgotten to be gracious! I am not one of His elect. He has shut up His heart of compassion and I can never be saved.” Hear this, my Friend—if you feel all that, let me solemnly assure you, in God’s name, that though lost in yourself, Christ came to save you! Would to God that all of you who hear me this day were either agonizing over your being lost, or rejoicing that you are found! You would then be equally safe, if not equally happy. I had rather, O you careless Sinners, that terrors took hold upon you and fears compassed you about, than that you should be dancing on the mountains of folly and reveling in your sins, unconscious of danger! Know this, you lighthearted, you giddy and silly ones—the hour of your damnation draws near! But as for you who are broken in pieces, sighing and groaning because you think your case is hopeless, let me tell you, as God’s ambassador, that your case is not hopeless, but hopeful. You may call to mind, like Jeremiah, your affliction and your misery, “the wormwood and the gall,” and say with him, “Therefore have I hope.”

Have I faithfully described you? Will you answer to your name as a prodigal son, as a lost child? Then, lost as you are, you have a Father! So lost as to need finding, so lost as to need saving, I think I hear a Father’s yearnings over you, “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart is troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.” I think I hear the Savior’s voice saying, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” A vision flits before my eyes—I think I see the blessed Jesus in shepherd’s garb, with staff in hand, bearing on His shoulders a lost sheep whom He has, this morning, recovered. Just now the poor sheep was wandering in the wilderness in a solitary way—now he is laid on the everlasting shoulders, guarded by Omnipotent power and kept secure from harm! Happy soul! The angels rejoice over you, though your heart has not yet realized the sense of security which could give you joy!

There is another characteristic of the man who feels himself lost, more horrible than those I have mentioned. Waking to a consciousness that he is lost, he not only beholds the gate of Hope shut, but the gate of Hell opened. Ah, my Friends! I speak now as one who should know, as one who has felt in his own soul what his lips describe. I have passed through that experience which I have told you and this have I likewise known. Well do I remember, after many a month of prayer without an answer from God, when faith I had none and my hope had given up the ghost, I thought God would never save me. And just then I thought the gates of Hell were opened before my soul—for if ever a soul did experience a foretaste of Perdition, I think I did—and I believe many of you experienced the same before you found peace with God. You knew you were not in Hell and yet you thought even that almost preferable to your condition, you were in such dread suspense! Sometimes there was a glimmer of hope, but that only made your darkness more visible. As John Bunyan has it, the Hell drum was beating in your ears—you heard it from morning till night, and from night till morning—“Lost, lost, lost! You will soon be in Hell!” Do you not remember when you did walk the earth and think that every tuft of grass would be as the mouth of Hell to open and swallow you up—when you could not sleep for frightful dreams and did wake and feel the very terror which haunted you in your night visions? Your poor conscience was lashed by the whip of the Law and while your wounds were smarting, you did cry, “O God! Will You never save me? The sorrows of death have compassed me about, and all Your billows have gone over me.”

Do you not remember when, like David, all your bones were out of joint and you said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me”—but there was no answer? And, moreover, Satan suggested a reply—“What? Renew a right spirit in YOU? You are the worst wretch who ever lived! Your death warrant is signed, the wood is burning that will consume you, the chains are already forged to bind you forever and you shall be with me shut up under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Now, is there such an one here, one to whom Hell’s gates are opened, upon whom fiends seem perpetually hissing— one who is brought to the black land of confusion, to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where not only is there no hope, but where the portending clouds seem to be gathered round him? Let him take heart— Christ has come to save such lost souls! And as surely as the devil is let loose upon you in this way, Christ will find him yet! He will break the teeth of the oppressor and will take you, His poor lost sheep, out of the jaws of the lion and the paw of the bear! Are you so lost? Then here is the promise for you—“I will seek that which was lost.”

But you say, “Sir, I have had too long a trial to think it possible. I have attended your ministry, and other ministries, for many a long year. Sometimes I have thought that surely I might be saved, but ah, it is of no use! You may speak of all the promises you like, they have nothing to do with me. I write my name down among the lost—and charm you ever so wisely, I am like the deaf adder—never, never to be comforted! It is all over—I am locked up in this iron cage of despair—lost, lost beyond all hope and I cannot believe what you say!” Ah, poor Soul, but just notice what the text says, “I will seek that which was lost.” I have been seeking you for many a Sabbath and so have other ministers, but we have never found you—but God’s seeking is very different from ours! If I could, I would come to you with these weeping eyes of mine, and say, “Poor Sinner, do take heart.” I would go down upon my knees with you and offer my supplications for you that you might believe in Christ. But I know it would avail little unless my Master sought you. The undershepherds have been after you many a day, but they could not find you. But God knows, as we do not, where you are! If you are in the deepest pit in the forest, His almighty eyes can see to the bottom! Yes, and in one of the favored moments of the day of salvation, that time accepted, He will send home a promise so sweetly that all your fetters shall break off in an instant, your night shall be scattered, your dawn begin and He will give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness! Believe now, and you shall be comforted now—for the time of faith is the time of comfort!

Our text gives us a second characteristic of lost sheep—“THAT WHICH WAS DRIVEN AWAY.” I wish to particularize this morning because I have begged the Lord to send His arrows home personally, even to three or four, rather than to let me shoot them in among you and strike no hearts at all. There are souls, not only lost, but driven away. “I could tell you of a time,” says one, “when I had a hope of Heaven or, at least, I thought I had. I groaned, prayed and strived and one Sabbath—I shall never forget it—I stepped into the House of God and, during the reading of a chapter or the singing of a hymn, I fondly thought that I had seen Christ and had believed in Him! But oh, it was only for a moment—I was only permitted to just look into the well of Living Water—no one came to draw water for me and give me a drink. I thought for a single second, ‘Now is the hour of my salvation.’ Something said within my heart, ‘Now is the appointed time. Today is the day of salvation,’ and I almost began to smile within myself at the thought that I had found the Lord. But, Sir, I was driven away and I dare not go again! I was once very near being a Believer—I was just upon the edge of having faith in Christ—but it only makes the night darker to think I once saw a star, for I was driven away.”

Now there are different ways in which poor sinners are driven away and in many cases it is the devil’s work. Sometimes unbelief does it—the sinner sees Christ on the Cross, the blood flowing from His head and hands and feet and side, and he thinks—

*“Oh I could but believe,*

*Then all would easy be.”*  
He thinks of the happy effects that would follow faith in Christ and something says within him—

*“Venture on Him, venture wholly!  
Let no other trust intrude.”*

And he is just going to do it when suddenly there comes a great black thought, “What, you? You have no right to come! Away with you!” He has just pressed through the crowd and is going to touch the hem of his Master’s garment, but before his finger reaches it, someone has pushed in front of him and he goes away broken-hearted—and all the more so to think that he should have ever had the presumption, as he deems it, to hope for salvation! Unbelief has pushed many a sinner away from Christ just when he was coming and has kept him away for a long time.

Sometimes legal preachers drive souls away. They preach a Gospel so much mixed up with Law, so united with the doings of man, that the poor soul just coming to Christ gets driven away. And even some of God’s true ministers—yes, the very best of them—sometimes drive poor sinners away from Christ. When they speak of the experience of the saint, the poor sinner writes bitter things against himself because he does not feel that he comes up to the experience which some of the Lord’s children have had. Ah, we cannot always tell when we are driving poor souls away from Christ. Often, when we think we are wooing them, we are really driving them away! When we would be winning them to the Savior, some harsh expression of ours frightens sinners away from Him! Ah, poor Soul! Have you been driven away? Do you understand and sympathize with what I have said? Before I knew the Lord, I could declare that I was driven away. Once, under a powerful sermon, my heart shook within me and was dissolved in the midst of my body. I thought I would seek the Lord and I bowed my knee and wrestled, and poured out my heart before Him. I ventured within His sanctuary to hear His Word, hoping that in some favored hour He would send a precious promise to my consolation, but ah, that wretched afternoon I heard a sermon wherein Christ was not and I had no longer any hope! I would have sipped at that fountain, but I was driven away! I felt that I would have believed in Christ and I longed and sighed for Him. But ah, that dreadful sermon—and those dreadful things that were uttered! My poor soul knew not what was truth, or what was error, but I thought the man was surely preaching the truth and I was driven back. I dared not go! I could not believe I could not lay hold on Christ! I was shut out if no one else was.

Is there someone here who has been thus driven away? I may have done it and I will weep before God in secret on account of it. But let me cheer you. Hear this—“I will bring again that which was driven away.” As surely as you ever did come once, you will be brought back! That heavenly hour shall once more return! That blessed day shall dawn afresh! Christ shall appear and His love and mercy shall be bestowed on you! He has drawn you once and He will draw you again, for God never fails! He may, for wise ends and purposes, suffer you to be driven away once, but He will ultimately bring you to Himself, for He has said, “I will bring again that which was driven away.”

The other two points have, I think, something to do with the driving away—“I WILL BIND UP THAT WHICH WAS BROKEN.” This, I think, refers to those who have been broken by being driven away. The shepherds smote them so hard that they even broke their bones. How many have there been who, when they thought they had found Christ, but were driven away, have felt from that moment that they were broken, that they were more sorely wounded than ever they had been! They did entertain some little hope before, that Christ might look upon then with love, but now they are broken to pieces—and that breaking, together with the breaking of the Holy Spirit, which has ground them as in the mortar and pestle of conviction, has so broken them that they feel utterly destroyed. Besides the sickness of sin, they have upon them a sickness partly engendered by the strokes of those who drove them away. Then comes in most blessedly the fourth promise of the text—“I WILL STRENGTHEN THAT WHICH WAS SICK.”

I may be taking an extreme case when I suppose one character in whom those four points meet. Have I anyone here in such a position—not only “lost,” not only “driven away,” but “broken” and “sick”? Your head has begun to whirl, you know not how it is, but so strongly have these convictions got hold of you that your very mind seems to suffer from them—a mystery to yourself—you cannot tell where you are! Some say that you are mad and you think, within yourself, that they have good ground for the suspicion. You are sick of your existence and almost ready to take your life! A terrible giddiness has seized you, as if a Hell were kindled in your breast to be the prelude of despair and irrevocable destruction—the first notes of the “Miserere” of eternal woe! Are you reduced to such a terrible extremity? Are you sick as well as broken and driven away and lost? Hear this, “I will seek that which was lost.” Can you not believe that God’s promise is true? “I will bring again that which was driven away.” Do you think that God’s, “I will,” stands for nothing? “I will bind up that which was broken.” Can you not implicitly believe what God so absolutely affirms? “I will strengthen that which was sick.” O sick one, God give you Grace to understand that He means what He says and to believe that He will do what He promises! Come now, is there one here in whom all these troubles meet? Let him lift up his head with joy from this moment, for Jesus Christ has come to save him and his sighing shall, before long, be exchanged for songs of thanksgiving!

II. Now, very briefly, let me hint at the four characters separately. First, “that which was lost.” This, of course, is the awakened sinner who is made to know that, in Adam, he is lost and by his own sins he is utterly ruined and destroyed. Such an one has here the Divine authority for hope that God will seek him and that he shall yet be saved.  
“I will bring again that which was driven away.” This refers to the backslider who has been driven away from God by sin. Strong temptations have goaded him to follow the propensities of his own wicked will. Poor Backslider, God will restore you! Oh, I could tell of some here who have greatly and grievously departed from the paths of righteousness! And the leanness will testify that they have been driven from the pastures. Let me say to you, in God’s name, that He will bring back “that which was driven away.” “Oh but,” you say, “six years ago I dishonored my profession, and ever since I have been as one estranged from his people.” Yes, but if you are the Lord’s child, if it were 60 years, He would bring you back with weeping and lamentation unto Zion! “Oh, Sir, but I have so disgraced the cause!” Turn you, turn you at His bidding! God invites you to come! My backsliding Brother, my backsliding Sister, I will not condemn you. I may become a backslider, too, and the best of these who now stand fast by Jesus may be, likewise, “overtaken in a fault.” You are condemned enough in your own heart—I would not that you should “be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” “Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you.” ‘Tis even so with our God. “Yet does He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him.” Come, Ephraim! You have been a stubborn child, still your Father bids you come home! Come, Prodigal! You have wasted your substance, yet a Father’s loving eyes have beheld you when you were a great way off. Come! His breast heaves with love for you! Come, you driven-away one, come to Him! He loved you before you loved Him and though you did rebel against Him, He has never ceased to love you! Though you have sinned much, His loving heart is immutably the same. Oh believe in His goodness in the teeth of your own unworthiness—so shall you be comforted and the word on which He has caused you to hope shall be fulfilled, “I will bring again that which was driven away.”  
The next character is the broken one. The child of God is often broken—especially if he has been a backslider. He is sure to have broken bones and he is likely to limp all the rest of his days. Or the Believer may be broken by trouble, by affliction, or by assaults of the enemy. He may be broken on account of the inbred sin manifested to him by the Holy Spirit. But, broken one, God will help you, for He has said, “I will bind up that which was broken.” Sweet thought! Precious promises are the ligatures with which God Himself binds up broken bones! Marvelous Surgeon! God Almighty Himself bowing down from Heaven to put the heavenly liniment and the fair white linen of a Savior’s righteousness round about the wounded spirit! Broken one, rejoice! God says, “I will bind up that which was broken.”  
Lastly, there are the sick ones, and many such there are among the Lord’s people. Their faith is weak. Their prayers are not so spiritual and fervent as they desire. There is a chill about them, or else a heat of feverish anxiety. Their hearts often palpitate with gloomy fears and sad forebodings—they are not so healthy as they desire to be before God— they long for that perfect love which casts out fear. Yes then, do you feel that sickness, Saint, this morning? Say not because you are sick that God will let you die. No, for He says, “I will strengthen that which was sick.” So then, Saints in all your distresses, Sinners in all your sins— here are exceedingly great promises ministered unto you this morning! And may the Holy Spirit show you their infinite value and apply then to you with demonstration and with power! How unspeakable the satisfaction to a poor sinner when he hears the physician minutely describe all his ailments! But to hear him speak with confidence that however painful, no symptom is beyond his skill, how the patient will brighten up! Your case, my Brother, is more cheering still! Have you not sometimes heard your doctor say, “When you recover from this sickness, you will be better than you were before”? Well now, think how far God’s mercies exceed our miseries, how far His cure extends beyond our maladies, how sure He is to do for His people exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think! Then, despairing Soul, though you have all four maladies, you shall have all four promises! If you are a member of His family, for every affliction and every chastisement you shall get so many peaceable fruits of righteousness, so that you will afterwards kiss the rod and subscribe to David’s testimony, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word.” And mark you this—in the fulfillment of God’s promises you shall receive double for all your distresses!  
And now, can I say any more? Have I not gone to the uttermost case in the application of my text? Are there any poor souls that I have not reached? Then let me try once again. My dear Friends, do you know yourselves to be lost and ruined by the Fall? Do you feel that you are utterly undone, ruined and lost without Christ? Well then, in His name I solemnly declare this great Truth of the Gospel—that all who know this and feel it may confidently believe that there is salvation for them! The only proof that I can give you that you shall be saints is that you feel that you are now sinners. O poor sin-sick Soul, I thank God that you are afflicted with this sickness, for now you will have recourse to the Physician! O poor Sinner, I thank God that you know yourself to be poor, for God will make you rich!  
But as for such as you are as the text says, “the fat and the strong,” you who boast that you are good enough and have need of nothing, go your own way—you want no Gospel and I have none to preach to you! You who are so good and excellent, you want no Christ to save you—you will despise the man who comes in Christ’s name to preach free, unmerited, Sovereign Love. And what if you do? Does he care for your contempt? Not one whit! Reproach will sit lightly on him if he may but win souls to be found in Christ at last. If you need not the medicine, spurn it if you please, but you are fools for your pains! And if you want it not for yourselves, if you are so whole that you need not the physician, hoot him not while he goes to attend upon those who feel their danger to be imminent! Grumble not that I preach no Gospel to you, for you want it not! You are as good as you can be—in fact, rather better than most Christians in your own opinion! You are no cants, no hypocrites. You may want a patch or two of religion to make you all right at last. Your garments are white and courtly—they only need a little brushing to take the dust off. Alas for you, Sirs, Hell is built for such good people as you are! You shall find no place in Heaven—its blessed mansions are prepared for sinners saved by Grace! Hell’s dark dungeons remain for those who reject Christ, despise mercy and scorn to sue for pardon because they deem themselves too good, too holy, too excellent to need a Savior!  
I say again, as for you who are fat and strong, God will feed you with judgment! You think to stand by your own works, but your best works will destroy you! You shall appear before God in your own characters and they shall ruin you forever. You think your own merits will suffice and that God will bestow on you a reward. Yes, and He will reward you, and a terrible recompense it shall be when you shall find yourselves receiving what you have earned—tribulation, wrath and destruction from the Presence of the Lord your God! Your consciences tell you that what I speak is true. You may despise the warning now, but in the silent moments of your sober thought it shall cling to you and haunt you. When your guilt recoils on your memory. When your heart and flesh fail, and your reason totters at the prospect of a dread hereafter, you will howl with misery and cry out, “Woe worth the day!”  
Now you lost and ruined, come to Jesus! You broken Sinners, believe in Jesus! You that are bruised and mangled by the Fall, come to Jesus— *“Come you needy, come and welcome!  
God’s free bounty glorify.  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every Grace that brings us nigh,  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!  
Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream—  
All the fitness He requires  
Is to feel your need of Him—  
And this He gives you!  
‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”*

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #28 New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST  
NO. 28

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 3, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing and I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing.” Ezekiel 34:26.**

The Chapter (Ezekiel 34) that I read at the commencement of the service is a prophetical one. I understand it’s meaning to refer to the relation, not to the condition of the Jews during the captivity and their subsequent happiness when they should return to their land, but to a state into which they should fall after they had been restored to their country under Nehemiah and Ezra and in which state they still continue to the present day. The Prophet tells us that the shepherds then, instead of feeding the flock, fed themselves. They trod the grass, instead of allowing the sheep to eat it and they fouled the waters with their feet. This is an exact description of the state of Judea after the captivity. For then there arose the Scribes and Pharisees who took the key of knowledge and would not enter themselves nor allow others to enter. They laid heavy burdens on men’s shoulders and would not touch them with one of their fingers. They made religion to consist entirely in sacrifices and ceremonies and imposed such a burden on the people that they cried out, “What a weariness it is!” That same evil has continued with the poor Jews to the present day. Should you read the nonsense of the Talmud and the Gemara and see the burdens they laid upon them, you would say, “Verily, they have idle shepherds.” They give the sheep no food. They trouble them with fanciful superstitions and silly views and instead of telling them that the Messiah is already come, they delude them with the idea that there is a Messiah yet to come who shall restore Judea and raise it to its glory. The Lord pronounces a curse upon these Pharisees and Rabbis. These who “thrust with side and with shoulder,” those evil shepherds who will not suffer the sheep to lie down, neither will feed them with good pasture. But after having described this state, Ezekiel prophecies better times for the poor Jew. The day is coming when the careless shepherds shall be as nothing. Then the power of the Rabbis shall cease. Then the traditions of the Mishna and the Talmud shall be cast aside. The hour is approaching when the tribes shall go up to their own country, when Judea, so long a howling wilderness, shall once more blossom like the rose. Then, if the Temple, itself, is not restored, yet on Zion’s hill shall be raised some Christian building where the chants of solemn praise shall be heard, as of old the Psalms of David were sung in the Tabernacle. Not long shall it be before they shall come—shall come from distant lands, wherever they rest or roam. And she who has been the offscouring of all things, whose name has been a proverb and a byword, shall become the glory of all lands! Dejected Zion shall raise her head, shaking herself from dust, darkness and the dead. Then shall the Lord feed His people and make them and the places round about His hill a blessing. I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible, it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel. “There they shall go up. They shall come with weeping unto Zion and with supplications unto Jerusalem.” May that happy day soon come! For when the Jews are restored, then the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in. And as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion to reign with His ancients gloriously and the halcyon days of the Millennium shall then dawn. We shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend. Christ shall rule with universal sway!

This, then, is the meaning of the text—that God would make Jerusalem and the places round about His hill a blessing. I shall not, however, use it so this morning—I shall use it in a more confined sense—or, perhaps, in a more enlarged sense—as it applies to the Church of Jesus Christ and to this particular Church with which you and I stand connected. “I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing. And I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing.”

There are two things here spoken of. First, Christ’s Church is to be a blessing. Secondly, Christ’s Church is to be blessed. These two things you will find in the different sentences of the text.

I. First, CHRIST’S CHURCH IS TO BE A BLESSING. “I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing.” The objective of God in choosing a people before all worlds was not only to save that people, but through them to confer essential benefits upon the whole human race. When He chose Abraham He did not elect him simply to be God’s friend and the recipient of peculiar privileges. But He chose him to make him, as it were, the conservator of Truth. He was to be the ark in which the Truth should be hid. He was to be the keeper of the Covenant in behalf of the whole world! And when God chooses any men by His Sovereign Electing Grace and makes them Christ’s, He does it not only for their own sake, that they may be saved, but for the world’s sake. For know you not that, “you are the light of the world”?—“A city set upon a hill which cannot be hid”? “You are the salt of the earth.” And when God makes you salt, it is not only that you may have salt in yourselves but that, like salt, you may preserve the whole mass. If He makes you leaven it is that like the little leaven, you may leaven the whole lump. Salvation is not a selfish thing. God does not give it for us to keep to ourselves, but that we may thereby be made the means of blessing to others! And the great day shall declare that there is not a man living on the surface of the earth but has received a blessing in some way or other through God’s gift of the Gospel. The very keeping of the wicked in life and granting of the reprieve was purchased with the death of Jesus. Through His sufferings and death the temporal blessings which both we and they enjoy are bestowed on us. The Gospel was sent that it might first bless those that embrace it and then expand, so as to make them a blessing to the whole human race!

In thus speaking of the Church as a blessing, we shall notice three things. First, here is Divinity—“I will make them a blessing.” Secondly, here is personality of religion—“I will make them a blessing.” And, thirdly, here is the development of religion—“and the places round about My hill.”

1. First, with regard to this blessing which God will cause His Church to be, here is Divinity. It is God, the Everlasting Jehovah, speaking—He says, “I will make them a blessing.” None of us can bless others unless God has first blessed us. We need Divine workmanship. “I will make them a blessing by helping them and by constraining them.” God makes His people a blessing by helping them. What can we do without God’s help? I stand and preach to thousands, or it may be hundreds. What have I done, unless a greater than man has been in the pulpit with me? I work in the Sunday schools—what can I do, unless the Master is there, teaching the children with me? We want God’s aid in every position. And once give us that assistance, there is no telling with how little labor we may become a blessing, Ah, a few words, sometimes, will be more of a blessing than a whole sermon. You take some little prattler on your knee—and some few words that you say to him he remembers and makes use of in later years. I knew a gray-headed old man who was in the habit of doing this. He once took a boy to a certain tree and said, “Now, John, you kneel down at that tree and I will kneel down with you.” He knelt down and prayed and asked God to convert him and save his soul. “Now,” he said, “perhaps you will come to this tree again and if you are not converted you will remember that I asked under this tree that God would save your soul.” That young man went away and forgot the old man’s prayer. But it chanced as God would have it, that he walked down that field, again, and saw a tree. It seemed as if the old man’s name was cut in the bark. He recollected what he prayed for, but the prayer was not fulfilled. But he dared not pass the tree without kneeling down to pray, himself—and there was his spiritual birthplace! The simplest observation of the Christian shall be made a blessing, if God helps him. “His leaf also shall not wither”—the simplest word he speaks shall be treasured up. And whatever he does shall prosper.

But there is constraint here. “I will make them a blessing.” I will give them to be a blessing. I will compel them to be a blessing. I can say myself that I never did anything which was a blessing to my fellow creatures without feeling compelled to do it. I thought of going to a Sunday school to teach. On a certain day, someone called—asked me—begged me— prayed me to take his class. I could not refuse to go. And there I was held hand and foot by the superintendent and was compelled to go on. I was asked to address the children. I thought I could not, but no one else was there to do it, so I stood up and stammered out a few words. And I recollect the first occasion on which I attempted to preach to the people—I am sure I had no wish to do it—but there was no one else in the place. And should the congregation go away without a single word of warning or address? How could I allow it? I felt forced to address them. And so it has been with whatever I have laid my hand to. I have always felt a kind of impulse which I could not resist, but, moreover felt placed by Providence in such a position that I had no wish to avoid the duty and if I had desired it, could not have helped myself. And so it is with God’s people. As they go through their lives, wherever they have been made a blessing, they will find that God seems to have thrust them into the vineyard. Such-and-such a man was once rich. What good was he in the world? He did but loll in his carriage. He did but little good and was of little service to his fellow creatures. Says God, “I will make him a blessing”—so He strips away his riches and brings him into low circumstances. He is then brought into association with the poor and his superior education and intellect make him a blessing to them. God makes him a blessing! Another man was naturally very timid. He would not pray at the Prayer Meeting, he would hardly like to join the Church. Soon he gets into a position in which he cannot help himself. “I will make him a blessing.” And as sure as ever you are a servant of God, He will make you a blessing! He will have none of His gold in the lump. He will hammer it out and make it a blessing. I verily believe there are some in my congregation to whom God has given power to preach His name. They do not know it, perhaps, but God will make it known by-and-by. I would have every man look and see whether God is making him do a certain thing. And when once he feels the impulse, let him by no means ever check it. I am somewhat of a believer in the doctrine of the Quakers as to the impulses of the Spirit and I fear lest I should check one of them. If a thought crosses my mind, “Go to such a person’s house,” I always like to do it, because I do not know but what it may be from the Spirit. I understand this verse to mean something like that. “I will make them a blessing. I will force them to do good. If I cannot make a sweet scent come from them in any other way, I will pound them in the mortar of affliction! If they have seed and the seed cannot be scattered in any other way, I will send a rough wind to blow the downy seed everywhere.” “I will make them a blessing.” If you have never been made a blessing to anyone, depend upon it, you are not a child of God! For Jehovah says, “I will make them a blessing.”

2. But notice, next, the personality of the blessing. “I will make them a blessing.” “I will make each member of the Church a blessing.” Many people come up to the House of Prayer where the Church assembles and you say, “Well, what are you doing at such-and-such a place where you attend?” “Well, we are doing so-and so.” “How do you spell we?” “It is a plain monosyllable,” you say. “Yes, but do you put I in ‘we’?” “No.” There are a great many people who could easily spell “we” without an I in it, for though they say, “We have been doing so-and-so,” they do not say, “How much have I done? Did I do anything in it? Yes. This Chapel has been enlarged. What did I subscribe? Two pence!” Of course it is done. Those who paid the money have done it. “We preach the Gospel.” Do we, indeed? Yes, we sit in our pew and listen a little and do not pray for a blessing. “We have got such a large Sunday school.” Did you ever teach in it? “We have got a very good working Society.” Did you ever go to work in it? That is not the way to spell, “we.” It is “I will make them a blessing.” When Jerusalem was built, every man began nearest his own house. That is where you must begin to build, or to do something. Do not let us tell a lie about it. If we do not have some share in the building, if we neither handle the trowel nor the spear, let us not talk about our Church. For the text says, “I will make them a blessing,” everyone of them.

“But, Sir, what can I do? I am nothing but a father at home. I am so full of business, I can only see my children a little.” But in your business, do you ever have any servants? “No—I am a servant myself.” You have fellow servants? “No, I work alone.” Do you work alone, then, and live alone, like a monk in a cell? I don’t believe that. But you have fellow servants at work, cannot you say a word to their conscience? “I don’t like to intrude religion into business.” Quite right, too, so say I. When I am at business, let it be business. When you are at religion, let it be religion. But do you ever have an opportunity? Why, you cannot go into an omnibus, or a railway carriage, but what you can say something for Jesus Christ! I have found it so and I don’t believe I am different from other people. Cannot do anything? Cannot you put a tract in your hat and drop it where you go? Cannot you speak a word to a child? Where does this man come from that cannot do anything? There is a spider on the wall. He takes hold on kings’ palaces and spins his web to rid the world of noxious flies. There is a nettle in the corner of the churchyard. The physician tells me it has its virtues. There is a tiny star in the sky. That is noted in the chart and the mariner looks at it. There is an insect under water. It builds a rock. God made all these things for something! But here is a man that God made and gave him nothing at all to do? I do not believe it! God never makes useless things. He has no superfluous workmanship. I care not what you are. You have something to do. And oh, may God show you what it is and then make you do it, by the wondrous compulsion of His Providence and His Grace.

3. But we have to notice, in the third place, the development of Gospel blessing. “I will make them a blessing,” but it does not end there—“And the places round about My hill.” Religion is an expansive thing. When it begins in the heart, at first it is like a tiny grain of mustard seed. But it gradually increases and becomes a great tree, so that the birds of the air lodge in its branches. A man cannot be religious to himself. “No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself.” You have heard, a score of times, that if you do but drop a pebble in a brook it causes a small ring at first, then another outside of that and then another, and another, till the influence of the pebble is perceptible over the entire bosom of the water. So it is when God makes His people a blessing. “I will make a minister a blessing to one or two. I will then make him a blessing to a hundred. I will then make him a blessing to thousands. And then I will make those thousands a blessing. I will make each one, individually, a blessing—and when I have done that, I will make all the places round about a blessing. I will make them a blessing.” I hope we shall never be satisfied, as members of Park Street, until we are a blessing not only to ourselves, but to all the places round about our hill. What are the places round about our hill? I think they are first, our agencies, secondly, our neighborhood and thirdly, the churches adjacent to us.

First, there are our agencies. There is our Sunday school—how near that is to our hill? I speak a great deal about this, because I want it to be brought into notice. I intend to preach a practical sermon this morning, to move some of you to come and teach in the Sunday school, for there we require some suitable men to “come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Therefore I mention the Sunday school as a place very near to the hill. It ought to be just at the very foot of it. Yes, it ought to be so near the hill that very many may pass from it to the Church. Then there is our Visiting and Christian Instruction Society which we have for the visiting of this neighborhood. I trust that has been made a blessing. God has sent among us a man who labors zealously and earnestly in visiting the sick. I have, as the superintendent of my beloved Brother, the missionary, a regular account of his labors. His report has most highly gratified me and I am able to bear testimony to the fact that he is very efficiently laboring around us. I want that Society to have all your sympathy and strength. I consider him as a Joshua, with whom you are to go forth by hundreds to those who live in the neighborhood. Do you not know what dark places there are? Walk down a street a little to the right. See the shops open on a Sunday. Some, thank God, that used to open them, now come and worship with us. We shall have more yet. For “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” and why should not we have it? My Brothers and Sisters, as you visit the sick, or distribute tracts from door to door, make this your prayer—that this Society, being one of the places round about our hill, may be made a blessing! Let me not forget any agency connected with this Church. There are several more which are places round about our hill—and the Lord has just put it into my heart to fashion other societies, which shall be made a blessing to this hill—and in a little while you shall hear of them. We have several Brothers in this congregation to whom God has given a mouth of utterance. These are about to form themselves into a society for proclaiming the Word of God. Where God has so blessed His Church and made us to be so noted and named among the people, why should we not keep on? We have been brought up to a great pitch of fervency and love. Now is the time for doing something. While the iron is hot, why not strike and fashion it? I believe we have the materials not only for making a Church, here, that shall be the glory of the Baptist churches in London, but for making churches everywhere throughout the metropolis! And we have more plans on hand, which matured by sober judgment and backed by prudence, shall yet make this metropolis more honored than it has been by the sound of the pure Gospel and the proclamation of the pure Word of God. May God make all our Agencies—the places round about our hill—a blessing!

But next, there is the neighborhood. I am paralyzed, sometimes when I think that we are of so little service to the neighborhood, though this is a green oasis in the midst of a great spiritual desert. Just at the back of us we could find you hundreds of Roman Catholics and men of the very worst character. And it is sad to think that we cannot make this place a blessing to them. It is made a great blessing to you, my Hearers. But you do not come from this district. You come from anywhere and nowhere, some of you, I suppose. People say, “There is something doing in that Chapel—look at the crowd—but we cannot get in!” This one thing I ask— never come here to gratify your curiosity. You that are members of other congregations, just consider it your duty to stay at home. There are many stray sheep about. I would rather have them than you. Keep to your own place. I do not want to rob other ministers. Do not come here from charity. We are much obliged to you for your kindly intentions. But we would rather have your seat than your company if you are members of other Churches. We want sinners to come—sinners of every sort. But do not let us have that sort of men whose ears are everlastingly itching for some new preacher—who are saying, “I need something else, I need something else.” Oh, I beseech you, for God’s sake, be of some good! And if you are running about from one place to another, you can never expect to be. Do you know what is said of rolling stones? Ah, you have heard of that. They “gather no moss.” Now, don’t be rolling stones but stay at home. God help to make us a blessing to the neighborhood! I long to see something done for the people around here. We must open our arms to them. We must go out into the open air to them. We must and will preach God’s Gospel to them. Let, then, the people around listen to the word of the Gospel. And may it be said, “That place is the cathedral of Southwark!” So it is now. Out of it goes a blessing—God is pouring out a blessing upon it!

What else do we mean by the places round about our hill? We mean the churches adjacent. I cannot but rejoice in the prosperity of many churches around us. But as our beloved Brother, Mr. Sherman, said last Thursday morning, “It is not invidious to say that there are very few churches that are in a prosperous state, but that taking the churches at large, they are in a deplorable condition. It is only here and there,” he said, “that God is pouring out His Spirit. But most of the churches are lying like barges at Black Friars Bridge when the tide is down—right in the mud—and all the king’s horses and all the king’s men cannot pull them off till the tide comes and sets them afloat.” Who can tell, then, what good may be done by this Church? If there is a light in this candlestick, let others come and light their candles by it! If there is a flame here, let the flame spread until all the neighboring churches shall be lit up with the glory. Then indeed, shall we be made the rejoicing of the earth— for there is never a revival in one spot, but it shall affect others. Who shall tell, then, where it shall end?

*“Fly abroad, you mighty Gospel!*

*Win and conquer, never cease!”*  
And it never will cease, when God once makes the places round about His hill a blessing.

II. The second point is that God’s people are not only to be a blessing but THEY ARE TO BE BLESSED. For read the second part of the verse. “And I will cause the shower to come down in his season. There shall be showers of blessing.” It is somewhat singular, as a prediction of the showers of blessings we hope to receive here, that God sent us showers on the first day of opening. If I were a believer in omens, I would pray that as it rained the first day, so may it rain every day since! When it stops, may the Chapel be shut up. For we only want it open so long as showers of Grace continue to descend.

First, here is S overeign Mercy. Listen to these words; “I will give them the shower in its season.” Is it not Sovereign, Divine Mercy, for who can say, “I will give them showers,” except God? Can the false prophet who walks among the benighted Hottentots? He says he is a rainmaker and can give them showers. But can he do it? Is there an imperial monarch, or the most learned man on earth, who can say, “I will give them the showers in their season?” No. There is only one. There is only one hand in which all the channels of the mighty ocean above the firmament are contained. There is only one voice that can speak to the clouds and bid them beget the rain! “Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoary frost of Heaven, who has gendered it?” “Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?” Who else could do it? Is not rain in God’s power? And who could send it except Him? We know that Catholics pretend that they can get grace without getting it directly from God. For they believe that God puts all His Grace into the pope and then that runs down into smaller pipes, called cardinals and bishops, through which it runs into the priests. And by turning the tap with a shilling you can get as much “grace” as you like! But it is not so with God’s Grace. He says, “I will give them showers.” Grace is the gift of God and is not to be created by man.

Notice next, it is needed Grace. “I will give them showers.” What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds, but what can you do without the rain? Ah, you may prepare your barn and sharpen your sickles. But your sickles will be rusted before you have any wheat, unless there are showers. They are needed. So is the Divine blessing—

*“In vain Apollos sows the seed,  
And Paul may plant in vain.”*

In vain you come here, in vain you labor, in vain you give your money— *“Till God the plenteous shower bestows,  
And sends salvation down.”*

Then, next, it is plenteous Grace. “I will send them showers.” It does not say, “I will send them drops,” but “I will send them showers.” “It seldom rains but it pours.” So it is with Grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Where are we going to hold God’s blessing that we have already obtained? I told the people on Thursday that God had promised us that if we brought the tithes into the storehouse He would send us such a blessing that we would not have room to hold it. We have tried it. And the promise has been fulfilled, as it always will be as long as we rely upon it. Plenteous Grace! Ah, we shall need plenteous Divine Grace, my Friends. Plenteous Grace to keep us humble, plenteous Grace to make us prayerful, plenteous Grace to make us holy, plenteous Grace to make us zealous, plenteous Grace to make us truthful, plenteous Grace to preserve us through this life and, at last, to land us in Heaven! We cannot do without showers of Grace! How many are there here that have been dry in a shower of Grace? Why, there is a shower of Divine Grace here. But how is it that it does not fall on some of the people? It is because they put up the umbrella of their prejudice. And though they sit here, even as God’s people sit, even when it rains they have such a prejudice against God’s Word they do not want to hear it! They do not want to love it and it runs off their prejudices. Nevertheless, the showers are there— and we will thank God for them where they do fall!

Again, it is seasonable Grace. “I will give them the shower in its season.” There is nothing like seasonable Grace. There are fruits, you know, that are best in their season and they are not good at any other time. And there are Graces that are good in their season but we do not always require them. A person vexes and irritates me. I need Grace just at that moment to be patient! I have not got it and I get angry. Ten minutes after I am ever so patient. But I have not had Grace in its season. The promise is, “I will give them the shower in its season.” Ah, poor waiting Soul, what is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the seasons for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers! What is your season this morning, business man? Lost money all the week, have you? Now is the season to ask for showers. It is nighttime. Now the dew falls. The dew does not fall in the day—it falls in the night. The night of affliction, trial and trouble. There stands the promise—only go and plead it. “I will give them the shower in its season.”

We have one more thought and then we have done. Here is a varied blessing. “I will give you showers of blessing.” The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. The rain is all of one kind when it comes. But Divine Grace is not all of one kind, or it does not produce the same effect. When God sends rain upon His Church, He “sends showers of blessing.” There are some ministers who think that if there is a shower on their church, God will send a shower of work. Yes, but if He does, He will send a shower of comfort. Others think that God will send a shower of Gospel Truth. Yes, but if He sends that, He will send a shower of Gospel holiness. For all God’s blessings go together! They are like the sweet sister graces that danced hand in hand. God sends showers of blessings!

If He gives comforting Grace, He also gives converting Grace. If He makes the trumpet blow for the bankrupt sinner, He will also make it sound a shout of joy for the sinner that is pardoned and forgiven. He will send “showers of blessing.”

Now, then, there is a promise in that Bible. We have tried to explain and enlarge upon it. What shall we do with it?—  
*“In that book there lies hidden  
A pearl of price unknown.”*

Well, we have examined this rich promise. We as a Church are looking at it. We are saying, “Is that ours?” I think most of the members will say, “It is, for God has poured out upon us showers of blessing in their season.” Well, then, if the promise is ours, the precept is ours as much as the promise! Ought we not to ask God to continue to make us a blessing? Some say I did so-and-so when I was a young man. But supposing you are fifty, you are not an old man now. Is there not something you can do? It is all very well to talk about what you have done. But what are you doing now? I know what it is with some of you. You shined brightly, once, but your candle has not been trimmed lately and so it does not shine so well. May God take away some of the worldly cares and trim the candles a little! You know there were scissors and scissors trays provided in the Temple for all the candles, but no extinguishers. And if there should be a poor candle here this morning with a wick that has not given light for a long while, you will have no extinguisher from me—but I hope you will always have a trimming. I thought the first time when I came to the lamps this morning it would be to trim them. That has been the intention of my sermon—to trim you a little—to set you to work for Jesus Christ.

O Zion, shake yourself from the dust! O Christian, raise yourself from your slumbers! Warrior, put on your armor! Soldier, grasp your sword! The captain sounds the alarm of war! O sluggard, why do you sleep? O heir of Heaven, has not Jesus done so much for you that you should live to Him? O beloved Brothers and Sisters, purchased with redeeming mercies, girt about with loving kindness and with tenderness—

*“Now for a shout of sacred joy,’’*  
and after that to the battle! The little seed has grown to this—who knows what it shall be? Only let us strive together without variance! Let us labor for Jesus. Never did men have so fair an opportunity, for the last hundred years, “There is a tide that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.” Shall you take it at the flood? Over the bar, at the harbor’s mouth! O ship of Heaven, let your sails be out. Let not your canvass be furled. And the wind will blow us across the Sea of Difficulty that lies before us. Oh, that the latter day might have its dawning even in this despised habitation! O my God! From this place cause the first wave to spring which shall move another and then another, till the last great wave shall sweep over the sands of time and dash against the rocks of eternity, echoing as it falls, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1462 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE YOKE REMOVED AND THE LORD REVEALED  
NO. 1462

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

**“They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bars of their yoke.”  
Ezekiel 34:27.**

BUT do not all men know that God is the Lord? They should know it, for He is clearly to be seen in the works of Nature. Even where no Revelation has come, yet Heaven and earth and sea and the rain which brings with it fruitful seasons—filling men’s hearts with food and gladness—all proclaim the Most High! But man, by wisdom, knows not God. He shuts his eyes to evidences brighter than the sun and in his willful blindness he sets up an image of wood or stone or gold or silver—bows before it and calls that his God! This is the sin of the nations, that they changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

But do not all know God in this land—this land where there is so much Gospel teaching—where we boast of our open Bible and of our Protestant pulpit? Alas, no! There are multitudes who have heard of God and who say that they believe in Him, but who have no personal acquaintance with Him and do not, in the sense of the text, know that He is the Lord. Ah, dear Friends, there is no knowing God except by personal acquaintance with Him! And there is no personal acquaintance with Him except by His own revealing of Himself to our spirit! You may read as much as ever you will and hear as long as ever you please, but until your own spirit comes into contact with the Spirit of God, you do not and cannot know the Lord! You know the report of Him which you have heard with the hearing of the ear, but that is a small matter unless it leads to something higher.

There are, I fear, a great many “Christian” people whom we must not judge, for they keep up outwardly all that is to be expected in the Christian character according to the common run of profession, nowadays, who, nevertheless, do not truly know God by spiritual fellowship with Him. Their faith stands upon reason—it is based upon argument and appeals to the intellect—but it has never led to personal knowledge and acquaintance. The Lord is, to them, a logical abstraction, not a beloved Person. Or, perhaps, which is somewhat worse, their faith as to God rests upon excitement, upon association, upon the eloquence of a favorite preacher, or something of that sort.

Now, in such cases as this, God is not so known as He should be and, after a while, if another god is preached, a different god from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they leave the true God for the false. In these days of worldly wisdom men set up a fresh deity who is more effeminate

and pliable than the glorious God of Moses and of Aaron, the God of the fathers and the Prophets! And, straightway, those who know not the only living and true God, for there is but one, run after this new god, newly set up by these modern Divines who have manufactured him in their studies as certainly as ever the Hindu manufactures mud gods by the river Ganges! They bow before this new god and cry out against the Jehovah of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as if He were to be judged by them and to be no more accounted Lord!

It is amazing to hear them speak of the, “stern Deity of the Old Testament,” and of, “the semi-enlightened views of Moses and Isaiah.” As for us, we heartily love Him who made known His ways unto Moses and His acts unto the children of Israel—and we desire no other God. Those who know the Lord know that He is still the I AM THAT I AM, unchangeable in all respects! And we know that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, is the same God who revealed Himself at Paran and came with sound of thunder at Sinai! The God who manifests Himself in Jesus Christ is He who spoke to our fathers and the Prophets, for He is the one glorious Lord God!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, there is no fear of your running after the new gods if you have once known the true God! If, by experience you have been brought into fellowship with the Most High and felt His power and seen His Glory, you will be confirmed in those things which He has taught you and which His Spirit has engraved upon your soul as with an iron pen and written with the point of a diamond.

It appears from the text that there is a process by which God’s own people are brought to know the Lord. This process takes place when He breaks the bars of their yoke. Then they know that the Lord is God! It is clear, therefore, that He must first of all permit His own chosen, for a wise purpose, to come into bondage. They must be in bondage, or else they would not wear the yoke and there would be no opportunity for the Lord to break that yoke. I do not commend the bondage—it is a thing to be deplored—but, as Augustine once cried out, “Beata culpa!” “Happy fault!” when he saw how sin had made space for the wonderful display of Divine Grace. So I venture to say, “Blessed bondage, which gives an opportunity for our God to come in and set His children free! And by thus breaking the bars of their yoke to teach them that He, Himself is the Lord.”

Let us now describe, by the help of God’s Spirit, who alone can teach us, this process of breaking the bars of the yoke by which the emancipated know that the Lord is God. There are two things to be considered. First, that the Lord does break the bars of the yoke of His people. And, secondly, that then they know Him to be the Lord. It is not difficult to show that THE LORD BREAKS THE BARS OF THE YOKE OF HIS PEOPLE, for the yokes which they wear at different times are many and, in the breaking of each one of these, they learn that He is the Lord.

You cannot forget the first yoke of which you were conscious. It was a yoke of iron—but you had worn it for many years without feeling it. A spark of Divine Life dropped into your bosom and then you began to perceive that a yoke of sin, of guilt, of condemnation under the Law was firmly fixed upon your neck. If you felt as I felt, it was, indeed, an iron bondage and the iron entered into your soul! We can well understand the feeling of some, who, when wearing this yoke, wish that God had made them frogs, or toads, or snakes, or anything sooner than that they should be men and, being men, should be sinful and obnoxious to Divine wrath!

It is a horrible thing to be a sinner—and when the horror is fully perceived it brings a little Hell into the soul. What stings of scorpions, or teeth of lions, or lashes of a whip of wire can be more sharp and cutting than reflections such as these—“I have sinned and cannot undo the sin. I have provoked God and can make no atonement for my provocation. I deserve His wrath and can present no plea why that wrath should not come upon me”? The fabled Atlas, when the world pressed on his shoulders, was not more loaded than an awakened conscience pressed with its own iniquities! It is easy to talk of conviction of sin, but to feel it is quite another matter! It puts the soul under saws and under harrows of iron and makes it pass through the brick kiln.

Sin on the conscience is a specter which will haunt you by night as well as by day—and drive sleep away from your eyes till your soul chooses strangling rather than life. I say not that conviction is equally terrible in all cases, but some have felt this yoke to be exceedingly heavy and I believe that all God’s people, when the Lord begins to deal with them, to a greater or lesser degree, are bowed down beneath the oppressive bondage. Happy is the hour when the Lord breaks that yoke! He, alone, can remove it but He does it most effectually—and then we know that He is Jehovah our God that brought us out of the house of bondage! To emancipate a soul from the thralldom of sin is a labor worthy of God—and to His liberating hand be Glory forever and ever!

Then the awakened soul begins to be conscious of a second yoke. More or less, according to temperament and circumstances and so on, but still, in each case we somewhat feel the yoke of natural corruption and inbred sin. The moment we become Christians, an inward battle begins. The old self will not tolerate the intruder—the new creature in Christ Jesus—and a conflict ensues. The converted man will be clean rid of some sins and scarcely ever feel a temptation to them. Notably, some men who have been given to certain evil habits have never been tempted that way again, but the flesh has taken a turn and rebelled in another direction.

I have known a man, after conversion, tempted to commit a totally new sin for him and the suggestion has been a galling yoke. A passion which before he did not know to be in his soul has been awakened and he has seen the meshes of a net gradually encompassing him—then has he cried out because of the oppression put upon his sin-hating heart! If a Believer has gone very deep in sin before conversion, he will often have a hard battle of it arising from the recollection of old transgressions, old habits and old lusts. You may get the serpent out, but the slime of the reptile still remains—it needs the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God to purge its

former lurking places.

If a lion has long had his lair in a thicket, the hunters may chase him out, but his den is there and likely enough, cubs will come forth when least expected. And so it is with evil in the heart of man. An old cask smells of the wine it held. It will need a great deal of scalding to sweeten it and even then, if you put pure water into it, there will soon be a taste of the old liquor about it. In certain of our petty wars we never seem to come to an end—the natives are not at peace nor will they keep quiet—they watch for an opportunity and break out again.

It is so with the war in the Christian’s soul. You may presume that sin is completely dead in you, but it laughs while you are boasting and before long it will make you weep to think that you were so readily deceived. I have known a Christian man to have a temptation come upon him and though he has not yielded to it in any degree, it has clouded his joy and put a yoke on his neck. The temptation comes. He hates it, but it comes. He goes to God and prays against it, but it comes. He watches every step he takes, but there it comes! It seems to pursue him like his shadow. He would go to the ends of the earth to get rid of it, but there it is—it dogs his footsteps.

He kneels down to pray and there it is. It is like the old story of the Scot people who thought they had ghosts in their house so moved away to be rid of them—but as they moved, they heard a noise in the butter churn— the mischievous spirits were going with them! So have we known a Christian man move and shift and try to get away from a temptation—but there it has been—the torment of his life, a sword in his bones piercing him to the heart with daily anguish. To some men of God, temptation to a certain sin has been a galling yoke for years without end! They have cried to God, with their hair almost on end for horror of the sin and yet the suggestion to the evil has thrust itself upon them, as if it would not be refused!

Read in Bunyan’s, “Grace Abounding,” how he was haunted with that thought of selling Christ and how the words seemed to ring in his ears— “Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him!” till at last he inadvertently said, or thought he said, “Let Him go if He will.” And then the devil gloried over him and said, “You have sold Christ!” For the ten thousandth time Satan was a liar in his accusations. Honest John had done nothing of the sort, but he had been so plagued and perplexed with the temptation that he scarcely knew what he said or thought! Madame Bubble, too, is difficult to shake off when she courts a poor pilgrim. Her seductions are only to be resisted on our knees and even then they give us terrible twists. You do not all understand this and I do not wish you should. But if you are now experiencing what I describe, I would have you remember that the Lord can break this yoke, also, and tear away each one of its bars. Very joyful is the deliverance and when it comes, the text is abundantly fulfilled—“They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bars of their yoke.”

Another yoke which the Lord’s people have too often borne is that of a perpetual tendency to unbelief. Unbelief lies in us all! It is the sin of mankind—the root sin—the taproot of all sorts of iniquity. Blessed are those who believe and are strong in faith! The Lord be praised whenever He brings us to full assurance! But there are certain of God’s people who are so very prone to unbelief that on the very slightest turn of circumstances they begin to fret. At little troubles they grow nervous and as to their own spiritual state, they appear to themselves to be in jeopardy every hour. Often the only proof of their spiritual life which they can, themselves, perceive, is their wish to be right, their desire to avoid sin and their longing after God.

They cannot say that they have much joy or much peace through believing, neither can they expect it, for their faith is so exceedingly weak. Others call them, “killjoys,” because they mope and mourn so much and, in truth, they reflect but small credit upon their religion. They act more as scarecrows to keep others away than as attractions to draw them in. Some of the Lord’s people seem to be born in the shade and to live in the shade, as if they were descended from the old troglodytes, or cave dwellers, and love to be buried before they are dead. This habit of mind is to be condemned, nor should any who fall into it think lightly of it.

But, dear Friends, we must not be severe upon others, or condemn them. We must, on the contrary, feel that they are putting a very heavy yoke upon themselves and that the burden weighs down their spirits and crushes the joy out of them. There are many about whose interest in Christ nobody who knows them can have any doubt at all, whose Christian consistency is beyond all question, whose prayerfulness, whose love of the Word of God, whose simple, child-like trust in Jesus Christ is manifested to everybody except themselves. They are, nevertheless, in heaviness through anxiety as to their state. Their faces shine to others, but they share not in the brightness. No one has a doubt about them, but they are full of doubts for themselves! May the Lord bring up such Brothers and Sisters out of their prison and then shall they know that He is the Lord when He has broken the bars of their yoke.

Some Christians are also loaded with a yoke through great trouble. We come together and we look cheerful and happy, but we do not know the burden of the person sitting in the pew with us. In such an assembly as this on Thursday nights I know there is many a merchant who has come from the City where he has been driven to his wits’ end all day long and he scarcely knows what he shall do. So he has said, “Well, I will just run into the House of God and I will hear what the Lord may have to say to my soul.” Many and many a time a sweet promise has come home to the bewildered child of God and he has gone away feeling that the Master had sent a message to Him through His servant.

I have known the housewife come up to the House of God in the same state—one child is sick and another sickening. The husband, perhaps, walking in a way that grieves the tender Christian heart of the wife, and home affairs are anything but as they should be. But while she has sat before the Lord, there has come a Word from the Oracle of comfort and

Hannah has been no more sad! Some of our Brothers and Sisters have a perpetual cross to carry. If we knew what they have to suffer in business, suffer in body, suffer in the domestic circle—if we knew the weight they have to carry—we should very often communicate to them words of comfort, whereas now, through our not knowing, they are left unheeded and there is little or no Christian sympathy manifested.

Ah, dear Brother, it may be that you have been made to carry a very heavy yoke for years, but when the Lord shall break the bars of your yoke, then shall you know that He is the Lord! I can bear witness that trial has been a great blessing to me. I do not know that I have learned much except in trouble! What little I know has been whipped into me and I suspect it is so with most of my Master’s family. By scourging He instructs every son that He receives! But when you have been in sore perplexity and difficulty and did not see your way out of it and could not, in fact, get out of it yourself—then have you known that the Lord was God when He has, Himself, appeared before you and broken the bars of your yoke! With a song you have magnified His surprising Grace and blessed His delivering love!

I have not time, however, to mention all the various yokes, but I would say, next, that many yokes which God’s people bear they cannot break themselves. When the sinner bears the yoke of sin he cannot get it off. He may tug and tug, but he only galls himself and fixes the yoke tighter than ever. The riveted fetter of sin is not to be shaken off! Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he who is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well by himself, apart from Divine Grace! The yoke of despondency of mind and, very frequently, the yoke of temporal trouble, will be such that a man cannot free himself from them.

“Stand still and see the salvation of God,” is sometimes the very best advice you can give to a man in distress. He is like a drowning man—the more he struggles, the quicker he goes down. He cannot help himself. The Lord often puts His people, on purpose, into positions where there is an end of the creature, where all carnal hope fails, where you look all around and not a single ray of light gladdens your weary eyes till the star of Bethlehem breaks forth and heralds the morning! But, dear Friends, let us remember that though yokes are very many and some of them are such that we cannot possibly break them off, yet there is no yoke but what the Lord can readily enough take from His people. To remove the yoke of sin He brings the pardoning blood of Jesus near and our heavy load departs. As for the power of sin over us, we overcome it through the blood of the Lamb.

As for our daily cares, we cast our cares on Him who cares for us. As for our despondencies of spirit, our soul has heard Him say, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” Nothing is impossible with God and, therefore, dear Friends, though the peculiar form of your distress at this time is known to none but your heavenly Father and yourself, I am quite safe in saying that God can remove it in an instant if He pleases. He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sits him among princes. He brings forth those that are bound with chains. Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.

One of His saints of old recorded his experience in these words, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O God, and You heard me.” His experience is that of all the captives who trust in the Lord. No condition is so dark that He cannot, at once, enlighten it and no case is so hopeless that He cannot instantly relieve it. Do you believe that? Are you sure of it? Why, the very belief of that fact ought to minister comfort to your mind! One other reflection comes to me and it is this. We may expect the Lord to break the bars of our yoke. If He can do it and we are His people, we may expect Him to do it. Our children look for a great deal from their fathers and I think you will find that friends and relatives frequently expect much more of you than they are likely to get—but none ever expected more of God than God has been pleased to bestow.

“My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” You know, if your child were sick and you could heal him, he would not be rash in expecting you to do it. And if your child were carrying an intolerable load and you, as his father, could release him from it, it would be only a natural expectation that he should reckon that you would do so. Oh you, then, that are oppressed—expect to be set free! Captives under the bondage of sin, since you feel sin to be a slavery, you are the Lord’s prisoners of hope! Oh, you that have the deepest sense of guilt and have written the blackest things against yourselves, expect the Lord to set you free! If He had meant to destroy you, He would have left you to bear your sin in utter indifference and would not have convinced you of it.

What can be the good of His giving you two Hells—one here and another hereafter? No, He is judging you now! He is bringing you to pronounce sentence against yourself that you may plead guilty and that He may absolve you through His abounding Grace! Christian, He is bringing you low; He is stripping you; He is casting you into the mire; He is beating you small as the dust of the streets and all because by this means He will make you see your nothingness and will cause you more fully to appreciate the splendor of His Grace and the all-sufficiency of His power! Knowing this, faith may help us to rejoice in tribulation the moment it arrives, saying, “Here is my Father’s black horse come to my door to bring me a new token of love from Him.”

“We glory in tribulation, also, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” O Ground, welcome the spade that is to turn you into a garden! O Soul, welcome the affliction that is, through infinite mercy, to make you bring forth fruit unto your God! Then shall you know that the Lord is God when He has broken the bars of your yoke—and this you may expect Him to do! Thus much upon the first head, namely, that the Lord does break the bars of His people.

II. Now, secondly, WHEN HE DOES THIS, THEN THEY KNOW HIM TO

BE THE LORD. Here we come to personal experience. Beloved, when we have great deliverances from bondage, then we begin to see the Divine attributes displayed. You all believe God to be very powerful, for you have heard His voice in the thunder and seen His might in the tempest. But when you have been brought into very deep distress and God has brought you out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm, then you have said, “Now I see His power! No hand but His could have moved that burden and He has done it.”

I do not suppose that all of you can go with me in this, but you who have done business in great waters have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You have known times when if anybody had told you that you would be delivered you would have said, “Impossible! Impossible!” Yet you have been delivered and you have cried out, “This is the finger of God! Now I know that there is a God in Israel, for He has done for me what no man could have accomplished, no, nor the angels of God!” You have felt the power of God come so near to you that you have said, like Jacob, “How dreadful is this place!” Awe has overwhelmed you at the thought that God should display such power towards such an unworthy one as you, to lift you up from such depths of trouble!

You must also have seen with wonderful vividness the attribute of wisdom. You have been all in a snarl. You have done your best and you have made things worse. You have gone for advice and the advice has perplexed you. You have looked in all directions and the more you have looked, the less hope you have seen. And then, all of a sudden, God’s finger has seemed to be put out and all the knots have been untied and His Word has been fulfilled—“I will make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain.”

You have had clear sailing where rocks appeared to hem you in—and when you have safely passed both Scylla and Charybdis you have magnified the Divine Pilot and been astounded at His Infallible wisdom! Then have you called Him, “the only wise God,” and felt that He has abounded towards you in all wisdom and prudence. The path of your feet, as you have looked back upon it, has shone with mercy and you have said, “What a blessed road is this by which I have been led! I thank God that I came this way! It is the best path that I have ever trod—the most soul-enriching yet! What wisdom has been shown towards me! I have had a considerable trouble, but it has saved me from one a thousand times worse. I have been a great loser but, still, I am a greater gainer than a loser! I would not have missed this trial though I dreaded it! I would not have missed it for a thousand worlds! No one could have told me how this was to be done, nor by what process I was to be released, but now I know that the Lord is exceedingly wise and wonderful in counsel—blessed be His name!”

If any caviler had answered you, “I do not believe in Providence—it is all stuff and nonsense!” I do not suppose that you would have had much more patience with such a person than I should have and that is wonderfully little, for I am of the mind of a good old man to whom I was speaking yesterday, who said, “Mainly I read my Bible and having read it about 50 years and having tried it and lived by faith upon God—the modern humbug of the free-thinkers does not bother me. I know better! I never argue about it. I have lived upon the old doctrines and know the truth of them.” You will see, as I quote his words, that he put it rather strongly! But I am altogether of the old man’s mind.

Gentlemen waste their words when they try to make me doubt the overruling Presence and personal interference of the Lord in the affairs of His people. They might as well tell me that I have no father, or that I never had a mother and that my parents never treated me kindly. I know what I know and I know this—the Lord is kind in all His ways and that His Providence does continually interpose on behalf of His praying people! If the learned doubters cannot see a Providence—well, perhaps no special Providence has been sought for by them or vouchsafed to them. If they have no God and no Providence, of course they cannot bear witness to what they do not know! Let them go home and pray God to teach them.

But we know that God does appear for us and are not to be beaten out of it. And we expect to accumulate much more personal evidence upon that subject between this and Heaven, for we shall again suffer times of dark distress in which God will appeal for us and we shall know that He is the Lord by His breaking the bars off our neck! The Lord’s love is also clearly revealed in our deliverances. Have you not sat down with tears of gladness in your eyes and said to yourself, “What a God He is! Oh, what a God He is!” Have you not almost wanted to get up into a high pulpit, with all the world around you, that you might bear witness to His Grace to you on each particular occasion? My feet were almost gone, my steps had wellnear slipped. I was in a great strait. I was hemmed in. I knew not what to do and I had grieved Him by my sin and wandered from Him.

But though I had forgotten Him, He did not forget me! Though I was unbelieving, He was faithful! Though I was foolish, He was wise and He set my feet into a large room—therefore is my mouth opened and my heart constrains me to speak well of His name before many witnesses. I know that there are some of you who never will be able to tell what love God has manifested to you. The poet, though he strained the sense, yet spoke the truth when he said*—*

*“But O eternity’s too short*

*To utter half Your praise.”*  
We shall never get through it, Brothers and Sisters! There is no fear of our stopping the eternal music for lack of matter, for the goodness, the Grace and the love of God to us are past finding out and are altogether infinite! When we have had the bars of our yoke suddenly broken, then the Divine love in its boundless length and breadth has been conspicuously before us and we have known the Lord.

Thus I might speak of each of the Divine attributes, but I choose rather to pass to another topic. It is this. When the bars of our yoke have been broken, it is often in answer to prayer and because that liberty has come in answer to prayer, we have exclaimed, “Now I know the Lord.” If you have gone to God 20 times about a thing—(no, 20 times would be nothing). If you have risen in the night watches and cried with groans and tears about your burden! If you have walked your garden or walked the

streets and all the while your soul has been crying, “My Father, deliver me!” pleading every argument your soul knew with God that He would come to your rescue—then, when the rescue has come—you have known the Lord! An answered prayer is a window into God’s existence, a proof of His faithfulness, an evidence of His Presence. There you see that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

So, again, we know Him from another reason— the special hand of God is often seen in the breaking of the yoke of His people—the special hand. Those who look at Providences carefully, will often wonder at the specialties of God about little things. For instance, about the time—the exact time. God never is before His time and He is never late. He times His mercies to the tick of the clock. If they had come a little before, they might have been misused. If they came a little later, our spirit might have been broken and the steed might have been starved while the grass was growing. There it is—the moment the hand of the devil lifted the dart, the hand of the Eternal lifted the shield so that the dart was turned aside. Wonderful are the punctualities of God!

You have noticed them. I am sure you must have done so. You have met a friend by accidentally going down one street when you generally went another—and that very friend has been the one that you most needed to see. I have known what it is to go out of my way and to complain of myself for having made such a blunder and thus wasting half-anhour—till I have seen the person that I wanted to meet above all men, but had not thought of him as the right person to enquire of—and he has told me exactly what I wanted to know! I was going the right way when I was going out of the way! But often it is so and so you shall find it and you shall have to lift up your hands and say, “Now, also, do I know the Lord— time, place, circumstances, words, little petty details, small things—He has had a hand in them all.”

“Blessed be God,” I said, to a dear one today, “for our great God, that He loves us in great troubles.” “And,” she replied, “blessed be His name that nothing is too little for Him.” So do I say tonight! Blessed be His name for breaking the little bars of our yoke and for removing the great yokes by such small but effectual means! We most admire those little touches which are so Omnipotent! The magicians of Egypt turned water into blood, or pretended to do it, and they brought forth frogs—but when once Aaron began to make the dust into tiny life, they could not counterfeit the wonder and they said, “This is the finger of God!” Frequently by minute marvels God reveals Himself most clearly to the secret souls of His people and they hear, in His still small voice, more of His mind than in His thunder and mighty wind.

Dear Friends, if you have passed through any great and special deliverances, you will join with me in feeling that the Presence of God is often vividly perceived. I fear that the Presence of God is not often felt as it ought to be at a dinner table when a number of people are met together and are enjoying themselves. But I remember my feeling the Presence of God at a dinner table on a memorable occasion. There was a very large sum of money to be paid for the building of the Orphanage and I was up with certain friends at Regent’s Park—dining at the house of one of our Brothers. I there mentioned that I was short of some 2,000 pounds to meet an account which would very soon be due, but that I was sure that God would graciously give it, for it was His work and He would supply its needs in answer to prayer.

We were discussing as to whether it was not rather bold to speak too positively about answers to a prayer of such a kind and while we were still discoursing, there came a telegram from the Tabernacle to me, saying, “A person unknown has called and left 2,000 pounds in bank notes for the Orphanage.” I read the telegram to the friends assembled and their gratitude and astonishment abounded! My dear old friend, Dr. Brock, who is now with God, said, “Put down your knives and forks and let us bless the name of the Lord.” And he stood up and poured out His heart in a most wonderful manner in devout thankfulness to the Answerer of prayer! We all heartily joined in that act of devotion. The Lord was there—we felt His Presence as much as if it had been a sacramental supper, for the Lord had drawn so near to us. If someone had said to us just then, “Well, you know, this is a coincidence, a mere coincidence,” we should have laughed and I, for one, would have said, “It is a very blessed coincidence and I hope it will go on coinciding, for truly it coincides with the promise and with my faith in God.”

The devil does not give his followers such coincidences! Let me say that I have prayed and God has heard me and we can boldly say, “Now I know the Lord, for He has broken the bars of my yoke in answer to prayer and I have felt Him near.” Yes, and we feel Him so near that often we are obliged to utter words of praise!

See what the Israelites did when they had been in Egypt making bricks without straw and seeing their male children destroyed by a merciless tyrant. It was a happy, happy time for them when, at midnight, they came out of Egypt! Do you wonder, after they had crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his chariots had all been drowned in the midst of it, that when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, Miriam took her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel went forth with music chanting, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea”?

“Be quiet, good women! The philosophers have discovered that God is the ‘totality of existence’ and that He has no personality and, consequently, never interferes with the fixed laws of matter! You must not believe that He drowned those Egyptians by His own act and deed! It was an extraordinary natural phenomenon which occasionally happens just about that time and place! You ought rather to wonder at the marvelous laws of gravitation by which these Egyptians have sunk under the water.”

Thus some superfluously wise fool might have prated to the women of Israel! But what would they have thought of him? What would Miriam have said to that? Modern philosophers explain all miracles away and Colenso, with a slate, figures the whole story of the Exodus into thin air!

What would Moses have said to him for a bishop? In the presence of that miracle, with their shoulders still red with the lash, their faces still grimed with the brick dust, conscious that they had been in bondage and knew it—and were now free and that none but the eternal Jehovah could have set them free—the sons of Jacob would have pitched the philosophers into the Red Sea along with the Egyptians! I almost wish they were there, for they are of no use among us nowadays!

Infinite Mercy lets the creatures live, but we shall not cease from our glorying in our God because of what they call their criticism. In our case is fulfilled the promise, “They shall know that I am the Lord when I break the bars of their yoke.” Beloved, if you do not know the Lord personally, do not talk about Him, nor pretend to know Him! But if you know Him, be not afraid of being called dogmatic because you speak confidently! Read the Epistles of John and see how the beloved disciple harps upon that word. He says, “we know.” “We know.” “We know.” “We know.” The word occurs, perhaps, 40 times in those short Epistles. Know what you know, and when you know it, do not be driven from it, but let the text be fulfilled in your experience, “They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bars of their yoke.”

If your sins have been forgiven, if you have been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. If you have been delivered from the power of sin, so as, “to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord,” or aim at it. And if you have been blessed in Providence with answers to prayer and many a time rescued as from between the lion’s jaws, then say, “The Lord lives and blessed be my Rock—and I will walk by faith in Him. As for others, let them say what they will and doubt what they please—my soul follows hard after the Lord, for His right hand upholds me.”

There I leave the subject, praying that every one of you may have the bars of your yoke broken, for then shall you know the Lord, and not till then. The Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 34**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 126, 660.  
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A CALL TO THE LORD’S OWN FLOCK  
NO. 1807

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 2, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Thus shall they know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord God. And you are My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 34:30, 31.**

THE sermon of this morning is intended for the flock of God and it will be directed very pointedly to that particular part of it here gathered in fellowship. God has been coming very near to us of late, for a considerable number of Brothers and Sisters have fallen asleep during the last few days—nearly all of them persons of ripe age who have been gathered as sheaves in their season. Others are evidently upon the eve of departure, for their infirmities are multiplied and their strength is small. When the Good Shepherd is taking one and another into His bosom and bearing them away from us, the rest of us ought to recognize His Presence with holy reverence. Let us feel that the ground whereon we stand is holy, and that the time is most suitable for increased devotedness of life. Let us number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom. If we do not live when life is seen to be so short, how foolish we must be! If we do not awaken ourselves when the Lord is calling home our Brethren, we must be sluggards, indeed. Let us spend the time of our sojourning here in fear, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.

This is the special matter of which I would speak today. God has, in great mercy, gathered to Himself a Church in this place for these many years. He has multiplied the people and increased their joy—and we have joyed before Him as with the joy of harvest. Nothing has happened to mar our unity or prevent our success, for God has been with us. Many have been added to us of such as are saved and we have gone from strength to strength in Christian enterprise, never failing to accomplish our work. But the tendency of all human things is to deteriorate. There is a downdragging influence in the world and we, ourselves, are such creatures of the earth that we all too easily yield to its attractions. If we run well for a time, yet we grow weary and slacken our pace.

This we do all the more readily and unconsciously if we are surrounded by those whose pace is slow. We are apt to think that our running is faster than necessary and that we shall be quite as well thought of if we keep up with the many, or are just a trifle in advance of them. Oh, how soon shall we lag in the rear if we listen to this evil suggestion! The voice of the Spirit to the Church of Philadelphia was, “Hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.” It is a great thing to have done so well as to have a crown, but it is a greater thing to hold it fast! Men of the world tell us that it takes much wit and industry to make a fortune, but that it is far more difficult to keep it when it is made. I am sure that in spiritual things it is so! For a Church to be thoroughly prosperous in the life and work of God is difficult enough, but to continue so—this is the work, this is the labor!

Hence our cries to God that He will be pleased to keep us as a Church faithful to His Truth, united with one another, earnest in the glorifying of God and diligent in the winning of souls. It would be a calamity of no mean order if this Church should decline. For the sake of those unpopular Truths of God which we uphold, it is a matter for daily prayer that this Church may be maintained in honorable usefulness evermore! To that end I wish to speak with you, this morning, my own dear Brothers and Sisters. Strangers must pardon me if I make much of you and even seem to be egotistical in my address. I risk all that for the sake of the necessary Truth of God which I must put before you.

To my mind, this day is a day of good tidings. The Lord has done great things for us of which we are glad. Let us glory in His holy name and let us walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing so that we may enjoy a continuance of His favor. May the outstretched arm of the Most High still be with us, that we may see more and more of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards fallen man.

I. Calling your attention to our text, I shall notice, first, what the text rather suggests than declares, namely, OUR PROFESSION TOWARDS GOD. Read on—“Thus shall they know that I, Jehovah, am their God.” It is implied, then, that we know Jehovah to be our God. So many of us as are joined together in Church fellowship here have declared that Jehovah is the only one living and true God. He has revealed Himself to us in these latter days as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we unfeignedly accept the Triune God as our God forever and ever. Other lords have had dominion over us, but now we yield ourselves unto God without reserve. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob is the God of Believers to this day. We do not wish to have any other God, although in these days the carnally wise have set up another.

Their god is a god who has no justice or righteousness—he takes small account of sin and mainly seeks to make things pleasant all round. This effeminate deity now occupies the place once given to Apollo or Venus, and he is as much a false god as they were. Our God does not suffer one attribute to eclipse another—He has all excellencies in perfection. Remember how Moses spoke concerning our God and said, “The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty”? “This God is our God forever and ever—He will be our God even unto death.”

A second profession we have made is this, that we are His people. “That they, even the house of Israel, are My people, says the Lord God.” This is involved in the first profession, but it is not always sufficiently thought of. We are, as Believers, in common with all the people of God, separated unto His service, consecrated to His Glory. We believe that He chose us before the earth was, to be a peculiar people unto Himself. We believe that He has redeemed us from among men, according to that word, “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” We believe that by the decree of God we are adopted into the Divine family and acknowledged to be the children of the living God, even we who were once heirs of wrath even as others. We are His people because the Holy Spirit has worked upon us and we have been turned from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Our song is, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.”

We acknowledge the claim founded upon our redemption, “You are not your own; for you are bought with a price.” To glorify God in our spirits and in our bodies, which are, alike, redeemed, is our reasonable service. Our bands are loosed, we are no more the servants of men—new bonds are about us, for we are now the servants of the living God. In Jehovah is our trust, our joy, our glory! Each one of us can say, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” To serve Him is its own reward. To dwell with Him is Heaven! Is it not so with you, my Brothers and Sisters? Have you not lifted up your hands unto the Lord so that you cannot go back? Do you not wish to realize that promise, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people”?

Further than that, we have also professed and avowed our joyful confidence in our Immanuel—God With Us. It is an interesting thing to me that this name should be in my text. Look carefully at the English and you will see it in the very first sentence—“that I, the Lord their God, am with them.” Leave out the word, “am,” which is in italics, and you get it—“God with them.” What is this but, “God with us?” Today we believe in the Lord Jesus, who is God With Us. God has come down among men. He has taken upon Himself their nature, so that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and Man in one ever-blessed and indivisible Person and, therefore, He is very near to us, yes, next of kin to us! We rejoice in Him as “God With Us”—our Brother, Friend and Husband. Have we not found it so? Has there not been a Divine nearness between our souls and Christ since that first day when we touched His garment’s hem and were made whole?

Why, Brothers and Sisters, we have gone on to lean our heads upon His bosom in heavenly rest, like John of old! Yes, some of you have emulated Simeon, for you have taken up the Lord’s Christ into your arms and said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace.” Through Christ Jesus we do not only believe in God as yonder in Heaven, but in God by His Holy Spirit dwelling here among men, stirring our hearts, ruling our lives, enlightening our understandings, hallowing our affections and sanctifying our whole being unto God! Is it not so? You do so confess!

This is a very large profession. We are not inclined to start back from it, but when we take it in its threefold character—this God our God, ourselves His people, and Himself, by His Son Jesus Christ, “God With Us”— oh, then, I say, it is a very solemn avowal and one which calls us to a lofty form of life! Blessed are they who stand to this confession and walk worthily of it, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto them!

Jehovah is our God, in opposition to Romanism and Ritualism, with their idols of one form or another, to which they bow the knee. The invisible Jehovah is our God and not the host, the virgin, the crucifix, or any visible thing! Jehovah is our God in opposition to the new gods of “modern thought,” which your fathers knew not! Our faith finds the Light of God, as well, in the majesty of the Old Testament as in the mercy of the New. Jehovah is our God in opposition to the “no God” of infidelity. We believe in a personal God and we put our trust in Him as hearing our prayers. We are His people and on Him we call! He has come very near to us and with Him we have sweet communion through Jesus Christ His Son. This is our profession! We dare not say less! We could not say more. Now every profession of so solemn a sort should be backed up with proof. Where shall the proof be found?

II. That shall be our second subject of discourse—OUR PROOF FROM GOD. “Thus shall they know that I, Jehovah, am with them, and that they are My people, says the Lord God.” How shall they know it? In this one way—by the Presence of God among us! If God works among us, then even our adversaries shall say, “Jehovah-Shammah,” The Lord Is There! A tree is known by its fruit and the rule applies even to God, Himself. God is known among us by the acts that He does. He reveals His Presence to His people by His deeds of Grace. I want you to look back through the chapter and then ask whether we have or have not, as a Church, the marks of Jehovah’s Presence by which we are attested to be His people.

The first mark is the gathering in of the scattered. See verse eleven. “Thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep.” I am bound to bear witness that in the midst of us, many have been sought out and saved who but a little while ago were wandering far away from Christ! Whenever I give notice that I will see friends who wish to join the Church, I am cheered by the many who present themselves. They fly as doves to their windows! They tell me glad news of their conversion—news which makes my heart leap for joy! The Lord calls some who were grossly ignorant of the Gospel, to whom it came as a fresh light from Heaven. And He calls others who knew the Truth of God, but slighted it, and turned away from it year after year!

He removes hard-heartedness and indifference by His Grace. His own voice calls men and they come to Him! Many conversions are among us at this time—not only from my own preaching of the Word of God, otherwise might I speak with less freedom—but from the school, the missionstations, the street-preaching, the tract-distributing and from every form of effort. Frequently, when I have spoken with a number of new converts, I have found the larger proportion not brought to Jesus Christ by my words from this platform, but brought to Him by you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have laid yourselves out to win souls. I am but one and you are many—there should be more fruit to the Lord from 5,000 of you than from me! I have desired this, and prayed for it, that you all may be useful. May God multiply you and make you spiritual parents, every one of you, till we may quote the words of Solomon’s Song and apply them to you—“They are like a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, of which every one bears twins, and there is not one barren among them.”

“Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.” So said your Lord, and you will not forget His words—conversions are the sure sign of the immediate Presence of the Lord. I pray Him to give us a token of His being with us, this morning, in your conversion, O wounded heart! May some poor trembler come to Jesus! May some penitent plead the promise, “I will heal that which is broken.” May some wanderer look to the Cross and live! The Lord has promised that He will search His sheep and seek them out—and He has fulfilled that word in our midst—therefore He is with us! If I had to stand here and say to you, “Brethren, there are no conversions, none are brought to repentance and faith,” then might we hold days for fasting and humiliation. And we might, each one, weep his eyes out because the Glory has departed. But the Lord has not left us! No ear has heard the awful words within the holy place saying, “Let us go hence.” Glory be to His name, His hand is still stretched out for miracles of Grace!

A second token of the Lord’s Presence is the feeding of the flock. The Holy Spirit seems to lay great stress upon that, for thus says the Lord in verse 15—“I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down. There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed.” Have we not found it so? Have not our Sabbaths been times of holy festival? Has not the King, Himself, banqueted with us? At the Communion Table have we not been transported with such joys as can never be excelled until we behold the Chief Shepherd face to face? When we speak with one another at the close of the Lord’s Day is not the greeting habitual to some of us, “The Lord has been with us again today”? You have wished that there were six Sundays and only one workday in the week!

I know that many of you have fed upon the Word of God with great delight. Value greatly this gift, for it comes not from man, but is a choice gift of God! There are congregations where the sheep look up and are not fed. There are places where the Sabbath is the most wearisome day of the week because the people need the Gospel but the Gospel is withheld from them. Saints of God cannot feed upon the husks of philosophical systems or semi-rational speculations. The speech which is half of Ashdod and half of Jerusalem suits not the inhabitant of Zion—it is a strange language to him. God grant to this flock, whoever may be their pastor in years to come, that they may relish the Gospel and find it sweet to their palates and strengthening to their hearts!

Another token of the Presence of the Good Shepherd is the healing of the sick. I mean the spiritually sick, for there is this promise given, “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” It is a rare joy to restore such as have been overtaken in a fault. Lately I have received several Brothers and Sisters who had gone from us through laxity of life or through falling into novelties of opinion. I am glad to see among those who come to unite with us familiar faces which, for a while, had been missed. Those who have lived where Jesus dwells do not feel easy till they return to such society! They are saying, “We will return to our Brethren, with whom we assembled before, for it was better with us then, than now.” The Presence of the Lord acts like a charm upon the wanderers and they hasten to return at His bidding. It is pleasant to hear the returning penitent confess how cold in heart he grew and how he sought to find satisfaction in the things of the world—and to hear him tell how he has been brought back to be, in the future, more resolutely faithful and more humbly dependent upon God.

The showers of Grace which have fallen upon us have caused many withered branches to bud forth again! Many are singing, “He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” If there should have strayed in here, this morning, any who once were among Believers, and happy in the Lord, but have been away for a while and have lost the fervor of their love, let me entreat them to hasten their return! O my Brother, come back! O my Sister, come back! We shall welcome you with intense delight! Like as the man who lost one sheep left the 99 to find it and rejoiced more over the finding of the one lost sheep than over the 99 that had not gone astray, so will it be with us! If backsliders are not brought back in any Church, I would conclude that God is not there—but when they do come back, we rejoice in this evidence of His Presence! The God of our salvation has devised means to bring home His banished and, therefore, He is still in the midst of us. Glory be to His condescending love!

A further proof of the Presence of God in a Church is when the Lord Jesus Christ is greatly honored, for here it is written, “I will set up one Shepherd over them and He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.” O Brothers and Sisters, if we did not gather to the name of Christ, our gathering would not be a Church of God! If the testimony which issues from our midst were not of Jesus and of His precious blood—and of His Kingdom and of His coming—then we might know that the Lord was not with us, for only as we know Christ, will God know us! If your faith rested anywhere but in the glorious Person and finished work of the Son of God, it were a worthless faith! If I preached any other Gospel than that which you have received, I should be an Anathema and not a servant of God! And if you did not labor with all your might to bring souls to Jesus rather than to any sect or party, and to set Jesus forth rather than any peculiar ism, then might we rest assured that the Lord was not with us.

But in this matter we are clear, for to us Christ is All! Do you not love Jesus? I appeal to your hearts, you that have been baptized into the thrice holy name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—

*“Is not His name melodious, still,  
To your attentive ear?  
Does not your heart with pleasure bound, Your Savior’s voice to hear?”*

If a Sunday should roll by without Christ, would it not be the reverse of a Sabbath to you? You would sadly miss the Risen One on His own resurrection day! If we should gather together and there should be no discourse concerning Him, and no savor of His name, would you not go away disappointed? He is the First and the Last of our hope, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely! And just in proportion as it is so, the Lord is with us! He will never forget those who honor His Son and seek to advance His Kingdom!

Jesus is our Prince! His authority is supreme among us! No popes, bishops, or councils may legislate for us. Jesus is our King! If He is, indeed, the Lord of whom we are the loyal subjects, then the Lord our God is with us and we are His people. Where Jesus is, there dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. As he that believes in Him has everlasting life, so has he fellowship with the living God! You shall judge for yourselves whether this is not the token among us that our profession is no lie, but that Jehovah is our God and we are His people.

A further evidence of the Lord’s Presence with a people is found in their prevailing peace of mind. “I will make with them a covenant of peace and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.” Do not many of you realize that deep peace, the peace of God which passes all understanding, so that you are free from all fear and happy amid grievous poverty and trial? By reason of your great numbers, I cannot converse much with you, personally, while you are in health, but I do have the sorrowful privilege of speaking with many Brothers and Sisters in the time of sickness and death. And my uniform experience is most joyful! To this statement I can remember no exception whatever within my memory. When our members come near to die they exhibit peace—deep, profound—and frequently joy is mingled therewith and a holy exultation! I have said, again and again, as I have left the sick chamber, “Let me go that I may die with him.”

Though emaciated and, perhaps, full of agonizing pain, each one of our friends has said, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” They have had no more doubt about the Divine Truths of God than about their own existence! And they have had no more fear when looking into eternity than they had in going upstairs to their bed—no, not as much, for they have had a longing to depart and to be with Christ! “Our people die well,” said Wesley, and I can say the same. They pass away in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.

Not long ago, one who preaches doctrines far different than mine, complained bitterly that he could make no headway with people of your sort because those who have once fallen under the influence of our doctrine are settled in it and cannot be rescued from it. He said that no headway could be made against our views, for men become so desperately enamored of them that they cannot be weaned from them. Blessed be God for that! Let a man once know the living God and feel His eternal love within his bosom—and all the devils in Hell cannot make him leave the Doctrines of Grace which are life unto his soul! Argument is useless against the Truth of God written upon the heart! Sophistry cannot persuade us out of our consciousness. The Truth of God has been sealed upon our hearts and it is not possible that we should renounce it! In this I do rejoice, that the evil beasts cease out of the land! When the Doctrines of Grace flame forth in the midst of a people, doubters and heretics quit the place in disgust. “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon.” Wolves shun the flock when the Chief Shepherd is in the midst of it! So may it be even to the end of the chapter—sure evidence that God is with His people, giving them deep peace of mind and solid rest as to the things of God. These tokens we have, and many others which we cannot now mention—read the chapter through and judge for yourselves.

I desire to speak to you with no flattering words, but wish soberly to testify what I have seen, desiring always to be taught of the Spirit of God, that I may speak no further than I can justify by fact. I can say, and do say, “The Lord of Hosts is with us.” What then? Then it seems to me that it becomes every member of this Church, as indeed of every other, to be very careful how he lives and walks. If the Lord is with us, remember there is a discipline going on in the Church every day—not only that which the Church can execute by itself, but that which God, in Providence, executes. “His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” Good men, if they hinder the work of God, are not dealt with as the ungodly and suffered to go on their evil way—frequently they are laid aside and their influence is taken from them. Even more than this—I doubt not that many are removed by death when they become obstacles to the Truth of God, or fall into sin. “For this cause,” said Paul to the Corinthians, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

Thus Believers are chastened of the Lord that they should not be condemned with the world. God will not have His own child transgress the rules of His house without chastising him! Hence the need of careful behavior on the part of Church members. If any of you who are God’s children are walking carelessly. If your garments are spotted with the world. If you are dishonoring the name of your Lord by an unhallowed conversation, the Lord will not walk with you in joyful fellowship. “Many walk, of whom I have told you often,” said the Apostle, “and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ”—these were inside the Church, and yet enemies! None can hinder the work of God so much as God’s professed people if they are not true to their profession. Beloved, to live up to that which I laid down at the commencement of this sermon will require more power than we possess! We shall need the Spirit of God abundantly to rest upon us, that our walk may be close with God and our actions such as become the Gospel of Christ.

In addition to this, it seems to me that if God is with us, now is the time for abounding activities. In evil days we tug the laboring oar to small purpose, for the vessel makes no progress against the tide. But now that a favoring wind is with us, let us spread every yard of sail. “Crowd all your canvas on, cut through the foam.” Now is the mariner’s happy hour and he must avail himself of it! If there is anything more that we can do. If there is any forgotten enterprise which we can revive. If there is a possibility of greater ardor and more intense zeal—in the name of God let us rise to it! Let us withhold no power from the Lord’s service, lest measurably upon us, also, should come the curse pronounced of old—“Curse you Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly, the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” It is a day of good tidings—we do not well if we sit still. See to it, you servants of God, that you prove, by your activity, that the Lord is among you!

Again, let our prayers be more fervent. Nothing comforts my heart like the Prayer Meetings which are so continual among us. Even the little gathering for prayer which meets on Thursday before my sermon has grown to larger proportions and we have delightful seasons of communion with God! As for our Monday-evening assemblies—what a benediction from the Lord! Now that our hundreds at prayer are growing into thousands, it delights my heart to see them! I had hardly hoped to see so many constantly coming to pray. May your prayerfulness at home, in your families and in your closets be increased continually. What cannot the Lord do with a Church if it will but be ready to be used? All things are possible to Him and all things are possible to him that believes.

In general the Lord says to His people, “You have not, because you ask not, or because you ask amiss.” But when the spirit of supplication is poured out, then, verily, the Lord is there! We love each other with a pure heart, fervently, therefore let us remove everything that could mar our perfect unity in Christ Jesus, for then shall we have continually abundant evidence that we have taken the Lord to be our God, that we are His people and that He is God With Us and that His Glory dwells among us! Thus have I tried to press the matter home upon you. The Lord bless the exhortation.

III. A very interesting part of our discourse, this morning, lies IN OUR DESCRIPTION BY GOD. How does God describe His own Church? Read the last verse of the text. “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God.” First, in this description God calls His Church His flock. A flock is the shepherd’s treasure. It is his living wealth, but it is also the shepherd’s care, it is his constant anxiety. Ask a shepherd what he prizes most and he tells you, of course, his flock. Demand what he cares for most and he replies, “I have no other care but this, my flock; for this I spend my days in the heat and my nights in the damp and the cold.” Only think of the Lord’s looking down upon His people here and saying, “You are My flock.”

Some Christians try to go to Heaven alone, in solitude. But Believers are not compared to bears, or lions, or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks and so do God’s people. The Lord loves them best as a company—

*“He likes the tents of Jacob well,*

*But still in Zion loves to dwell.”*  
Christ is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep and He folds them, guards them, protects them as His flock. A true Church is, therefore, a very precious thing. It is not a mere human society banded together for certain objectives, but it is a community which God, Himself, has formed, and over which He does watch with an unsleeping eye. It is a flock which He cares for, so that Heaven and earth may be ransacked but He will have provender for them. This flock is so well preserved that at the last, the Great Shepherd will say, “Of them which You gave Me I have lost none.”

Observe that it is added, “The flock of My pasture.” There is a different idea here. It shows that God’s people are not only peculiar in other things, but they are peculiar in their feeding. You may know a child of God by that which his soul lives upon. Many professors can feed on any mortal thing, so long as it is cleverly put. “Have you heard So-and-So preach?” “No, I have not, but I have heard that he has departed from the Truth.” “But,” says one, “he is a wonderfully clever man.” And if a man is only clever, the generality of people will accept anything he likes to bring, from Heaven above, or from the earth beneath, or from the waters under the earth. It does not matter, to most people, so long as the man can deliver his opinions fluently and poetically. But such are not Christ’s sheep, for they have not the discernment of the faithful. “The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.”

I remember hearing a Brother tell how he disproved the notion that sheep only know the shepherd by his dress. When in Palestine, he asked a shepherd to allow him to put on his clothes. Then he began to call the sheep, but never a one would come, not even a lamb. The most sheepish of the flock had sense enough left to know that he was not the shepherd and even the youngest kept aloof, heedless of the stranger’s voice! He might have called till he was hoarse, but they would not come. So God’s people know their Lord and they know the kind of food which He gives them. They know the truth from a lie! Men put the falsehood so prettily that they would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect—but that, “if it were possible,” guards the chosen flock of God’s pasture! They will not graze on the hemlock, nor feed on poisoned grain. They will have nothing but clean provender and, the more evidently it comes from the Great Shepherd’s own hands, the better it is to them.

It is a very amazing thing, but it is added, “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men.” This was inserted, some commentators think, lest the reader should think that the Lord was really speaking of sheep. This cannot be true, for no rational being could be so foolish as to fall into that mistake! The language is used for a much higher purpose. “You are men”—then God knows what kind of persons we are, whom He has loved with an everlasting love! We are Adams, not angels! If you come into the Church of God and expect to get among angels, you will be mightily mistaken! And if the Brethren should receive you and hope that they are receiving angels unawares, they will be mistaken, too! We make absurd mistakes through foolish expectations! We shall not find that our Brothers and Sisters are male and female cherubim, for they are men and women and nothing more! They are fallen men and women, too, bearing about them traces of the ruin of their nature—they went astray like lost sheep, even the best of them. They are men! That is to say, they are only men, for the best of men are but men at the best.

Somebody once wrote me a letter of denunciation for using that sentence, and, as far as I could make out from his letter, the friend thought himself to be something more than a man. I did not agree with his judgment, but fancied that he was rather less than more than a man! From the bitter spirit of his letter I thought him more human than humane. The best men I have ever seen are but men and, generally, the better men are, the more ready they are to confess their imperfections! Some are tall by the measurement of conceit, but short when brought to the standard of wisdom. God’s people are but men, yet they are men and not brutes. There are in human form many who are hardly so good as brutes, but the saints are gentle, compassionate and gracious. God’s people are true men—when the Spirit of God is in them, they quit themselves like men. They come to the front and bear the brunt of the battle. “You are men”—it is a bad word in one sense, but a good one in another. God make us men in the better sense and may we rise superior to the infirmities of “men” in the worse sense, by being humble, yet brave.

But then He adds this blessed assurance, “ And I am your God.” God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the son of a man, that He should repent. I hear that poor soul seeking after God, say, “Oh, but I am so unworthy.” Just so. The Lord knows it. He says you are men. But then He is not unworthy—He is worthy to receive honor and Divine Power, for He is our God. “Alas,” says one, “I feel myself so weak.” Just so. You are men, but then He is your God, your strength is in Him. “But I am so changeable.” Just so, for you are men, but then He says, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “But I am so faithless.” Just so, for you are men, and men are fickle and frail. But God changes not, He is the same and of His years there is no end. If the promises rested on you for keeping, then they would never be kept, for you are men. If your salvation depended on your own merits you would be lost, for you are men! But inasmuch as the whole Covenant and the whole weight of salvation rests with God, here is our joy—“I am your God, says the Lord God.”

I have two words to say. One is to the poor sinner. He says, “I am afraid to come to God in Christ Jesus.” Do not be afraid to come, for He knows what you are! “Oh, but I am so vile.” He knows how vile you are. “But I am everything I ought not to be.” He knows that! That is why He sent a Savior. If you had not been lost, there would have been no need for Him to seek you out. Come to Jesus just as you are, poor Trembler, and let this Word of God beckon you to Him, “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men.” You are poor, weak, feeble, erring, undeserving men, but your God is full of mercy and His thoughts of love are as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! Come now and reason together with Him, and He will put away your sins as a cloud and your transgressions as a thick cloud, and you shall sing, “Who is a God like unto You?”

The other word is to you that ought to be members of the Church, who know the Lord and love Him, but have never confessed Him. You say, “I shall join the Church when I feel better.” When will that be? Are you any better than you were a year ago? How much better are you going to be before you obey your Lord? I should like to hang up a sort of thermometer so that when you did reach the point you might come out, obey your Lord’s command and join with His Church. Do you need to be perfect and to join with perfect men? If you do, do not come to this Church, because I will guarantee you there is not one perfect member in it, though there are many of the excellent of the earth in our midst. We had some perfect Brothers and Sisters once, but they went to their own place after having proved to us that their boasted perfection was very poor stuff.

When workers get that proud notion into their heads, they become both useless and unloving. We are sorry to say that we are a company of imperfect men and women—but we shall be very glad to receive you if you love the Lord and are prepared to obey His commands. That is all we require. Do you want to join a perfect Church? You must die. You will not do it otherwise. And if you were to join a perfect Church, I am sure it would not be perfect after you had been admitted into it. You had better give up that idea and just believe what God says about His own Church, “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men.” Come, then, with us, and we will do you good.

“I am afraid,” says one. Is this like a man? Can we say of such cowards, “You are men”? We cannot give you the good side of the word, surely! But come with us. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, confess Him! The Gospel message is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Faith and Baptism are here placed very closely together—do not divide them. “He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.” Neglect not one command of Christ—confess your faith at once. “There is nothing saving in it,” you say. Selfish wretch, so you will do nothing except to save your own skin? If you are a saved man, you will loathe such meanness and you will say, “Now, for the love I bear my Master’s name, whatever command He gives to His believing people, I am ready to obey—

*“Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes.  
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry, Though earth and Hell oppose.”*

God grant you His blessing in so doing, for Christ’s sake. Amen. **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 34:11-31.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—100 (VERS. III), 955, 957. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #536 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH  
NO. 536

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Whereas the Lord was there.”  
Ezekiel 35:10.**

HEREIN lay the special security of the chosen land. The Edomites saw the whole country of Israel and Judah left desolate. Babylonians and Chaldeans had carried away the people and ravaged the land, therefore the proud inhabitants of the city in the rock said—“These two nations and these two countries shall be mine and we will possess it.” The dukes of Edom counted upon an easy conquest and such, indeed, the Holy Land would have proved, had there not been one great difficulty—quite unknown to them—“The Lord was there.”

Jehovah Himself was still in possession, even though His rebellious people had been carried into captivity. HE would never allow that the Idumea should hold Jehovah’s land in possession, and with despiteful hearts cast it out for a prey. From this one incident we gather that whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God’s people, though there is nothing else to thwart them, there is this as an effectual barrier—the saints are God’s heritage and the Lord is there, to guard and hold His own. The book of Ezekiel, if you will notice, concludes with these blessed words, as the name of the great city of the latter days. When all conflicts shall be ended, when the scattered shall be gathered, when the tabernacle of the Lord shall be among them. Then this which is Zion’s bulwark today, shall be her everlasting glory. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—“The Lord was there.”

As Palestine was preserved from the enmity of Mount Seir by the presence of the great Jehovah, so the Church and each separate member of it is constantly kept by the power of a present God, despite the rage of adversaries. In enlarging upon this cheering Truth of God, I shall invite you to notice the Church as a despised people, constantly triumphant. Next, we will observe the Christian, in his opposed life, perpetually victorious. Thirdly, a desolate soul graciously delivered from Satan. And lastly, a ruined and depraved earth, resplendent with perfect beauty—and all because “The Lord was there.”

I. Consider, then, A DESPISED PEOPLE CONSTANTLY TRIUMPHANT, BECAUSE “THE LORD WAS THERE.” “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.” Here election divides two races forever. Since that hour the rejected have always displayed a deadly hatred towards the elected. The seed of the profane Esau, who sold his birthright, have in all generations maintained perpetual strife against the children of the accepted Jacob, upon whom the Lord has looked with the eyes of discriminating Grace.

The Prophet Obadiah denounces a curse upon Edom for their violence to their brother Jacob—“In the day that you stood on the other side. In the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even you were as one of them. But you should not have looked on the day of your brother in the day that he became a stranger. Neither should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. Neither should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Neither should you have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape. Neither should you have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.”

An eternal enmity is put between the serpent and the woman—between his seed and her seed. This was evidenced at the beginning of human history, in the case of Cain and Abel—and the story of the great battle of Armageddon, when Gog and Magog shall be utterly overthrown, will stand upon the last page of the world’s story as a sure proof that the old enmity is as hot as ever. The people of God have always been, in every age, a hated and despised people. This may be seen if you will notice a few facts.

1. The adversaries of God’s Israel have often thought in their hearts that they would utterly destroy them. When Israel dwelt in Egypt and the single household began to be a great nation, Pharaoh said unto His people, “Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply.” Hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all manner of service in the field was tried until their lives were made bitter. But the tyrant’s purpose was not accomplished, for the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

Then spoke the king unto the midwives—“If it is a son, then you shall kill him. But if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” O deep-laid scheme of a cruel and wily despot! Now he thinks that the work is surely done. The Nile will be covered with the dead bodies of Israel’s sons and Egypt will know no fear from her bond slaves. Little did he dream that the midwives would violate his orders and far less that from the river which he worshipped would spring the man who would make the fields of Zoan mourn and avenge upon the first-born of Egypt the slaughter of Israel’s sons.

As it was fabled of Hercules that while a babe in his cradle, he strangled with his infant hands the serpents which came to destroy him, so was it with the chosen nation. While yet feeble as a child in Egypt, it was more than a match for the craft and malice of the dragon, for “the Lord was there.”

In after years a Pharaoh of like spirit grievously oppressed the people until Jehovah brought them forth with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. They had scarcely been free more than a few hours—they had gone but a few furlongs from Egypt, when the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he said, “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil—my lust shall be satisfied upon them.” Behold the hosts of Israel— they are entangled in the land—the wilderness has shut them in. The Red Sea rolls before them. Now Pharaoh, now may you destroy them at a blow! How is the prey snatched from the hand of the mighty! How gloriously is captivity led captive! The sea divides, the waters stand upright like an heap and the chosen people of God are led through the deep as through a wilderness, for “the Lord was there.”

After-years present us with numberless occasions in which the people who bore the oracles of God were in imminent peril and were miraculously preserved by her great King. Well did the Psalmist sing, “God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved: God shall help her and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

To single out one case among many, let us remember the boastings and the shame of Sennacherib. The great king has taken the defended cities of Judah and sent his foul-mouthed servant, Rabshakeh, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem, that he may carry away all the people of the land. Hezekiah comforts the minds of the people, saying, “The Lord will deliver us.” Rabshakeh writes a blasphemous letter and cries to the people on the wall, “Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, the Lord will deliver us. Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria?

“Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hands? Who are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hands, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hands?” Thus he boasts against the living God and counts upon the ready possession of the Holy City. And what happens? He had calculated that his ferocious troops would cut to pieces the insignificant armies of Hezekiah. He looked upon Jerusalem as a cauldron, and all the inhabitants thereof as the pieces of flesh that are boiled therein—but he forgot that the Lord was there. He knew not Jehovah-Shammah.

He little dreamed of the secret reason why the virgin daughter of Zion despised him and laughed him to scorn. But when the hook was in his nose, when the thousands of his troops had fallen like leaves in autumn, and when he himself was smitten by his own sons in the house of Nisroch, his god, then all the nations knew that God was great and greatly to be feared in the mountain of His holiness. Had not the Lord been on Judah’s side, she would have been as stubble to the fire. But the Lord was there, and her foe could not prevail.

Fly on still in your vision of the Lord’s marvelous works, till you come to the Church of God properly called. How easy it seemed to Herod to destroy once and for all the followers of Jesus! They are but a handful. He will take James to begin with and Peter shall follow. The Apostles shall be the first fruits of the bloody harvest which he means to reap. Aha! Aha! Foolish Herod, a greater Herod than you are sought to destroy Him who was King of the Jews. In his blind fury he smote all the young children of Bethlehem, but the newborn Prince escaped the murderous sword and so shall this young child, the new-formed Church, escape out of your wolfish fangs.

She shall fly to the uttermost ends of the earth and shall be free. Her

Word shall go forth throughout every land and people. Need I say that you have but to change name and circumstances and this story may be repeated thousands of times? During the first centuries, the dragon incessantly persecuted the woman—“The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.” One of the Roman emperors set up a monument, “In the memory of a destroyed superstition called Christianity.” But was our holy religion destroyed?

Could the dragon prevail against the remnant which kept the Commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? Behold the multitudes who this day bow the knees at the name of Jesus of Nazareth! Diocletian dyed the earth red with the blood of saints, and if it had not been that the Lord was there, certainly the Roman sword must have cut off forever the woman’s seed. But why do I linger here? All ages and all lands witness to the same struggle. Our own country, at the Reformation, is a clear instance. Mary hunted out the saints of God. As the bloodhound tracks the fugitive slave, so she tracked the faithful wherever they were hidden.

But the stakes of Smithfield and the dungeons of the Lollards’ Tower were not sufficient to destroy the people of God. And Elizabeth, equally bloody against those who followed the Lord fully, having set up a semipapal hierarchy, sought to parry Puritans out of the land. Her successors followed in her steps, but neither the hangman’s rope, nor loathsome dungeons, nor the dragoons of Claverhouse, nor fines, nor banishment, nor death could destroy the separated Church of God—for her God was her refuge and high tower. How came it, let us ask, that all the regal and priestly power was foiled and could not stand against the people scattered and peeled?

How did this anvil break so many hammers? How could this earthwork stand against the fire of such well-manned batteries? Was there any human force in the Church capable of resisting these bloody persecutions? Brethren, there was none but this—Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord was there.” The Lord being there, immortality, no, eternity was in the Church. God is eternal, He is in the Church and His Church is immortal, too. Who shall quench immortality? Where is the sword that can snap the links of eternity? When God the Immortal shall bow His head to weakness. When age shall palsy His arm and death shall send His terrible shaft into His heart, then may the Church of God be destroyed. But not till then, because “the Lord was there.”

2. The enemies of the Church have frequently shown their scorn of her by the ridicule which they have cast upon her attacks. When the Church defies the world, the proud servants of Satan are filled with derision. Even as Midian rested in unguarded security, fearless of Gideon and his three hundred men, comparing him to a poor barley-cake which they could eat at once if it were not unworthy of their notice, so the ungodly despise the zeal of the godly. But as the cake of barley-bread fell upon the tent of Midian and smote it that it lay along, even so the Church is more than conqueror.

How loudly did Goliath mock at David! How he cursed him by his gods—“Come to me and I will give your flesh unto the fowls of heaven and to the beasts of the field.” But Goliath falls like a tottering tower headlong upon the ground. His own sword slays him and the despised David bears the monster’s head triumphantly in his hand. So, doubtless, in Apostolic times, the world ridiculed the armies of the Lord. “These poor men!” said kings and princes—and they smiled in royal scorn of the mendicant band, “what kingdom can they set up?”

“Unlearned and ignorant men!” muttered the philosophers, as they cast their mantles about them and mocked at the strange doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. “This handful of weaklings,” said the commander of the legions of Rome. “This handful! A miserable eleven, what can they do against innumerable priests and worshippers supported by the eagles of an universal empire?” “Aha! Aha!” said the world, “was anything ever so despicable, so fanatical, so foolish! Eleven fishermen!

“Get back to your nets and to your boats! Go back to the lake of Gennesaret! Transform the fishes into men and then come back and think to turn us from the ancient gods of our fathers into worshippers of the crucified Man of Nazareth.” Yet for all their wisdom, their laughter was illspent, for the Lord was there and therefore the attacks of the brave eleven were followed by speedy victory. Wherever they marched they cast down the idols’ temples. No, they hurled the gods themselves to the moles and to the bats and the few, the ignorant, the poor, the weak—in the course of a few score years had cast the pomps of priesthood, the pride of philosophy, and even the might of kings—from the abodes of their glory and trod them like mire in the streets, because Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord was there.”

How constantly has the world ridiculed the Church in every effort she has put forth for her own enlargement? “What of these feeble Jews,” said Sanballat and Tobiah—“will they fortify themselves, will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish? Even that which they build, if a fox goes up, he shall break down their stone wall.” But they built the wall and the timbers were fixed in their places. How vexed must Tobiah and Sanballat have been when they saw the city rising upon its heap.

The same has been the case in all time. To quote a modern instance of what has ever been the case—Sydney Smith said when Carey talked of evangelizing India, that a consecrated cobbler was going out to preach the Gospel to educated and enlightened Hindus. But the consecrated cobbler took his post and dug in India a well of which thousands shall yet drink. That man of God has placed the battering ram of the Gospel in such a position, that before long the hoary bastions of idolatry will tremble and the world shall see that the weakness of God is stronger than man.

It is really an absurd thing for us to talk about overcoming the world and converting the heathen and comforting God’s people and enlarging the borders of the Church. It is, I say, an absurd thing if we talk so in our own strength, but it is not absurd when this little word comes in— “Whereas the Lord was there.” Then we have Omnipotence in our midst. If God is there, the Church has God’s Omnipotence. And little do our enemies know our might. Omnipotence walks forth, in the youthful David to

fight Goliath. Omnipotence goes forth in the consecrated cobbler to fight with Juggernaut and the gods of the heathen. And feeble though the Church may be to this day, unlearned and to a great extent still made up of the poor of this world, yet the day shall come when the earth shall know that the Church is mightier than the mightiest of her foes, because Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord was there.”

3. Let me again remind you that the world’s estimation of the Church has frequently been seen in the way in which it will mock at all her teachings. The wise men of this world have always something far superior to anything that the Bible can reveal. Even bishops make great discoveries and find out that perfect wisdom has made very many blunders in the book of Exodus. New theologians are every now and then starting most remarkable schemes of doctrine—their own wood, hay and stubble, being, in their own opinion, infinitely superior to the gold and the silver and precious stones of God’s Inspiration.

Well, they may go on and tell us that the Gospel is a vulgar thing and only fit for the poor. They may assure us that it will suit very well the uneducated masses, but the intellectual and enlightened few want something better. Ah, we can well endure their boasting, for the Doctrines of Grace are the loftiest of all philosophy and the most intellectual of all teachings—because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is in them. And where God is, there is perfect wisdom—where God is, there is incomprehensible knowledge.

The sum total of all human knowledge is but as a drop in the bucket compared with the wisdom of God. And the wisdom of God is in and with the teachings of His Church, wherever Jesus Christ is lifted up. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and therefore in answer to the world’s railing against our folly, we reply, “Yes, but the foolishness of God is wiser than man,” and, in Scripture, “Jehovah-Shammah,” the Lord is there.

4. Do they not, also, very frequently cast in our teeth our trials? They will say of the Christian, “Where is He now?” When Israel’s hills were desolate, then Edom said, “Where is their God?” The sons of Esau boasted and said, “Let us go up and take possession.” It is ever the part of the ungodly, when they find a Christian in distress, to say, “Where is your God? God has forsaken him. Let us persecute and take him.” Yes, and we should have been swallowed up quickly by our fierce foes, only that, in the worst moments of the Church, God is there.

If she is in prison, God is there. At the stakes where her martyrs burn, God is there. The silenced ministers may have to conceal themselves in the caves and dens of the earth, but God is there. Tried though the Christian is, God is with him in the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar can cast in but three, he cannot, however, cast out the Fourth! Where the Church shall be Christ shall walk the coals with His people and they shall come out of their trials triumphant—for God is there. Where God is, there is everlasting love. Where God abides, there is immutable affection. And, therefore, let this be our comfort, God is with you, Israel, passing through the fire. Beloved, the world shows its disrespect of us by the way in which it often treats the Christian. It sees him poor and naked and miserable, and therefore pushes him about as though he were a beggar and not one of the royal blood. Little do they know that however poor the Christian may be, the Lord is there. The image of Jesus Christ is in every Christian’s face, but especially in the face of a poor Believer. The Holy Spirit dwells in that body, however clothed with rags, however emaciated by hunger and disease.

You remember the other day that certain young men treated rudely a pale-faced person whom they saw sitting in the railway carriage—pushed him about, struck him and so forth and went to their homes, no doubt, boasting of the way in which they treated a poor fool who had not the spirit, as they would say, to defend himself. To their consternation it turned out to be a peer of the realm whom they had thus ill-treated. And then how small they seemed. What abject apologies they offered. Ah, it was quite a different thing then. They would not have pushed his grace, his lordship, the duke. Oh if they had only known it—they thought him only some common man.

And so nowadays the world elbows the Christian, pushes him, strikes him. But when it finds out what a Christian is, then how small their mirth will seem—they would not have done it if they had known who it was. They knew not the Lord of Glory and if they knew not Him, how shall they know His people? Let it ever be remembered that wherever there is a true Christian, there is Glory, because God is there and God is never apart from His own Glory. The very honor and dignity and majesty of Deity itself guards every follower of the Savior, however much he may be despised among men.

O for a celestial tongue to set forth the honor and safety of the chosen people, an honor which streams from the Presence of God as light pours from the sun! You will see how it is. There was a little flock—a multitude of ravening wolves all hungry and athirst for blood came howling on. They rushed to the very edge of the fold. They were about to leap in and suck the blood of the sheep, but suddenly they started back like whipped curs. See how they turn tail and take to flight, for lo, a mysterious One lifts His hand over the fold. A voice cries, “Get you gone!” and back they go—they little dreamed that the Lord was there. Had they known it they would scarcely have attempted a task so impossible as the destruction of a people who had God in the midst of them and therefore could not be moved.

II. But I must leave this for want of time and introduce THE OPPOSED, AND YET A CONQUEROR. Moses saw at the back of the desert a bush burning. It was nothing but a bush. The fire was real. The fire was quite capable of consuming the bush in but the twinkling of an eye, and yet though the bush burned with fire, it was not consumed. It is such a sight as this that I bid you now look upon for a few moments, my Beloved.

In the Lord Jesus Christ a Christian man is constantly opposed and yet perpetually preserved because the Lord is there. The very moment that a Christian is born again, Satan seeks to destroy him. The early convictions of a newborn soul are always the subject of Satanic attack. Frequently the devil will employ our old companions to laugh us out of our fears—”Come

along, old fellow,” they will say, “do not give way to this melancholy misery. There is a first-class play tonight—come and see it. We shall meet at the tavern—we will have merriment and a rare time of it.”

Satan hopes that with the laughs, the jeers, the jests and merriment, he will destroy utterly all convictions of sin. Little does he dream that the Lord is there and where God sends the arrow home, no devil can ever draw it out. Where the Lord convicts of sin, it is not possible that those convictions should be staunched, except by a Savior’s wounds. If we should attempt to blow out a candle, since the candle was lit by human power, human power may put it out. But he were the greatest of fools who should try to blow out the sun. For He alone who kindled its matchless rays can ever quench them.

If, then, the convictions of sin are natural, and come from man, man may destroy them. But if the sunlight of God has risen in a human heart, no power—human or satanic—shall ever be able to destroy the glorious day which the daystar foretold. If I attempt to stop in its course a stone which has been slung from human hand, I may, perhaps, accomplish my purpose. But who is he that could interpose to stop a meteor as it flashes across the sky? Who shall cast a bridle about the neck of the planet as it flies in its tremendous pathway? Who shall bind it fast in its place, or thrust a bit into its jaws? If God is in the thing, it must traverse its destined pathway, in spite of all opposition. So, Beloved, where the Lord begins a true heart-breaking and real conviction of sin, it cannot be destroyed. Why? Because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

Then, as the Fiend has tried to destroy conviction, he will next shoot his arrows against our faith. Poor, feeble Follower of Jesus, he will worry you. “Oh,” says he, “he is but a little one, I will encounter him in full fury, I will strike him to the ground and spill his soul.” But the faith which God gives to us overcomes the world—yes, and overcome the old dragon, too. It is a faith which lives under pressure and load—mountains may be piled upon it—but it still breathes under the terrific weight. It lives in the midst of death, swallowing up death in victory. It defies the power of Hell’s fiery darts. They are not only turned aside, but they are quenched upon the shield of faith.

Satan may throw all sorts of accusations in our pathway, but faith dies to the Advocate. He may strike us many a cowardly blow with fierce temptations such as suited our former state and the corruptions of our flesh, but if God is in our faith and He is in it if it is real and genuine, “more is He that is for us than all they that are against us.” There shall be this ever for our preservation—“the Lord is there.”

Beloved, have not you always found that not only your faith but all your good works are the subjects of Satan’s attacks? I never yet had a virtue or possessed a Divine Grace but what it was sure to be the target for hellish bullets, whether it was hope, bright and sparkling, or love, warm and fervent, or patience, all enduring, or zeal, flaming like coals of fire. The old enemy of everything that is good has tried, if he could, to destroy or mar it. And why is it that anything virtuous or lovely survives in you? There can be no reason given except this, “God is there.”

God dwells in His people. Every good thing which springs up in the human heart is an emanation from the indwelling Deity. And being such, the Destroyer may vent his malice upon it, but as the waves are broken against the rocks, so shall his cruel spite be broken against the power of the most high God—God is in it.

Note, Beloved, how sedulously Satan aims against the perseverance of God’s people. “They will never hold on their way,” says he. You and I have thought we never should. Sometimes we have sat down and become weary in well-doing—the troubles of the way, our non-successes, our frequent sorrows, perhaps the backsliding of our heart from God—all these have made us say, “I shall never reach my journey’s end and see my God with acceptance.” And yet you have not fallen away from Grace yet, not yet have you disgraced your character, not yet gone back to your old lusts.

Old Adam has given you many a grip in the side, as though he would tear the heart out of you, but you have held on your way despite all that he could do. How is this? Why, God was in you, and if He had not been there, then, indeed, had you been a prey unto your adversaries. I went last week into the lighthouse at Holyhead and marked the lights that warn the mariner crossing the sea, or guide him in time of storm into the haven. I noticed in the second story of the lighthouse many large vats filled with oil laid up in store that the lamps might be constantly trimmed for months to come. I compared that in my own mind to that gracious provision of Divine Grace which the Lord lays up in store for His people. The lamps would go out but Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there—we have the all-sufficiency of God laying up a store of oil so that our lights may be always trimmed.

A Christian is something like an express train. On some of our railroads you know there are express trains which do not stop to take water, the water lies in a trench in the middle between the rails and as the train runs it sucks up its own supply of cold water and so continues its course without a pause. Our God in Divine Grace has prepared in advance our needs. He prepares supplies for His own people so that without their stopping to seek the streams of creature-confidence—sometimes without the use of means—He is pleased to speed them on their pathway towards Heaven, fed by a Divine arrangement of Grace.

O it is blessed to think that if God is there, everything a Christian can want for his final persevering, for his eternal life, is ready at hand. I have no doubt, Beloved, we shall find that when we come to die, our dying confidence will be the object of the enmity of all the powers of Hell. Perhaps Jordan will overflow her banks and Satan will issue his command, “Come here, principalities and powers, here is the man that we could not overturn in life, let us at last overthrow him in death.”

Perhaps like John Knox, you may have your blackest day at the last, but oh, thanks be unto God that gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! We have no fear for our dying confidence, for “God is there,” even there where the billows are the most tempestuous and the water is

most chill. We shall feel the bottom and know that it is good. Our feet shall stand upon the Rock of Ages even in our dying moments. Beloved, from the first of a Christian’s life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because “the Lord is there.”

How often has the devil reckoned without his host? He has thought, “Surely I shall destroy and devour that lamb.” So, indeed, he would have, if it had belonged to anybody else—but seeing it belonged to the Lord—the Lord was there to protect it, to pluck it out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear and to preserve it even to the end. I think, my Soul, you have learned never to love anything of which you cannot say, “The Lord is there.” If you have a grace, a virtue, a good work, a prayer— and the Lord is not in it—away with it! Away with it!

But if you have the feeblest prayer that ever was prayed and the faintest hope that ever gladdened a man, if God is in it, never give it up—for where there is God there is something firmer than adamant and the axes of your adversaries shall have their edges turned against it.

III. Now, with greater brevity still, I come to dwell upon the third point, which is this—A DESOLATE SOUL, NOT DESTROYED, BECAUSE GOD IS THERE. I wish I could convey, by my words, some little inkling of my own joy of heart while I was thinking over the third part of my subject. I thought of the dead sinner. But an elect sinner and the devil, like the sons of Edom, said, “I shall have that dead sinner, I shall have him.” “My purpose is,” says Satan, “that he shall dwell forever with me, in extreme misery. I have laid hold upon him,” says he, “and he has made a league with Hell. He is mine, he is mine forever.”

But stop, stop, the Lord was there before the devil. Does the devil have a purpose? Ah, but God’s purpose is older than the devil’s purpose. Does the sinner make a covenant? Yes, but then, God’s Covenant was made before that sinner was born! And what is the devil’s purpose compared with God’s purpose? You see God is there before him—”Whereas the Lord was there.” “I have purposed says the Lord, to make that sinner My child, a new heart also will I give him and a right spirit will I put within him. I will sprinkle clean water upon him and he shall be clean. From all his filthiness will I cleanse him.”

Satan, you are deceived, the purpose of God is before you. “Ah, but,” said Satan, “he is mine, I will have him, I will go and take possession, he is mine.” And so he is about to enter the vineyard and take possession of the vines of sour grapes, when lo, someone meets him on the threshold and says, “What are you doing here?” “I am come to take possession,” says he. “Take possession,” says Christ, “I have a claim upon this vineyard, I bought it and paid for it with drops of blood. What are you doing here? You say, ‘I will possess this land,’ whereas the Lord was there.”

And He shows the Fiend the print of the nails and points him to His wounded side and says, “Whatever your claim may be, Mine is a higher claim. I bought, I paid for, I have the acceptance from the Divine hand and this vessel of mercy was Mine. Mine long before you could have any claim upon it.” “Yes, yes,” says the devil, “but I have been providing for this soul that it shall lie in Hell forever. I have determined to put suchand-such temptations in its pathway that it may go on step by step till it makes its bed in Hell.”

“Ah,” says the Lord, “I have been before you. If you have a providence so have I, and My Providence is older than yours. I have watched this man from the cradle even until now. And even when you have been leading him astray further and further from Me, I have overruled it all to bring him nearer and nearer to the predestined spot and to the appointed moment when the Eternal Council shall be fulfilled and that man shall be turned from darkness to light.”

Satan, no doubt, thinks he lays his plans very prettily. There is only this to deceive his calculations and baffle his designs—“Whereas the Lord was there.” Perhaps the Evil One led you here this morning to ridicule the Gospel, but the Lord may be in it and you may be brought to His feet. I have known the devil lead men into sin and yet the very sin has been blessed of God to their conviction and conversion. I remember one whose life had been eminently moral before, who was self-righteous, but the devil led him into a trap and his fall opened his eyes to see the depravity of his heart. And so the devil had his head cut off with his own sword—he was taken in his own net.

Beloved, whatever Satan may do in Providence, God is the Master of Providence, and He is waiting to be gracious, still. But the devil will say, “Yes, but I have him—I have got him now. I have put into his thoughts and into his mind all manner of falsehood and he is mine.” “No,” says Christ, “the Lord is there. He knows the Gospel—today is the Gospel preached in his ears—”believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Yes,” says the devil, “he may know it, but I have the power over him, I have my hand upon the bit and the bridle—I will manage and control him.”

But I trust the Lord will say to elect souls who are here this morning— “No, but I have the power over you. The Spirit of God shall go with the Word, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.” And then shall it be said once more, “The dead soul had almost gone to Hell, but it could not go, for the Lord was there in the road to stop him in his ruinous career.”

Do I address a backslider—one who used to be a member of a Christian Church, but who has gone back to the world? Ah, poor Soul, if you ever were a child of God, you will come back, yet. You will never live at ease— you cannot live happily, I know. But by God’s Grace you will not live to your life’s end what you now are—if the Lord is in you. The devil may get you to give up the means of Divine Grace. He may lead you to attend the public house. He may tempt you to forget the Sabbath and to become as vile as other men. But if God is there, he will be cheated of his prey yet.

At the last moment, if never before, I pray that you may hear the voice that says, “Return, return.” O that you would hear it this morning! Come, Backslider, God has not cast you away! Having loved you with an everlasting love, He has not forgotten you. Come to His feet. Confess your wanderings and offenses and now, again, enter into His family and rejoice with joy unspeakable and fullness of glory! You cannot be ruined, for “the

Lord is there.” You shall be saved, for “the Lord is there,” and will not leave you nor forsake you.

IV. And now lastly—and this is but a hint. The same, dear Friends, is true with regard to THE ENTIRE WORLD. The world cannot be destroyed, because “Jehovah is there.” This world once shone, like its sister stars, bright and fair. But a sad shadow of eclipse was thrown upon it—it became swathed in the mists of sin and though the glory of the Lord has risen upon it, yet still much of the gloom and the thick darkness continues. Shall that darkness cover all the nation? Shall the light become dim forever?

No, no! “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” Shall its groans and travails end in nothing? No, no. The day comes when, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

There are signs which we sometimes think portend the speedy coming of the Son of Man, “when He shall stand in the latter day” upon Mount Olivet and reign with all His ancients gloriously. Then shall it be seen that since God in all ages was in the world with Patriarchs and Prophets, with Christ and His Apostles and with His Church throughout all time, there always was a reason why the world should yet be saved—why there should be a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Despair not for the world, Beloved. Work on, hope on, pray on and expect every blessing, for God is in the earth still, and therefore it can never be the devil’s globe—it can never be wholly given up to the enemy of Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord is there.” Now I do not know where the Great Master is about to conduct some of you. You are, perhaps, about to journey across the sea. You may have, some of you, to go to a bed of sickness, but remember I give you this for your cordial—“The Lord is there.” It may be, Brothers and Sisters, some of you are appointed unto death, you are come to the borders of the dark valley.

Or else, bereavement will befall you and you will have to visit and revisit the grave with children and friends and relatives. Remember the Lord is there. Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes. Anywhere with Jesus! Anywhere with Jesus! Nowhere would I be without Him. If He says, “I am with you,” then will I neither fear the floods nor the fires, nor death, nor life, nor things present, or things to come.

This shall be my joyous trust and boast—“The Lord is there.” God bless you. And in the school, the College and our beloved classes, may it be said, “the Lord is there.” Amen.

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THE VISION OF THE FIELD  
NO. 3001

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1864.**

**“For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.”  
Ezekiel 36:9.**

THESE words were addressed to the mountains of Palestine. Albeit that they are now waste and barren, they are yet to be as fruitful and luxuriant as in the days of Israel’s grandeur. God will turn to them—the vines shall then crown the summits and there shall be harvests again upon the mountaintops.

The mountains of Israel were a soil of glass in which you could see reflected, at a single glimpse, the condition and character of the people. While the Israelites were obedient to God, the mountains dripped with new wine and the little hills seemed to melt with fertility. Honey dripped from the rock and oil appeared to be distilled of the very flint. When the people sinned so that God gave them over to their enemies, irrigation being neglected and the culture of the soil no longer profitable, the mountains straightaway became as blank and barren as though they were a howling wilderness! And then, again, when the people repented and turned to God, the soil began to cover the mountains, carried up there by the industry of the people, the sides of the hills were terraced, the waste places began to blossom and the vines were once more filled with clusters. You could thus read the history of the people in the condition of their hills.

I intend to take the hills of Israel as a representation of our own state—the state of our own heart. As they really did mirror forth the condition of the people of old, the metaphor becomes peculiarly attractive. I shall divide the subject thus—first, man’s heart, by nature, is like a waste field. Secondly, there is no hope for that field unless God shall turn to it in mercy. Thirdly, when He does turn to it, He will have to till it, for, lastly, not until after tillage can it be sown with any hope of success.

I. MAN’S HEART, BY NATURE, IS LIKE A WASTE FIELD. A waste field produces no harvest. Reaper, you shall never fill your arms with sheaves, the axle of the wagon shall never creak beneath the load of harvest and the young men shall never dance with the maidens at the harvest home. Let the field lie waste and the fruit it will yield in a whole century will not be sufficient to feed a single individual!  
Such is man, we say, by nature. He brings forth no fruit unto God. Leave him alone and he will live unto himself. Perhaps he will be a respectable sinner and, if so, he will selfishly spend all his life in trying to provide for himself, alone, or for his family, which is but a part of himself. He will go through the world from his birth to his sepulcher without a thought of God. He will never do anything for God. His heart will never beat with love to Him. He may sometimes, out of sheer selfishness, go with others to worship, but he will not worship God, whatever difference he may show to the outward form. His heart will be in complete alienation from the God who made him. He will live and he will die a strange monstrosity in the world—a creature that has lived without love to his Creator!  
Perhaps, however, he will be a disreputable sinner. He will live in sin, find his comfort in drunkenness, perhaps in lust, possibly in dishonesty—but regardless, he will bring forth nothing that God can accept. I think I see the great God coming to look at the man, even as a farmer might come to look upon his fallow field. What can God see? Is there a prayer? Yes, he says a few forms of prayer, but they are dead, lifeless things, and God cannot accept them. Does He see any praise? Perhaps a shriveled hymn growing up in the corner of the field, but since there is no heart in it, it rots and dies, and God abhors it. He looks the whole field through. There is no thought for God, no consecration of time to God, no desire to honor God, no longing to produce in the world fresh glory to God, no effort to raise up to Him fresh voices that shall praise His name. He lives unto himself, or to his fellow men and having so lived, he so dies.  
Now you know that there are a great many people who say to themselves, “Well, if we do good to our neighbor, if we are kind to others, that is enough.” And they expect to have some reward for this. But, mark you, every servant expects his master to pay his wages—surely then, if you serve your fellow men, they ought to reward you. Let them give you a statue, or let them emblazon your name on one of the rolls of fame. Let them sound down your exploits to future generations! Still, let your debtor and creditor account be fair. If you have not done anything distinctly and avowedly in the service of God, there is no remuneration that you can reasonably expect God to give you! What have you brought forth to Him? Nothing whatever! And we say it sincerely, for we know how sadly true it is—the natural heart of man never does and never can produce so much as one single grain that God can receive as being to His honor and glory. As for the natural children of men in all their generations—  
*“Like brutes they live, like brutes they die. Like grass they flourish, till Your breath Blasts them into everlasting death.”*  
Alas for them! Unto You, great God, they render no prayer nor praise, no heart-felt love nor reverent adoration. They pass through this world as though there were no God!  
Worse than this, the field that has never been plowed or sown does produce something. There is an activity about human nature that will not let us live without doing. Unless you should shut yourselves up in a cell like a monk, or live on the top of a pillar, like Simeon Stylites, you cannot very well pass through life utterly inert—without any purpose of mind, without any movement of the limbs, without any stir of the passions! And I suppose that even Simeon Stylites did exert some influence, for he led other people to be as great fools as himself. And even monks do some mischief by losing the interest on talents for which they ought to have rendered a good account—and spending their time in laziness which they ought to have employed in useful service. “None of us lives to himself.” Is there no wheat growing on that soil? No barley? No rye? Very well, then, there will be grass, and cockle, and stickers and all sorts of weeds. So it is with the unrenewed heart. It produces hard thoughts of God, enmity against the Most High. It is prolific of evil imaginations, wrong desires and bitter envying. As these ripen, they bring forth ill words—idle, or, it may be, lascivious words and perhaps atheistic, blasphemous words! And as these ripen, they come to actions—and the man becomes an offender in his deeds, perhaps against man, certainly against God. He lives to produce sour grapes. The apples of Gomorrah hang plentifully upon him.  
I know I am describing some here present. There are many such persons to be found in all our assemblies. They have done no good in their lives. Measuring their lives by the standard of God, they have done nothing. On the other hand, they have been guilty of much evil—they have brought forth fruit unto sin. Nor is this the worst of it. The bad farmer, who lets his fields run to weeds, does mischief to the neighboring farm. Here comes the wind, willing to waft seed—good seed if it can find it—into other soil. It will take the down of the flower seed and bear it into a garden where it will be needed. Or, if it must, it will carry the seeds of the thistle and so, when it comes sweeping by the farmer’s neglected field, it does damage to all the fields in the neighborhood.  
It is so with the sinner. “One sinner destroys much good.” Is he a father? His children grow up to be as ungodly as himself. Is he a master? Then his men, like him, break the Sabbath and neglect the ways of God. Is he a workman? Then his fellow workmen, who are younger than he, take encouragement from his evil example and they are led into sin while they blindly follow in his wake. Whatever station of life you put him into, he does mischief! The more eminent he is, the more eminently mischievous he is. I do not allude to those who are grave offenders against the laws of society. I mean those good, decent people who have no fear of God before their eyes. I think they do very much mischief, for the devil’s cause gets respectable through having them on its side! Those who persistently live in violation of Divine Law and who do not bend their necks to the yoke of Christ, may be very amiable, very moral and very excellent. If so, in a certain sense, the more is the pity because they get an increase of power to do evil, for others say, “If such good men as these can live without religion and live despising it, why shouldn’t we?” Thus a bad cause, which would be hissed off the stage if there were none but rascals to side with it, still walks respectably in the light of day because of these persons who back it up! God deliver you, my dear Hearers, from being like a field that does mischief unto others! Beware, you upas tree, lest your poisonous influence should receive the reward of Hell fire! Beware, you cumberer of the ground, standing there and sucking nutriment out of the soil, and cursing the other trees of the vineyard, lest the sharp ax should soon cut you to the core and lay you level with the ground!  
A barren field resembles the heart of man in that all the good influences that fall upon it are wasted. Comes there sunshine—it produces no harvest on the fallow land. Here are the precious drops of dew glistening in the morning, but they cannot produce an ear of corn. And here fall the sweet smiling showers of rain that make the new-mown fields all fragrant, but this field gets no good from it. It is even so with you who are still in a state of nature. You have the blessings of Providence, but they do not make you grateful. You even have the blessings of the outward means of Divine Grace, but they excite in you no longings towards God. Surely, my dear Friends, if this has been long the case with you, you must be near unto cursing!  
Yet the waste field does produce something pleasant to the eyes, something worth looking at, for have you not seen the gorgeous poppy and the finest specimens of the ranunculus growing in the field that was never plowed and sown? And there is the dog-rose yonder and the foxglove, and the forget-me-not, all springing up and flourishing where there should have been furrows for wheat! And so a man may have a comely appearance and make a fair show in the flesh, although he does not live near to God. In his character and reputation, there may be many a gaudy flower—yes, as red and as conspicuous as the poppy. He may shine among men and men may talk much about him. But, as the Lord lives, if the Lord’s plow has never gone over him, the bright blushing weeds are still just weeds! A poison and a pest, not a blessing or a balm—as the farmer right well knows. Let those of you who are in such a state see an apt emblem of yourselves every time you pass a piece of waste ground, and say, “That is just what we are, and what we shall be to the end of our lives, unless the Grace of God shall interfere to retrieve us from endless ruin.”  
II. THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THIS FIELD UNLESS GOD SHALL TURN TO IT IN MERCY.  
Even so, unless the Lord shall turn to men, no good will ever come of them. The text says, “I am for you, and I will turn to you.” Man never does of himself turn to God, and that for obvious reasons. We are sure he never can, for he is “dead in trespasses and sins.” We are certain he never will, for by nature he hates anything like a new birth. And if he could make himself a new creature, he would not, for Christ has expressly said, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” Man is unwilling to give up sin—he loves it too much—he is unwilling to be made holy for he has no time for spiritual things. God, then, must come to man, for how can man, being naturally dead, and naturally unwilling, ever come to God? Experience tells us that he will not. When did you ever find a man who had come to God—who would say that he came of his own natural inclination? All the saints on earth will tell you that it was Almighty Grace that made them willing in the day of God’s power. If there is any man who ever came to God of himself, I can only say that I know I am not that man—  
*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God.”*  
If any unconverted person here will tell me that he can turn to God when he likes, I ask him why he does not turn now? What measure of damnation must be his due, when, according to his own confession, he has a power which he will not use! Sinner, talk not vainly of what you can do! Man, you can burn in Hell and you can fit yourself for the flames, but this is about all you can do for yourself! You have destroyed yourself! For that inglorious deed, your will was free and your agency free likewise. But only in God is your help found. For this, be sure—you have neither might nor skill. If ever you are saved, it must be by another power than your own and by another faculty than that which dwells in your puny, wicked heart. God must do it! If you wait till your waste field plows itself, or brings forth a harvest, you may wait till doomsday! And if I wait until my Hearers save their own souls, and turn to God with full purpose of heart, I may wait till these hairs are gray, or till these bones are carried to the tomb! And even then they will not have saved themselves! If you have turned to God, my dear Hearers, you know that the Lord has done it, so give Him the glory! If you have not been converted, God help you to cry to Him instantly and earnestly, “Turn us, and we shall be turned.” Look to Him who is exalted on high to “give repentance and remission of sins.” Seek Him and you shall live!  
Oh, that you could now see your wretched plight, that you could feel your imminent peril, that you could

believe in the Sovereign operations of God’s Grace! Then would I venture to prophesy that salvation had this day come to your house—yes, to your very heart!  
III. WHEN THE FIELD IS TO BE PUT UNDER CULTIVATION, IT MUST BE TILLED.  
So, when God turns to any man in His mercy, there has to be an operation, a tillage, performed upon his heart! The farmer, unless he is a fool, would never think of sowing his corn upon a field that remains just as it was when it lay fallow. He plows it first. Although we are to scatter the seed everywhere, upon the wayside as well as upon the good ground, God never does. Common calling is addressed to every man, but effectual calling comes only to prepared men, to those whom God makes “willing in the day of His power.”  
Now, what is the plow needed for? Why, it is needed, first of all, to break up the soil and make it crumble. It has gotten hard—perhaps it is a heavy clay and then it is all stuck together by the wet and all baked and caked together by the sun that shines on it. Or perhaps it is a light soil. Well, this may not need much plowing, but still, it will cake over, as we all see even in our little gardens. After the rain has gone, the sun comes, the ground cakes over and there will be no place for the seeds to thrust in their tender roots. The corn will not sink down into the earth unless the soil is broken up—and the more thoroughly pulverized it becomes, the more like dust you get it—the more hope there is that the seed will take good root.  
In such-like manner must human hearts be broken. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” The more thoroughly pulverized the heart becomes, the better. Hence, there needs to be the sharp plow of the Law of God driven right through the heart to break up its crust and split the clods. And then must come that blessed plow of the Cross, which is the best plow that yet ever went across a field—that blessed plow of the Cross, which, as it goes over it, turns up the soil, even the very heart of it, and makes the sinner feel his sin and hate it, too, because of the love of God which is shed abroad by Christ Jesus the Lord. Thus you must be tilled, then, that the heart may be broken, for the Seed of God will never get into an unbroken heart!  
And the plow is also needed to destroy the weeds, for they must be killed. We cannot have them growing. To spare the weeds would be to kill the wheat. The plow comes and cuts some weeds in two. Others it turns over and throws the heavy clods on and leaves them to lie there and be buried. It turns the roots of others up to the sun, and the sun, by the brightness of its shining, scorches them and they die. Some soils need cross-plowing—they need to be plowed this way and the other way, and then they need someone to go through the furrows, afterwards, and pull up the weeds, or else they will not be all rooted out of the soil. And I am afraid that many of us who have been plowed still have divers weeds left in us! The field must not only be plowed, but the weeds must be killed! And so it must be with you, my dear Hearers. If the Lord really saves you, He must kill your drunkenness, He must kill your swearing, He must kill your whoredom, He must kill your lying, He must kill your dishonesty. These must all go! Every single weed must be torn up—there is no hope for you while there is a weed living!  
True, I mean not those weeds which still exist, even in the regenerate, but even they must be doomed. John Wellman, a member of the Society of Friends, tells a strange story on himself. One night, after he had been reading the Scripture, as he lay awake, he heard a voice saying, “John Wellman is dead.” And, being a Quaker, he was greatly struck therewith and wondered how it was that he could be dead. He asked his wife what his name was and she said, “John Wellman.” Whereupon he perceived that he must be alive. At last he understood it to mean that he was dead to the world—that he was henceforth no longer what he formerly had been, but a new creature in Christ Jesus. And it will be a blessed thing for you, my dear Hearers, when the same thing may be said of you in the same sense, “He is dead.” There is a man I used to know—I wish I did not still know him so well. I used to meet him every day, some years ago, but we parted company. He would not go with me to Christ, so I went without him. I became a new man and he is dead. Oh, how often I wish he were buried, for I have to drag his dead body about with me and, as it putrefies in my nostrils, I have to cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” That rascally old man bears my own name and once he was identical with myself. I could gladly wish he were buried! In like manner, may it come to pass with you that you may die to the flesh and that henceforth you may live in the spirit unto God! And though the old man is still prone to corruption, what a blessed stroke is that which takes the life out of him so that he can no longer rule over you, but the new man reigns supreme!  
Plowmen tell us that when they are plowing, if the plow jumps, the work is done badly. They must plow it all alike, from end to end, from headland to headland. If the plow jumps, it has gone over some weeds or knots and not torn them up. I would like always to preach so that my plow may never jump. I sometimes say a hard word because I do not want my plow to jump—I want to tear up all the knots and not leave one in the ground. If one sin is tolerated, or one malicious desire is spared, the life of God is not completely reigning in us! The Lord make a clean sweep of the weeds and burn them all!  
Well, now, mark you, in this tilling there are different soils. There is the light soil and the heavy soil—and so there are different sorts of constitutions. There are some men who are naturally tender and sensitive. Many, too, of our sisters are like Lydia—they soon receive the Word. There are others who are like the heavy clay soil and you know that the farmer doe not plow both soils alike, or else he would make a sad mess of it! And so, God does not deal with all men alike. Some have, as it were, first a little plowing and then the seed is put in and all is done. But some have to be plowed and cross-plowed, and then there is the scarifier and the clod-crusher and I know not what, which have to be rolled over them before they are good for anything. And perhaps, after all, they produce very little fruit. Different constitutions need different modes of action. Let this comfort some of you who have not been so much alarmed as others have been. Different soils must have different methods. Christ does not deal with all men precisely in the same way in His heavenly tillage.  
A farmer has a large variety of implements. Go into the shed of a man who is a high farmer and what a number of implements you may see! I mentioned some of them just now, but there are far more than I can talk about. So it is with our Heavenly Father—He has all kinds of implements. Sometimes it is a Providential trial. One man loses a child. Another has to bury his father. And yonder one has had to follow his wife to the grave. Some have temporal losses—business becomes bad— perhaps they are out of work and half starving. Others are stretched upon a bed of sickness and others are brought near to the grave. These circumstances are all so many different sort of plows with which God plows the soil of our hearts!  
The laborers whom the Lord employs are dissimilar, likewise, by the diversity of their gifts. Ministers are some of one sort, and some of another. Even the same minister is not always engaged in the same sort of operation. There are some Sundays when I know some of you find me a terrible scarifier, for I have the terrors of the Lord on my conscience and there is very little comfort in the solemn warnings I am constrained to utter. But if, sometimes, I come down upon you like a clod-crusher, it is necessary that with true Grace and good hope, I may at other times drill in the seed and nourish your hearts with the very essence of the Gospel. The faithful evangelist has to become all things to all men to accomplish his Master’s work. But you must be tilled, for there is no sowing the ground until it has been first stirred about.  
And, you know, the farmer has his proper time for plowing. Some soils will do better at one season and some at another. There are some soils that break up best after a shower of rain and some that do best when they are dry. There are some hearts, and I think almost all hearts—that are best plowed after a shower of heavenly love has fallen upon them. They are in a grateful frame of mind for mercies received and then the story of a dying Savior comes to them as just that which will touch the strings of their hearts. Anyway, dear Friends, I would like to pass the question around, Have you been tilled? Has your heart been tilled? Has the soil of your heart been turned up? Have the secret things of your heart been discovered and brought to light, just as the plow turns up the ants’ nest? Have you been brought to know your own corruptions? Are there straight furrows right through you so that you can cry out, “O God, You have broken me in pieces, be pleased to come to my help”? Then I am glad of it. You are ready to despair of yourself, but I am not ready to despair for you. You tremble, but I am encouraged. I rejoice, not that you are made sorry, but that you sorrow to repentance after a godly manner! God has broken your heart and I know that He will bind it up. If He has plowed you, He will sow you, as He said to the mountains of Israel, “I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.”  
IV. UNLESS GOD HAS TILLED THE HEART, IT CANNOT BE SOWN WITH ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS.  
After plowing, there comes the sowing. When the heart is ready, God sows it—sows it with the best of wheat. The wise farmer does not sow tail corn but, as Isaiah says, he casts in “the principal wheat.” The seed which God sows is living seed. If a farmer were to sow boiled seed that has lost its vitality, what would be the good of it? But he sows living seed. And so the Truth of God which Jesus Christ preaches and bids us to scatter, is living wheat—living seed—and when that drops into the soil, God watches over it. The grub may come and the crow may come, but none of these shall get the seed—  
*“For Grace insures the crop”—*  
and up it shall spring—“first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” It shall grow, for God has prepared the soil for it!  
Now, I want to scatter a handful of the good Seed of the Kingdom. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Trust Jesus, and you are saved. There—I saw a handful of that Seed go on the wayside and another handful went upon some of you who are choked with thorns. But if there is a broken heart here, the Seed has fallen upon good ground, for that broken heart says, “What? If I trust Christ, shall I be saved?” Yes, you will be saved in a moment! Every sin forgiven you in a moment, for Jesus Christ took your place and stood and suffered all the punishment of your sins! Therefore God having been just in punishing Christ instead of you, can let you go free, and yet be just as though He had sent you to Hell! If you trust Christ, the merit of His suffering and the virtue of His righteousness shall be yours. You shall go your way rejoicing because you have peace with God through Jesus Christ! Will you believe or not, Sinner? God give you the Grace to trust Christ! Trust Him now. And if you do, then I shall know that God has plowed you, that God has prepared you before He bade me drop in the Seed! Let those of us who know the power of prayer drag the harrow across the field, for when the Seed is once in, it needs harrowing. Thus let us preach the Word, and thus let us pray that the Seed may take root, spring up, grow and bring forth a hundredfold! So sinners shall be saved and so God shall be glorified!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ECCLESIASTES 11:6-10; 12.

Ecclesiastes 11:6. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. It is our business to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom, to sow it broadcast, to sow it at all times—“In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand.” The result of our sowing does not rest with us, but with the great Lord of the Harvest. Some of the Seed may fall by the wayside, some among thorns, some upon a rock, or upon rocky ground with only a thin layer of earth; but if God has called us to be sowers, and we really sow Gospel Seed, some of it will fall into good ground and bring forth fruit, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or even a hundredfold!

7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. And as it is so pleasant for the natural eyes to behold the natural sun, how much more pleasant is it for the spiritual eyes to behold the Sun of Righteousness! Sweet as the light of the sun is, the light of the Sun of Righteousness is far sweeter.

8, 9. But if a man lives many years, and rejoices in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know you that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Nobody in his senses supposes that Solomon exhorted young men to walk according to their own heart and according to the sight of their eyes! This is a common way of speaking—as we may say to a man who is going to excess in drink, “Well, drink your full, and be drunk; but you will have to suffer for it. It will certainly exact a penalty at your hands by-and-by.” Nobody would be so foolish as to say that we had exhorted the man to drunkenness! On the contrary, we did, as it were, warn him not to continue in his evil course by reminding him of the penalty which would assuredly follow. So here Solomon seems to say, “Do this if you will. Do it if you dare. But remember that there is a Judgment Day coming and God will judge you for all these things—and according to these things will He measure out your doom.”

10. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart and put away evil from your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. There is no doubt that if we were holy, we would be happy. So, if we advise men to put away sorrow from their heart, we must remind them that they cannot do it except by putting away sin. The roots of evil must be cleared away, otherwise, in the long run, to cut down the shoots and leave the roots may be but to strengthen the evil. The removal of sorrow can only be effected by going deeper and clearing the heart of sin—and this can only be accomplished by God’s Grace.

Ecclesiastes 12:1. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them. Do not give God the dregs of life. Do not offer in sacrifice to Him anything that is worn out. Remember that among the first fruits which the Jews were to bring to the priest to be offered on God’s altar, there were to be “green ears of corn, dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.” The Lord delights to have the hearts of His people while they are yet children. The Lord said through Hosea the Prophet, “I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms,” as if, while they were but little, God had taught them to take their first steps in walking. There is also that passage in the prophecy of Jeremiah, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” God delights in those early evidences of love in the morning of life, while the dew is upon everything and there is a sparkling freshness all around. I pray that you who are young will remember your Creator in the days of your youth!

2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the star, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain. As they do in old age, when troubles seem to multiply and the brightness of life seems to have gone.

3, 4. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the birds, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low. This is a wonderfully vivid description of the failure of our natural powers. “The keepers of the house shall tremble”— these are our arms which are the guardians of the house of our body. We naturally thrust out our hands and arms to protect ourselves if we are likely to fall, so they are “the keepers of the house.” “The strong men shall bow themselves,” that is, our legs and knees begin to shake. “The grinders cease because they are few.” Our teeth gradually decay and, at last, fall from their places. They are like the first falling stones of a decaying wall, tottering to show how the rest will soon follow. “Those that look out of the windows are darkened.” The eyes begin to lose their quickness of sight and fresh windows—double windows—are sometimes needed to assist the failing sight. “The doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low.” The voice fails. Then there comes sleeplessness, so that the first little bird that chirps in the morning wakes up the aged man. And as for music, his ears sometimes fail to catch the sweetest melody and his own voice is unable to attune itself as once it did—“All the daughters of music shall be brought low.”

5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish. This is one of the most beautiful pieces of poetic description that were ever penned! Here we have a true picture of the nervousness which creeps over men in the decline of life. Then there is the flourishing of the almond tree—there are many before me now whose white hair shows that the almond tree is flourishing!

5. And the grasshopper shall be a burden. Those things that we treated lightly in our youth become a very heavy burden in our later years. A little work wearies, a little care fatigues and a little trouble frets us as it never used to do.

5. And desire shall fail. The whole nature becomes more calm and less ambitious—and less ardent than it used to be.  
5, 6. Because man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. “The silver cord” is the spinal marrow, which gradually relaxes, for the strength and power of it are gone. The whole frame begins to show symptoms of the paralysis which is creeping on. “The golden bowl” is the skull, which contains the brain, and whoever has seen a skull must see how appropriate the figure is. Then, in “the pitcher” and “the wheel” we have a reference to the circulation of the blood of which Solomon seems to have had at least some inklings. There have been writers who have affirmed that the entire system of anatomy might very well be gathered from these words. They are wonderful, not only because of the poetic imagery which is on the surface, but also because of the depth of meaning which lies beneath.  
7. Then shall the dust return to the Earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Thus will it happen to us all unless Christ shall first come. The machinery of our being will stand still. The fountain of life will be dry; no longer will the living floods rush through their appointed courses as they used to do. Please remember that we are not merely talking about people in the street, of whom we know nothing, but about ourselves, also, for we are mortal—so we must die. Let us believe this and prepare for it.  
8. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity. This seems to be the conclusion to which Solomon came by the experiment of his own life, as well as by the teaching of God. This Book of Ecclesiastes begins thus—“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”  
9. And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. That man is not fit to teach who does not give good heed and set his words in order. He who says whatever comes first into his mind, only gives out chaff which the wind drives away. But he who would scatter his seed broadcast must take care that he has in his seedbasket good seed that is worth sowing in the broad furrows of the worldfield.  
10. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words. The Hebrew expression means words of delight, for words that delight the ear may help to win the heart and so prove to be “acceptable words.”  
10, 11. And that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and the words of scholars are as well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. The true preacher’s words pierce us like the sharp ox-goads pierce the cattle, but they are also like nails that are driven into the wood, and clinched so that they cannot come out. There must be something to stir our emotions, and something to retain in our memory. We need the goads, for we are like the ox that is slow at the plow. And we need to have the nails well driven into us for our memory is often like a rotten piece of wood which lets the nail slip out as soon as it has to bear any weight. May the Holy Spirit make all of us, who are preachers, to be wise so as to know how to use the goad and how to drive the nail!  
12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there in no end: and much study is a weariness of the flesh. That is what Solomon said and he had never seen the British Museum, or the Bodleian and other noted libraries, for, if he had done so, he would have said with an emphasis, “There is no end,” for the books of his day could scarcely have been one in a thousand, or one in a million, compared with those which are now produced! I should not wonder, however, if the one in a million was quite worth the million. There are many books made that may benefit the printer, the publisher, and the bookseller, but they are not likely to benefit anybody else!  
13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Reverent walking before the Most High. Reconciliation to Him so that we can thus walk and thus live, and all this proved by a life of obedience to His commandments—“This is the whole duty of man.”  
14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil. Notice that expression, “every secret thing.” It is not merely our public actions that God will judge, otherwise we might be more at our ease—but He takes account of our most private thoughts, words, deeds and intents. Who among us can endure that ordeal? Yet we must endure it if we are to stand before Him. O Lord, prepare us, by Your Infinite Grace, through faith in Your dear Son, and by the regenerating work of Your gracious Spirit, for this solemn testing time! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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HOPE FOR YOUR FUTURE  
NO. 2125

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

**“I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings.”  
Ezekiel 36:11.**

THESE words were spoken to the mountains, valleys and rivers of Judah—and we know that the Lord cares not for hills and rivers, but He speaks altogether for the sake of His people. The blessing to the land was intended to be a blessing to the people. We shall do no violence to the text if we take the promise as belonging to ourselves and plead it before the Mercy Seat, trusting that the Lord will do this unto us and that our latter end may be better than our beginning.

Have you ever noticed that when nations fall they seldom rise again? Babylon and Nineveh became mountains of rubbish. If the Medo-Persian kingdom falls, the throne is never revived. If Greece and ancient Rome cease from their eminence, we see no more of them than their ruins. But God’s people are not numbered among the nations—so that when Israel falls she revives again. Though for many centuries the ancient people have been scattered and peeled, derided and despised, yet every Israelite may put down his foot with joyous tread and say, “No, Israel, you shall never perish!”

Even in her ashes live her fires and the days shall come when Israel shall acknowledge her Messiah and her God will fulfill the promise of the text, “I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” I believe that to be the first sense of the passage—but since all the blessings of the Covenant which belong to the seed according to the flesh do spiritually belong to all those who are in that Covenant according to the spirit, we shall take this word as spoken to all Believers.

If a hypocrite falls, he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again. He is a meteor that flashes across the sky and disappears—a wandering star for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Let Judas fall from his apostleship and there is no restoring the son of perdition. But how different is the case of God’s own when they fall! Alas, that they should do so! Yet of them it is said, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” Peter, at a look from his Master, wept bitterly, and lived to say, “You know that I love You.”

There is hope of a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, for there is life in it and where there is life there is hope. If Mordecai is of the royal seed, the enemy shall never prevail against him. There may come dark times of backsliding, but surely the redeemed of the Lord shall come again with mourning and repenting and they shall seek Him from whom they have wandered. I am not, however, going to dwell much upon the dark side of the subject of declension. I shall invite your attention to the

gracious promise that God will make things better for us than they were at our beginnings.

First, I shall answer the question, what is there, then, so good in our beginnings? In the second place, if so good, can anything be better? And, in the third place, how can we secure these better things so that our life shall verify the statement of the text, “I will do better unto you than at your beginnings”?

I. WHAT IS THERE, THEN, SO GOOD IN OUR BEGINNINGS? Let us look back. Some of us have been converted to God for a good number of years, now, and all that while we have enjoyed spiritual life. Others are young beginners, but their present enjoyment will assist them to answer the question—What is there so good about those first days? We read of our first love as “the love of our espousals” and we all know there was something specially charming about those first hours when forgiving love was precious to us and we rejoiced in the Lord.

One choice enjoyment was our vivid sense of pardon. We knew that we were forgiven—we had not the shadow of a doubt of it. We were so dirty lately that being washed from our stains, we saw the change. It would not have been possible for Satan, then, to make us doubt it. When we stood at the foot of the Cross and said, “Thus my sins were washed away,” then things went well with us. When Substitution was a novelty to us and when we seemed to hear a voice like that of the angels before the Throne of God, singing, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”—we all knew, then, that we had looked to Jesus, for we felt that we could look nowhere else.

We knew, then, we were newly cleansed sinners! Oh, that blessed period! Our earthly comforts were forgotten in the greater sweetness and our earthly sorrows ceased because guilt was gone. Taken out of the bonds of iniquity, our hearts danced at the very sound of the redeeming name. We sang, “I am forgiven! I am forgiven!” We wanted to tell the angels this strange wonder of almighty love. That was one of the good things of our beginning. We recollect very well, too, that we had, then, a delicious enjoyment of the good things of the Covenant of Grace. We did not know a tenth of what we know now, but we intensely enjoyed what we did know.

When the Israelites first came into Canaan they found it to be a land that flowed with milk and honey. It became afterwards a stony land through their sins, but rare clusters then grew in Eshcol and the wild bees made honey plentifully, even in such a strange place as the carcass of a lion. When we first came to Christ it was so with us as to the things of God—they were all sweets. We saw one Covenant blessing, then another and then another. And we were enraptured with each one. Whether in the body or out of the body we could scarcely tell, for we did not look, then, without tasting and we did not taste, then, without feasting—and we did not feast, then, without feasting again! We grudged the world the hours we spent in business—we wanted to get back to our Bibles—or to the assembly of the saints.

Our Lord was a precious Christ, then, and exceedingly lovely in our eyes that had been so newly opened. Everything about Him, His people, His Word, His day and His Cross was astonishing to us and filled us with an intense delight! It was “happy days,” indeed, with us then. That was another blessed point in our beginnings. And, at that time, we were like the children of Israel in a third matter, namely, that we had repeated victories. Do you remember when your Jericho fell down—when a high walled-up sin that you feared would never yield to you, was brought down suddenly?

As Israel went from victory to victory and slew king after king, so in those early days did you. As quickly as conscience revealed a sin you smote it as with a two-edged sword. You sometimes wondered at professors, that they could live as they did. You felt you could not. Your hand was in for fighting and, like Joshua, you did not stop. The day was not long enough for you in which to slay your sins! You felt inclined to bid the sun stand still and the moon rest so that you might make full work of blessed carnage in putting sin altogether to the sword.

You have had a good many defeats since then, it may be, for which you cannot excuse yourself—but then, “Victory!” was your watchword and you went on to realize it in the name of the eternal God. From day to day, though attacked by the uprising of corruptions, you said, “In the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” And you sometimes cried like she of old, “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength!” You marveled to see how the adversary was subdued beneath the feet of your faith! Those were good times, were they not—those beginnings? In those days, you had great delight in prayer. When alone with Christ, it was Heaven below—and in Prayer Meetings, when God’s people were warm at heart—how you delighted to unite with them!

The preaching was marrow and fatness to you. You did not mind walking a long way on a wet night to hear about your Lord and Master. It may be there was no cushion to the seat or you had to stand in the aisle. You did not mind that—but you are getting wonderfully dainty now—you cannot hear the poor preacher whose voice was once like music to you. You cannot enjoy the things of God as you once did. Whose fault is that? The kitchen is the same and the food the same— I fear the appetite has gone.

How ravenous I was after God’s Word—how I would wake early in the morning to read those books that are full of the deep things of God! I wanted none of your nonsensical novels, nor your weekly tales for which some of you pine, like children for sugar sticks. Then one fed on Manna that came from Heaven, on Christ Himself! Those were good times in which everything was delightful. You heard a Gospel preacher and perhaps he spoiled the Queen’s English—but you did not care a bit about that. You were hungry and you minded not the knives and the tablecloths—you wanted meat, and plenty of it—and so long as it was good spiritual meat, your souls were delighted! That is one of the good things of our beginnings.

In those days we were full of living fruitfulness. I hope we have not lost it. Just as the mountains of Judea dropped with wine and ran with milk through the abundance of the soil, so was it with us, then. We could do

anything! Sometimes, in looking back, we wonder how we ever attempted so much. We were not so anxious to keep up our spiritual life as we were to spend what we had got. We thought, then, we would push the Church before us and drag the world behind us! What marvels we were going to do! Yes, and we did many of them by God’s good Grace!

Then, if we had but little strength, yet we kept the Lord’s Word. If we had but one talent, we made as much use of it, perhaps, as some do with ten. I love to see you young Christians as active as ever you can be—and I am going to put my hand on young heads and say, “This is right. Do all you can. You may not be so lively by-and-by.” If you are not earnest when you begin, what will you soon be? I want you to maintain that earnestness and to let it increase, for no man is doing too much for Jesus! No one is too consecrated! No one is too self-denying! No one is too enthusiastic! There has never been seen on the face of the earth, yet, a man who has laid himself out too much for the cause and kingdom of our Master. That will never be.

But it is one of the good points of our beginnings that we were full of fruitfulness for the Lord our God. This is because the saints begin generally with abounding love. Oh, how we loved the Savior when first we discovered how He had loved us with an everlasting love! When we see that the dunghill is never to be our portion again, but yon bright Glory at the right hand of the Eternal—oh, then we love our Savior with all our hearts! I am not saying that we do not now love even more—but it is a good beginning when we overflow with love to our Lord Jesus.

II. I could thus keep on reminding you of the days gone by, but I do not care to do so. I am going now, in the second place, to answer the question, CAN ANYTHING BE BETTER THAN THIS? Well, it would be a very great pity if there could not be because I am sure we, when we were young beginners, were not much to boast of and all the joy we had was, after all, but little compared with what is revealed in the Word of God! We ought to get to something better—and it would be a miserable thing if we were to get “small by degrees, and miserably less.”

It would not look like Christian perseverance if our light were to shine less and less unto the perfect darkness! No, but it is to shine more and more unto the perfect day—and in the beginning our day is only twilight! In coming to God at first we are only in the outer courts—we have not yet entered the Holy of Holies of inward experience—we stand in the outer court. We are wheat in the blade as yet. Ask the farmer whether he thinks that the green blade is the best thing on the farm. He says, “Yes, for the present.” But if it is a green blade next July he will not think so. There is something better than before.

All the good that God gives us draws something better behind it. And let me whisper it—there is a best thing yet to come—not yet revealed unto eye or ear of saint, but it will be ours by-and-by when our Lord comes. In what respects, then, can our future be better than that which is behind? I answer very readily, faith may be stronger. By the Grace of God it will be firmer and more robust. At first it shoots up like the lily, very beautiful but fragile. Afterwards it is like the oak with great roots that grip the soil and rugged branches that defy the winds. Faith in the young beginner is soon cast down and doubts and fears prevail—but if we grow in Divine Grace we become rooted and grounded.

In these days, when it is fashionable to sneer at the doctrines of Scripture and nobody is thought to be sensible who believes anything, the young Believer is apt to be staggered. But it would take a great many of the critics and divines of the present day, with all their skepticism, to shake some of us. We have tasted and handled and lived upon these things—and being established in them we are not to be moved from the hope of our calling! Though all the wiseacres in the world should dip their pens in tenfold darkness and write it down as proven that there is no such thing as light, we have seen it with our eyes—we live in it and we are not to be moved from the eternal verities. This is something better than early faith, is it not? Go on and obtain it!

Again, God gives to His people, as they advance, much more knowledge. At first they enjoy what they know, but they hardly know what they enjoy! As we grow in Grace we know more. We are surprised to see that what we thought to be one blessing is 50 blessings in one. We learn the art of dissecting the Truth of God—taking it to pieces and seeing the different veins of Divine thought that run through it! And then we see with delight blessing after blessing conveyed to us by the Person and Sacrifice of our exalted Lord. Brothers and Sisters, if years and experience make us know more, our present is better than our beginnings!

Love to Christ gets to be more constant . It is a passion always, but with Believers who grow in Grace it comes to be a principle as well as a passion. If they are not always blazing with love, there is a good fire banked up within the soul. You know how you bank your fire up when you come to chapel in the evening, and have nobody at home, and want to keep the fire alight till you get home? That is often the condition of a Christian. Even if we do not talk much about assurance and say nothing about getting near perfection, yet we lie humbly before God and do not doubt that we love Him. We are sure that we do, for it becomes a daily delight to us to speak with Christ and, in the speaking, we feel our love glowing!

You do not always feel that you love those whom you never see—but when you talk to the dear objects of your love, your heart is moved. As one of the old Puritans used to say, our Graces are not apparent unless they are in exercise. You walk through a preserve and there may be partridges and pheasants and hares all round you—but you will not see them till one flies out of its hiding, or a hare starts up before you. You see them in motion—but while they were quiet in the bushes you did not observe them. So may love to Christ and all Christian virtues lie concealed till they are called into action. Our Lord’s dear Presence attracts them all out of their hiding places and then you perceive that love was always there, and there in strength, too, though it was not always on your lips nor even in your thoughts.

As Christians grow in Divine Grace, prayer becomes more mighty. If the

Lord builds you up into true spiritual manhood, you will know how to wrestle. Why did not Jacob meet the angel the first time when he went to Bethel? He lay down and slept, and dreamed a dream. He was a spiritual babe and a dream suited his capacity. But when he came back—a man who had grown by years of experience—then the Angel of God came and wrestled with him! It is one part of the teaching of Divine experience that we grow stronger in the art of prayer and know how to win from God greater things than we ever dreamt of asking at first. God grant you better things in the matter of prayer than at your beginnings!

So, I think, it is in usefulness. Growing Christians and full-grown Christians are more useful than beginners. They may not, apparently, be doing so much but they are doing it better and there is more result. Their fruit, if not quite so plentiful, is of better quality and more mellow. If there are fewer fruits, they are larger ones and each one of a finer flavor. In fact, this one thing is clear of all Believers who have grown in Grace—that the work of Grace in them is nearer completion. They are getting nearer Heaven and they are getting more fit for it. Some of you are sitting very loose by this world. You are expecting very soon to hear the summons which will call you to quit these earth-born things.

As ripe fruit comes from the tree with a gentle touch, so is it getting to be with you—the world had a greater hold upon you when you were young than it has now—and your thoughts of departure from it are more frequent and more full of desire than they used to be. You have come to look at death as though it were only a removal to a neighboring town, or like stepping across the street. You have looked at it so long that you can say like one I knew, “I have dipped my foot in the river every morning and I shall not be at all afraid to ford it when the time comes.” The Lord has made you to stand on tiptoe, ready to rise. You can say, “The time of my departure is at hand.” Your chariot is at the door!

Well, now, this is something better than your beginnings! The old Christian may look back upon the new wine and say regretfully, “How it sparkled and effervesced! But the old is better.” You may think of the days of your youthful vigor when the body kept pace with the spirit—and you were young and full of nerve and muscle and enthusiasm. Those animal spirits have now gone from you and you are sobered and even slow. You have become old, and, perhaps, forgetful of many things. You go over the old story, now, instead of inventing new ones. But then, the old story—the old, old story—is as new to you as at the first and you love it better than ever before!

You cannot be driven from it now. I should think Satan himself would hardly like to meddle with some of you—he feels that he cannot shake your faith in the living God! Or if he should shake you, you would in turn shake him! He has had so many brushes with you during the last 50 years that he begins to know that you carry the true Jerusalem blade— and he had rather deal with other folks who are fond of the “modern thought” wooden sword! You have come to the land Beulah and you are sitting on the brink of Jordan, waiting to cross over to the Celestial City. Surely, you have realized that God is dealing better with you than at your beginnings!

III. I will end with the last, which is a practical matter. How can we, dear Friends, we who are beginning a Christian life, HOW CAN WE SECURE THAT IT WILL BE BETTER WITH US, BY-AND-BY, THAN IT IS NOW? Alas, we have seen some start splendidly in appearance. They did run well but they were soon out of breath or turned aside. We hear no more of them. Our fear should be lest the like should happen to us. How can we act so as to hold on our way and go from good to better?

I answer, first, keep to the simplicity of your first faith. Never get away from that! You remember the story we used to tell of poor Jack the huckster, who sang—

*“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,*

*But Jesus Christ is my All in All”?*  
Questioners could not make him doubt. He said that he could not doubt that he was a poor sinner and nothing at all, for he knew he was! And why should he doubt that Jesus Christ was his All in All? The Word of God says so—why should he doubt it? Here he stood and would not budge an inch.

By God’s Grace, neither will I. The coney is safe in the rock and he knows better than to come out. I hide in Jesus, and there I mean to remain, whatever the critics or the cultured may say. Jesus is my All in All and I am nobody! My life cost Him His death and His death is my life. He took my sin and died—I take His righteousness and live. You may laugh, but I win. You may sneer, but I sing. O dear Friend, fly to Jesus and hide in Him and stay there! Never get an inch beyond the Cross, for, if you do, you will have to come back. That is your place till you die—you are nothing— Christ is everything!

You have to sink lower, and lower and lower—and in your esteem Christ must rise higher, and higher and higher. The “nothing at all” must be more emphatic the older you grow—and the “All in All” must be more emphatic, too. If you get to borrowing wings and trying to fly up with speculations about what you may be in yourself, you will end in coming down heavily with a bruised heart—if not with broken bones. Keep at the foot of the Cross and you will maintain—no, you will increase your joy in the Lord! At the same time, dear Friends, practice great watchfulness. Many a child of God has to weep for months because he did not watch for minutes. He closed his eyes a little while and said, “It is all right with me.” And in that little while the enemy came and sowed tares among his wheat and great mischief came because of a little nap.

We ought to have the eyes of a lynx and they ought never to be closed. We know not which way the most temptation will come. We need to be guarded on all sides and remember the words of our Master, “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.” You will not keep your joy and grow in Divine Grace unless you watch. The next advice is grow in dependence upon God. For your watchfulness, depend upon His watching. You cannot keep yourself unless He keeps you. You must watch, but it is He that keeps Israel and does neither slumber nor sleep. Remember that. Determine, dear Friends, at the very beginning, to be thorough.  
I love to see young Christians very scrupulous about the mind of the

Lord. I would not have you say, “Oh, that is non-essential!” Obedience to a command may not be essential to your salvation but it must be essential to the completeness of your holiness. “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Safe walking can only come of careful walking. I have known the time when I felt afraid to put down one foot before the other for fear I should go wrong—and I believe I was never so right as when that feeling was on me continually. You young people must cultivate more and more the Grace of holy fear. You must dread daily lest in anything you should omit to do your Lord’s will, or should trespass against Him. In this way your joy shall be maintained and you shall be settled after your old estates—and God will do better unto you than at your beginnings.

Lastly, seek for more instruction. Try to grow in the knowledge of God that your joy may be full. It will be ill for you to say, “I know I was converted and therefore need not care any further.” That will not do. No, no, in conversion you began a race from which you are never to cease! You have been born-again and therefore you need spiritual food. You enjoy spiritual life and you are to nurture that life till it is conformed to the perfect image of Christ. Onward, Brothers and Sisters! Onward, for that which is beyond will repay your labor!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Ezekiel 36:1-15; 23-34.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—675, 889, 867.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
DEAR FRIENDS—In the present epidemic we are, most of us, fellowsufferers. Let us endeavor to be spiritually profited thereby. We would be speedily restored but we would also be graciously instructed. The comfort and joy of life are dependent upon the Divine will as much as life itself. We must look up to the Lord for the joy of our Graces as well as for the existence of our hope. In all things we must pray. The preacher begs that he may not be forgotten by his hearers and readers to whom he hopes speedily to return in renewed health.  
Yours most heartily,  
Mentone, Jan. 11, 1890.

*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1921 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CLEANSING—A COVENANT BLESSING

NO. 1921

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

**“Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” Ezekiel 36:25.**

THIS is one of the opening words of the glorious Covenant of Grace. Ezekiel’s copy of the Covenant is full and clear and deserves to be written in letters of gold and hung up in the best chamber of every Believer’s dwelling This is the Magna Charta of saints—the title deed of the land of our inheritance! Glorious Covenant of Grace, our heart delights in every line of promise wherewith you are enriched!

You perceive that this promise deals with sin and it deals with sin because sin broke the first Covenant and thus ruined us all. Sin must be removed before Covenant relationship can be reestablished. Sin must be purged from the conscience before Covenant communion can be enjoyed. Sin must be abhorred before Covenant union can be consummated. Blessed be God, sin shall be washed away, for thus it is written in the Everlasting Covenant!

Sin is the great plague and pest of our lives, now that we are awakened to discern between good and evil, and now that the new heart and the right spirit have been put within us. Is it not well that this cause of misery should be destroyed? It is sin, my Brothers and Sisters, that keeps us away from God. Should not this barrier be utterly broken down and swept out of the way? It was because of sin that we needed to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Should not that atoning death effectually kill sin? Sin has done all the mischief. At first it withered Paradise and sowed the earth with thorns and thistles. And ever since it has brought forth the same painful crop. Still it saps our strength; it destroys our comfort; it robs us of usefulness—it is the foe of all good—it is all evils in one. O curse of curses, fountain of Hell and father of the devil, you unutterably horrible monster, Sin! Shall we not be doubly blessed when we are rid of you? We certainly should never fear death if we had no sin—neither need we even fear the devil, himself, for, if there were no traitor within the city, Mansoul might laugh to scorn all the attacks of her enemies outside.

Sin, to the awakened sinner, is his burden, his misery, his horror. It is a nightmare which haunts him! He can never escape from it. Like David, he cries, “My sin is ever before me.” Even when sin is forgiven, the memory of it often makes a man go softly all his days. We could bear disease if we were cured of sin. We could bear the world’s troubles if there were not these spiritual sorrows. We could be content to pine in prison on bread and water all the rest of our natural lives if we could be clear from sin. Yes, I guarantee you that the darkest dungeon would be a bright paradise to a Believer, if there he could be exempt from the temptation, from the remembrance and from the presence of sin! It is, therefore, a very blessed thought on the part of our God to make the Covenant to bear so much upon our sin and our sinfulness—and especially to make it open with this unconditional promise of infinite love—“Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” As the laver at the Tabernacle door, so stands this promise at the entrance of the Covenant. Let us wash and be clean.

I. Our first remark at this time shall be that GOD BEGINS TO DEAL WITH HIS PEOPLE WHILE THEY ARE YET IN SIN. The text evidently implies this. He does not wait until they are clean before He bestows His love and pity upon them. He does not wait till they have saved themselves and then comes to them with a nominal salvation. He does not make promises of purification to them upon condition that they cleanse themselves, but He comes to them according to the riches of His Grace, even when they are dead in trespasses and sins! He finds them in all their defilement, rebellion and iniquity—and He deals with them just as they are. Jesus saves sinners! God’s love comes to those who in no degree merit it. His Grace stoops to the ruin of the Fall and lifts us up from it.

These are very simple words, you say, but there are those here to whom these plain sentences will sound like the ringing of the silver trumpets of jubilee! I know them, for I once was one of them—they are a people sighing because of their defilement which they mourn over, but cannot remove. Dear Hearts, you have not to look for any good in yourselves when you come to God—you are to come just as you are. However filthy, however enslaved by idols you may have been, however much your own heart condemns you, you are to come to Jesus on terms, not of merit, but of Grace! And you are to approach Him as sinners, without any further qualification. Christ is a Savior who came to save His people from their sins. And His salvation, therefore, begins with them while they are yet in their sins. He does not wait till He spies out some sound spot in the patient, but when he is covered all over with leprosy from head to foot—and there is not one sound speck on him as big as the point of a pin—then it is that the Great Physician comes and makes the leprous one to be clean!

This is plain enough, if you will look at the text, for, first, it is clear that those to whom God makes His promise of His Covenant are unclean and unfit for fellowship with Him. He speaks of their filthiness, yes of, “all their filthiness,” so that there was much of it, for God’s “alls” are, by no means, trifles. There were also idols about and many of them, for He speaks of “all your idols.” These are abominations unto the Lord, but there they are, and they must be put out of the way. He says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean.” Not, “You are clean and, therefore, you may come to Me,” but, “I will come to you and make you clean.”

Some time ago we explained the type of the ashes of the red cow, how they were kept in water, ready to be used and applied to all persons who became ceremonially unclean. After this water had been sprinkled upon them, they were permitted to return to the camp and go up to the Lord’s Tabernacle. But until that purification had been applied, they were shut out from fellowship with God and His people. The people of God could not converse with them. The priest of God could not commune with them. God, Himself, would have nothing to do with them. They were unclean and so were set aside under a kind of quarantine not to come near the camp lest the rest of the people should be polluted by them.

Now that is just where God finds His people when He begins with them. They are not fit for communion. They are not fit that the saints of God should associate with them, nor that they should stand in the Holy Place of the Most High. They are not fit for any service, for the Lord will not have the unclean to bear His vessels. Their prayers are defiled; their praises are defiled; there is nothing about them but what is unclean. In such a condition the man could do nothing acceptable to God—his uncleanness put him out of court and rendered him altogether incapable of pleasing the pure and holy God. He that was unclean made everything unclean that he touched—the pollution was most contagious. If he sat upon a chair, no one else might sit there, for the seat was unclean. If he touched a vessel in the tent, the vessel was unclean and the tent was unclean! He was a source of defilement and wherever he went, he spread pollution. Such is every sinner in the sight of God. He is a well of foul waters, a fountain of bitterness. He is defiled and defiling. The God of all Grace visits His people at the first when they are in this terrible condition!

I may be speaking to one who is ready to cry out, “I am not fit to be in the House of God tonight. I am not worthy to lift my eyes to the place where His honor dwells.” That is where He finds you—just there—and it is to you in this sad position that the Covenant of Grace refers. Our Redeemer comes to us in our very worst estate! As I was speaking to an aged Brother in Christ, who is, probably, very near Home, he said, “I feel what a blessed thing it is to still come to Christ with the cry, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I do not rest upon past experience, nor upon anything else, but I constantly begin at the beginning. I come to Jesus even as I did at the first, only more humbly and with a more intense sincerity than I ever knew before.”

I am sure there is wisdom in this course and in no other. If the Covenant of Grace did not deal with sinners as sinners, I should be afraid to come to Christ. But because it opens its mouth wide to me while I am yet unclean and polluted by sin, I feel that it meets my case. The Free Grace of the Covenant does not come half way and say to me, when I am nearly dead, “Get up and take what I give you and I will deliver you.” But it comes, like the good Samaritan, where I am. It sees me to be unconscious and it awakens me. When it sees me conscious of my wounds, it pours in the oil and the wine. When it sees my weakness to be so great that I cannot stir a step, it sets me on its own beast and takes me to the inn. When it marks my utter poverty, so that I am not worth so much as two pence, it does not ask me to pay my own way, but discharges everything for me and leaves its promise that whatever more is needed shall be freely given! O blessed charity of Covenant Love! It will not be turned aside by our abominable filthiness, nor will it leave us because of our idols! Glorious Grace, which begins with us where sin and death have left us!

You may notice in the text, or gather it from it by clear inference— that these people with whom God dealt were not only unclean, but they could not cleanse themselves. It is a rule with miracles, as well miracles of the Spirit as miracles of the body, that God never does what others can do. As long as there is strength left in the natural laws, God does not go beyond them, but our extremity is God’s opportunity. Now, inasmuch as the text brings in God saying, “then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean,” it is clear that this evil could not be cleansed without the Divine interposition. There was no other way for the purging of the chosen ones but by the direct interposition of the Lord! Oh, but divines have fine notions nowadays! It appears, according to the latest information, that children are not now born in sin as they used to be! They say that certain highly favored children commence life in a most extraordinary way—they are born gracious! They do not need any degeneration or conversion, for the stock is so superior that the branches naturally bring forth good fruit!

I have never read of such people in the Scriptures, but I am often told that there are such, nowadays. At least their parents and their parsons say so. Of old it used to be, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and only, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” That, of course, is very old-fashioned doctrine! Well, when we have a new-fashioned god, I dare say we shall have new-fashioned truth—but at present, the Truth of God seems to me to be as Immutable as God Himself! If it is true, today, it was true yesterday and will be true even to the end, even as God, Himself, changes not. As for myself, I know that I was born in sin and I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. I know, also, that I once tried to purge and cleanse my own heart and labored at it, I believe, as honestly as any person that lived. I went about to seek a righteousness of my own and I endeavored to stop all sin—and my failure was complete!

I do not advise any other person to try self-healing. It brought me to despair. It drove me, almost, to the loss of reason. The more I scrubbed and cleansed, the blacker I became. I washed my Hottentot self and he was more of a Hottentot after I had bathed him than he was before! I only saw how black the black man was when I had whitened him, for the moment, with my soap. Job said, “If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch and my own clothes shall abhor me.” And it was so with me. Therefore I speak of my own experience and, taught by my own failure, I cannot urge any man to seek cleansing by his own doings or efforts, but I urge him to accept that cleansing which God has promised in the Covenant of Grace.

Cleansing cannot come from any other place, therefore seek it of the Lord who says, “I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean.” If you go about through Heaven, earth and Hell, you shall find no other detergent that shall take away sin but the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You shall sooner redden every wave of the Atlantic as you plunge your hands in it than you shall take away one spot of condemnation from off your soul! There is your sin and there it must eternally be unless Jehovah, Himself, shall blot it out! He that is filthy shall be filthy still, throughout the ages, unless the Divine One interpose. Our only hope lies in this faithful Word of God, “I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean.” The Lord begins to save His people when as yet they have no strength and cannot cleanse themselves.

More than that, when God begins to deal with His people, many of them have a special filthiness. “From all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” When He begins with them, they are given up to their idols. Other lords have dominion over them and these lords lead them into filthiness. Some upon whom God has looked with everlasting love have become, before their conversion, openly, manifestly, loathsomely filthy— and yet He begins in His Grace with them! The harlot—she strays into the House of God and feels that she has no right to be there—and yet the day comes when she stands behind the Master, washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head because she has had much forgiven. The man who has been guilty of foul vices, of which we say but little, but which he would gladly weep over with tears of blood at their remembrance—when the Lord of Love comes to such a horrible offender in a way of mercy, He says to him, even to him, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins.”

I am afraid I do not always speak plainly enough, though I try to do so. Let me try again to cast in the big net. The Lord Jesus Christ forgives thieves and robbers, liars and drunks and criminals of all sorts. The Lord Jesus has mercy upon those who have been blasphemers. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” I have seen, with great joy, cases of infidels who have mocked at the Scriptures, denied the Deity of Christ and persecuted God’s people—they have stepped in and heard the Gospel and they have been melted down by it—rescued from their obstinacy and cleansed from their iniquity! In fact, there are such here tonight! “Such were some of you: but you were washed.” Oh, it is not for me to tell all that I know of how the Lord has taken some of the ringleaders in the service of Satan, first in all manner of mischief, and has cast the devil out of them and made them to sit at His feet, clothed and in their right mind! We believe in a sinners’ Gospel. To the guilty we preach remission!

The heathen of old once reported that ours was the religion of the most abandoned. They laughed at Christianity, for they said it was like the building of Rome when Romulus received everybody that was in debt and discontented—and all the criminals from all the towns round about came to make the city of Rome! There is much truth in the statement—it is a very good figure, though meant to be a slander. The Lord does receive the devil’s runaways. If there is one here that is servant to that black master, I would recommend him to run to Christ tonight and not give his master five minutes’ notice. Quit the tyrant’s employment and run for it at once!

But then look at this—the Lord receives sinners to cleanse them. He does not receive them that they may remain as they were! The Lord Jesus receives sinners just as teachers receive children into a Ragged School. It is their glory that it is a Ragged School! The more ragged and the more dirty, the more welcome the child! But why do they receive the ragged child? Why, to wash him, to teach him, to clothe him, to instruct him! We do not receive ragged children for the love of their rags, nor to keep them in their rags—but that they may be taught, cleansed and elevated. Such is my Master’s house of mercy! It is a hospital—sick folk are always welcome. It is not a place for spreading disease, nor for treating it lightly—it is the place where disease is discovered, set apart and made to appear in all its horror—in order that it may be conquered and destroyed! Nobody speaks so sternly against sin as Jesus and those who believe His Gospel, but yet it forever stands true, “This Man receives sinners.” You may come to Jesus, dear Friend, whoever you are! Into whatever sin and iniquity you have plunged, you may come right now without any hesitation or deliberation, for the gate stands wide open and the blessed Lord, with His nail prints still in His hands, stands there to welcome you and say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Still is that declaration grandly true, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Still does God meet men while they are yet in the blackness and filth and degradation of their sin and then and there, just as they are, He says concerning them, “I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” O poor wretched sons of Adam, how earnestly would I invite you to Christ! I preach a Savior for the worst and vilest of you! Oh that you would come to Him! I know your house. It is stuffed full with idols of one sort or another. You delight in strong drink! That is your Moloch, or, perhaps, some sin of the flesh has fascinated you and carried you away—and your house is ruled by Venus and Bacchus and other dunghill deities! Ah me, what chambers of imagery there are in this city! Notwithstanding all that, the Lord of Love will come to your house with His salvation, turn those idols out and reign in their place! Your life, it may be, is full of filthiness and as you sit here you are remembering it to your heart’s sorrow. Be of good cheer, you broken down ones, for the Lord Jesus will come to you just as you are and put your filthiness away!

Do not think that I am talking, now, only to those who have been grossly immoral, though I do speak to them most certainly in literal terms. But even to those who have never sinned after that similitude I speak at this time. Thank God, there are some who have been kept by the restraints of education from ever going into the more outwardly filthy sins. It was so in my case. I might claim as to most actual sins to be blameless, but, oh, if there ever was a wretch on earth that felt his filthiness more than I did, I pity him! I loathed myself—utterly so. How often I wished that I had never been born! It seemed horrible to me that such a being should have lived at all. To have lived so long in sin and unbelief seemed still more a marvel—and though I was not then, 15, it appeared horrible to have lived so long without loving Christ! What an awful wretch I judged myself to be to have been surrounded with such mercy and not to have thought of my God!

Is was shocking beyond measure to have lived those years without love, without trust, without delight in God. I felt myself to be so foul and filthy a thing that I ought to be cast into the common sewer of the universe and swept away. But, oh, this blessed Word of God—“From all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” This is spoken as only God can speak! See, then, how God begins with us, just where we are, to the praise of the Glory of His own Grace. So much upon our first head.

II. The second is this—that GOD PROVIDES FOR THE CLEANSING OF THOSE TO WHOM HE COMES IN SOVEREIGN GRACE. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” He does not ask them to find the purification, but He brings it Himself. Where could this “clean water” be found by mortal man? Though he should climb up to the heights of the Alps to melt the virgin snows, or descend into the deep which couches beneath where come the sparkling springs, yet he could find no “clean water” that could take out the stain of sin! God Himself provides—it is His way—in the mount it shall be seen that He is Jehovah Jireh. The type is carried out in its antitype in this way—that God has provided a system of cleansing men, perfect in itself, just, right and effectual. Pure water is the best of purifiers and the Lord has provided that which is the most sure purification from sin. When, under the old Mosaic Law, they took water, scarlet wool and hyssop—and sprinkled the unclean, he was ceremonially cleansed—and now, under the Gospel, God has provided a wondrous way by which, being Himself perfectly pure, He can put away the impurities of our nature and the iniquities of our lives.

It is a righteous way . Do you need that I explain to you the way in which God puts away our filthiness? Whether you do or not, there are many who do and, therefore, we must have the Gospel over again. You put bread and salt on your table at every meal and even so, every sermon should have the Gospel in it! God must be just. Even if He would forgive sin, He must still be just. Sin must not go unpunished. It would be ruinous that such a thing should be. Therefore the Lord took sin and laid it on His Son, that His Son might bear what was due for our transgressions. This, the Lord Jesus did as our Substitute and Savior. “He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” He made a full Atonement and Expiation for the guilt of men so that, “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In addition to that, God has given the Holy Spirit as a gift of Christ on His Ascension—and that Holy Spirit is here to renew men in their hearts, to take away from them the love of sin, to give them a new life, to create in them a new heart and a right spirit—and so to change their inward longings and desires that their outward conduct shall become altogether different from what it was before. Here are two cleansings—the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—and these are as clean water. God can justly forgive you, my fellow sinner! And God can totally change you and make you to be as though you had been new-born, tonight, and were now to begin afresh. You see it is a clean way which God has devised— there is nothing in it which favors wrong or injustice.

And what a simple way it is, as well as clean! “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” The application of the blood of Jesus Christ to the conscience and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the heart are as simple as the sprinkling of water. The wisdom of God made the rite by which the leper was cleansed under the Law very simple, but even more simple is the act by which God applies the merit of His dear Son to us. Oh, that we might have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on our hearts at once by faith! Oh to feel the Blood of Sprinkling to which every Believer in Christ has come— the blood that “speaks better things than that of Abel!” It is a very simple way.

It is a way of universal adaptation, too, for wherever there is a soul on whom God has looked with love, He can apply to that soul the Blood of Sprinkling. Whoever you may be, you cannot cleanse yourself, but God can sprinkle you with this clean water! He can save you by the merit of His Son and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. No one is outside of this possibility, for the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If you are guilty, tonight, and you cry for mercy, that mercy can come at you and you can come at that mercy, for so has the Lord put it—“Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean.”

It is a way of unfailing efficacy, for He says, “From all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” He does not only attempt the cleansing but He accomplishes it. You may have a thousand sins, but this clean water can put the thousand sins away. Your heart may be a very pandemonium of idols, but the power of the Holy Spirit can break them all to pieces and can do it for you at once. The, “then,” of the text has to do with the time when Israel was full of sin. It has to do with such a time as there is with you unconverted men and women at this hour. Now, even now, in the midst of your filthiness and your idolatry, God can come with a high hand and an outstretched arm and commence the work by which you shall be perfectly delivered! Though your heart is like the Augean stable, the labors of Hercules shall be outdone by the wonders of Jesus! He shall cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Your hardness of heart, your pride, your lust, your unbelief, your enmity, your fickleness shall all go down at a stroke, as when Dagon fell before the Ark of God. Oh, do it, Lord! Do it, we pray You, with many that have strayed into the Tabernacle tonight, that Your name may have the Glory!

Thus we have come so far and we see clearly that God begins with His people in their filthiness and provides the means of their cleansing.  
III. Thirdly, GOD HIMSELF APPLIES THIS MEANS OF CLEANSING. See how He puts it—“Then will I sprinkle”—“I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.”  
Ah, dear Sirs! If God had only provided the medicine, but had never brought it to us, we could not have found it, reached it, or applied it! If He had made the plaster and had left it by the side of the wounded man, the poor wretch would have died, for he never could have laid it to his own wound. The same Grace which “first devised the way to save rebellious man” carries out all the plan from the beginning to the end! Who can sprinkle clean water on the foul sinner? “I will do it,” says the Lord. I am sure that I speak to many Brothers and Sisters here whose experience will bear out what I am going to say—it was the Lord who made us first to feel that we were filthy and that we loved idols. We were very fine people once—were we not? Our own righteousness was quite as good as that of anybody else and a little better. If we had sinned, we had a great many excuses for our failings and, besides, we always meant to be so good, byand-by! Therefore we felt that we ought not to be condemned, but rather to be commended!  
The Lord fetched us down from the tree and made us lie at the bottom of it and cry for mercy. We would still have refused to taste of His mercy and we would have perished in our sin if Divine Grace had not convinced us of our folly. Some of you remember when the Lord first revealed to you how much you needed to be cleansed—that discovery was a great part of the cleansing. Then did it not seem to you impossible that you could be cleansed from so much defilement? It seemed to me—I dare say it did to you—the most extraordinary thing in the world to believe in Jesus! I could not make it out. How could I get to Christ? I could see that He was a Savior. I could see that He saved others and I was glad that He did. But the thing was, how could I ever come to be personally a partaker of His power to save?  
I heard about that woman touching the hem of the garment and I felt that if Christ were before me, I would touch the hem of His garment with my finger, but I could not understand how I was to touch Him spiritually. To this day the simplest thing under Heaven is perverted by our evil hearts into difficulty and mystery! Faith is as clear as the sun, yet many make it as dark as midnight. Our hearers are ingenious at misunderstanding us when we speak of faith. I tried, one evening, to explain faith as simply as I could and I quoted that verse of Dr. Watts—  
*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.”*  
A young man came to me afterwards and said that he could not fall. This perplexed me, for I thought such an assertion was impossible! It may be hard to stand, but it is easy to fall. Falling does not require strength, but the very reverse. I intended to express the abnegation of all doing and all effort and the yielding all into the hands of Christ. But my young friend could not see it, nor could I make him comprehend it. All electric light would be of no use to stone-blind eyes. O God, it is as much a miracle of Your Grace to give us faith as to give us a Savior to believe in! And he that has faith knows that it is so. Despite the simplicity of faith, no man ever would have savingly believed in Jesus Christ if the Lord had not guided him and led him into that faith.  
Oh yes, the clean water is provided, but the clean water must be sprinkled by another hand than ours if we are to be cleansed! Are we not witnesses of this? Do we not acknowledge that when, at last, we were made clean through the precious blood of Christ, the closing act of faith was worked in us by the Holy Spirit? That was no small thing, that passing from death unto life, that being washed in the fountain filled with blood. Neither was the faith a trifle which brought us that washing—all, all was of Grace! I have heard a great deal about human free will. I never felt any inclination to ascribe the great blessing of confidence in Christ and consequent full justification to any uncreated willingness of mine. I was “made willing in the day of His power”—and to God I must give the Glory! Oh, that bright, that happy day when I could say—  
*“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s and He is mine.”*  
At that day I could not help also saying, “He drew me”—  
*“He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.”*  
Yes, it is God that applies the power which purifies!  
And all the way through the rest of life it is just the same. “All things are of God.” If He that has brought me so far towards Heaven does not help me throughout the rest of my journey, I must die even within sight of the promised land! If the Lord is not with you, even if you should get your foot upon the diamond doorstep of Heaven and your finger on the golden latch—you could not enter! Without fresh Grace to carry us the rest of the way, all our previous journey is in vain. When we get to Heaven, it will be, “Glory be to God forever, and ever, and ever!” We shall not hum even a single note to ourselves for our own glory, or on account of any part of the work for which we deserved credit—but we shall ascribe the whole of our salvation to infinite love, undeserved favor and to the unceasing faithfulness and power of our gracious Covenant God!  
Let us come back to this blessed text and read it again—and then conclude our sermon with our last point—“Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall he clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.”  
IV. I close with this last remark—THE LORD EFFECTUALLY CLEANSES ALL HIS PEOPLE.  
First, He cleanses them from all their filthiness. I want to dwell on that for a minute. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” All of it. Oh, what a vast “all” that is! “All your filthiness.” All the filthiness of your birth-sin; all the filthiness of your natural temperament, constitution and disposition. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” All the filthiness that came out of you in your childhood, that was developed in you in your youth, that still has vexed your manhood and, perhaps, even now dishonors your old age. From all your actual filthiness, as well as from all your original filthiness, will I cleanse you. From all your secret filthiness and from all your public filthiness—from everything that was wrong in the family; from everything that was wrong in the business; from everything that was wrong in your own heart—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.”  
From all your pride. What a filthy thing that is! From all your unbelief. What an abominable thing that is! From all your tainted imaginations; from all your lusts; from all your wrong words; from all your covetousness; from all your murmuring; from all your anger; from all your malice; from all your envy; from all your distrust—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.”  
Just read right down the Ten Commandments and then stop at each and say, “Lord, You have said, ‘From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.’ Lord, cleanse me in both ways—take away the evil of the sin, and take away my tendency to the sin—  
*‘Let the water and the blood,  
From His riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.’”*  
Oh, Beloved, that seems to me to be so full of richness—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” Do not believe that any filthiness need stay upon you in practice. As to the matter of sanctification, do not say to yourself, “I cannot overcome this sin.” You can! You must overcome all sin through Jesus Christ. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” Do not say to yourself, “I always was quick-tempered and I must always remain so, for this is a part of my natural temperament.” No! “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” I know that a certain troop of our sins are hard to kill in battle and they need to be sharply looked after lest they continue to plague us. They get into the cave of our secret hearts and there they hide themselves away in great quietness, biding their time. They do not even whisper—and we half fancy that they are dead. They are alive enough, as we shall soon see, if we are not awake to them.  
If we are foolish, we are content to roll a big stone at the mouth of the cave, and let the rascals live in their den. This is dangerous work and when our Joshua comes to us, He puts an end to the perilous experiment! He cries, “Bring them out. Hang them up before the sight of the sun, for these enemies must not live.” God help us to never tolerate any known sin. We too readily fall into evil habits, but oh, for Grace to keep out of them. Do not excuse sin so much as to call it an “infirmity”—call it, rather, an infamy, and drive it from your presence! We do unguardedly yield to sin but, Brothers and Sisters, we must not excuse ourselves—we must seek with all our might to obtain perfect holiness. Oh, to know the fullness of this blessing—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.”  
And then it is added that we shall be cleansed “from all our idols.” We are, all of us, idolaters by nature and by practice. The unregenerate man always has an idol. He will worship anything rather than his God. Yes, he will sooner worship himself than his Savior! Even the Christian may find, to his own surprise, that his dear Rachel whom he loves so much has managed to hide the idols away under the camel’s furniture and she is, even now, sitting on them and concealing them. I do not know an idol that is more apt to escape being broken than the idol that some beloved Rachel protects! But it must not be—“the idols He shall utterly abolish.” God’s way is, “From all your idols will I cleanse you.” If there is anything, Beloved, that has our love more than God, it is an idol and we must be purged from it.  
This is not a threat, but a promise—it is a great blessing to have our images of jealousy put away. If you make an idol of a child, either that child will die, or something else will happen which will make your idol to be your burden. If you want to kill your husband, idolize him. If you desire ill to a beloved one, set him up in Christ’s place. We can, alas, make idols of baser things than these! We can love gold, or dress, or honor, or rank, or even a forbidden thing. We are so dull and carnal that our affections are soon captured by earthly objects. Whatever it is that we idolize, God says, “I will cleanse you from it.” And I think that we can say, in response, “Lord, be it so”—  
*“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only Thee.”*  
We have no wish that any of our old lords should retain or regain dominion over us.  
Now, poor Sinner! Do you see what the Lord can do with you? He can break you loose from your temptations. He can set you free from every sin that holds you in captivity. Jesus gives pardon and purity most freely. Trust Him to cleanse you and the work shall be surely done. Trust Him that hung upon the tree to redeem His people and you are delivered. Trust Him to sanctify you wholly by His Spirit and He will purify you till every spot and wrinkle is gone. It is His work to save His people from their sins! Believe in Him and you shall triumph in His salvation!  
May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake!

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THE HEART OF FLESH  
NO. 1129

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.’’  
Ezekiel 36:26.**

IT is a peculiar feature in our holy religion that it begins its work within and acts first upon the heart. Other religions, like that of the Pharisees, begin with outward forms and ceremonies, perhaps hoping to work inwardly from without, although the process never ends, for though the outside of the cup and of the platter is made clean, the inside still remains full of rottenness as before. No Truth of God is more sure than this concerning all the sons of men, “You must be born again.”

There must be an entire and radical change of man’s nature or else where God is he can never come—the Gospel does not flinch from this, but enforces the declaration. The Holy Spirit does not attempt to improve human nature into something better, but lays the axe at the root of the trees and declares that we must become new creatures—and that by a supernatural work of the Omnipotent God.

Scripture does not mince matters, or say that some men may be better than others, naturally, and by an improvement of their excellencies may at last become good enough for God. Far from it! It declares concerning all, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” True religion begins, then, with the heart, and the heart is the ruling power of manhood. You may enlighten a man’s understanding and you have done much, but as long as his heart is wrong, the enlightenment of the understanding only enables him to sin with a greater weight of responsibility resting upon him. He knows good to be good, but he prefers the evil. He sees the light, but he loves the darkness and turns from the Truth of God because his heart is alienated from God.

If the heart is renewed, the judgment will, before long, follow in the same track. But as long as the heart is wrong, the affections govern the will and bias the character of the man towards evil. If a man loves evil he is evil. If he hates God he is God’s enemy, whatever his outward professions, whatever his knowledge, whatever his apparent good qualities. “As a man thinks in his heart so he is.” This is more nearly the man than any other of the faculties and powers which God has bestowed upon our nature. What if I say that the heart is the Eve in the little garden of our nature and she it is that first plucks the evil fruit? And though the understanding follows the affections, even as Adam followed Eve, yet the first

power for good or evil lies in the affections.

The heart, when renewed by Grace, is the best part of manhood. Unrenewed, it is the very worst. Aesop, when his master ordered him to provide nothing for a feast but the best things in the market, brought him nothing but tongues, and when, the next day, he ordered him to buy nothing but the worst things in the market, still brought nothing but tongues. And I would venture to correct or spiritualize the story by exchanging hearts for tongues, for there is nothing better in the world than hearts renewed, and nothing worse than hearts unregenerate. It is a great Covenant promise that the heart shall be renewed and the particular form of its renewal is this—that it shall be made living, warm, sensitive, and tender. It is naturally a heart of stone—it is to become, by a work of Divine Grace—a heart of flesh. Therefore, very much of the result of regeneration and conversion will be found to lie in the production of a tender spirit.

Tenderness, the opposite of that which is stout, obstinate, cold, hard— tenderness is one of the most gracious signs in a man’s character. And where God has given fleshiness, or living sensitiveness instead of stoniness, or dead insensibility of heart, there we may conclude that there is a real work of Grace and that God has created vital godliness within. Concerning this tenderness I am about to speak—“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”

I. Our first remark is that THE TENDERNESS HERE INTENDED IS ABSENT IN THE UNREGENERATE. They frequently have a natural sensitiveness—some persons who are not converted are very tender, indeed, as mothers to their children, as fathers to their offspring, as friends to friends. And God forbid that we should say anything amiss concerning that which is good in human nature after its kind! But that is widely different from the spiritually tender heart. Some there are who have a tenderness which arises from timidity, a tenderness which sometimes inclines them to good, not because they love the good, but because they are easily ruled by their company—so that they would be just as easily led towards evil if they fell in with bad companions. They have no principle, no root in themselves.

Such a tenderness Rehoboam had, who was tender, and therefore followed evil advisers to his own injury. Such an unmanly softness as this is to be strived against, for we need to have some grit in our constitution, some firmness and resolution—and that sort of pliability which unman’s a man and makes him a puppet for others to handle is a great evil. There is also a tenderness which arises mainly from legal terror and fear which is very different from the evangelical or saving softness of heart which is described in our text. I know some who exhibit a sort of counterfeit tenderness. When they hear a sermon they are excited by it and if it is about the world to come, the lifting up of the curtain of the future, they are affected for the time being. But then their goodness soon departs from them. They forget the next moment that which affected them a moment back—they are soon hot and soon cold—they are inconstant as the wind. That is a not the kind of tenderness to be desired—goodness which is as the morning cloud and the early dew which passes away.

In all unregenerate men there is a lack of the real spiritual tenderness of which I have to speak, though all are not equally hardened. In all, for instance, there is a natural stoniness of heart. We are not born into this world perfect, so that when sin meets us it receives a kindly reception and is not dreaded and shunned as it should be. Those who notice children in their first acts will not have discovered any strong aversion in them to children’s sins, or horror at the sight of them. How early does the little child give way to unrestrained passion and practice little acts of deceit? As the Prophet said, “We go astray from the womb, speaking lies.” Our children’s poet was correct when he said—

*“True, you are young, but there’s a stone  
Within the youngest breast,  
Or half the sins which you have done  
Would rob you of your rest.”*

The heart by nature is like the nether millstone and its hardness is increased by contact with the world. A youth’s flesh from a godly household is not one-half so hard as he who has been for some time in the midst of ungodly company and has seen the ways of the debauched and the profane. Custom has a great power over us and what we see others do with impunity we by-and-by come to think, (unless the Grace of God prevents it), it cannot be quite so bad as our parents and guardians taught us that it was. Familiarity with sin does not breed contempt for it, but often causes a measure of contempt for the law which forbids it. We see the sparkling eye of the drunk. We hear his hilarious shout and imagine that there is pleasure in the bowl. Or we hear men speak of the delights of their transgressions and the sweets of lust, and unless we are held back by Providence and Grace, we are apt to think lightly of those things which once we regarded with abhorrence. This world is a petrifying spring and all who are of the world are being putrefied in it and are growing harder and harder as the years roll on.

Moreover, men harden themselves by their own sins. Every time a man sins it becomes more easy for him to sin again. Like a stone falling, sin gains impetus and increased velocity. The man who sins once has a stronger tendency to sin again and there are some sins which almost necessitate a succession of sins. The man who lies, for instance, thinks he must lie a second time to conceal the first. And some transgressions which root themselves in the flesh breed a hunger and a thirst for the sin so that the flesh craves to be indulged again—and those who cannot bridle their passions are thus carried away by them with great force. As labor renders the hand hard, so sin makes the heart callous, and each sin makes the stony heart yet more like adamant.

At the same time, all the circumstances around an unregenerate man will be perverted to the same result. If, for instance, a man prospers, nothing is more hardening to the heart than long prosperity. Find me an

ungodly man whose course has been one of perpetual gain and you shall find me, almost certainly, a man who is ready to say unto the Lord, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” Pride is often begotten of fullness of bread. If the man had known what need is, he might, perhaps, have been humbled before God. But now he boasts in his broad acres and his large estates and, like Nebuchadnezzar, he says, “Behold this great Babylon that I have built.”

It is also a dangerous thing to be for many years in good health without a sickness. This also hardens a man. The sickness which brings a man to the borders of the grave is often sanctified to the breaking of the heart. To be without ache or pain for a long time is so far from being a blessing from God to the wicked, that I scarcely know anything which may turn out to be a greater curse to an ungodly man. Never chastened? Then you are no child of God! Left to find pleasure in sin? Then surely it must be that God will let you have what pleasure you may in this world because He knows a terrible future awaits you! O soul in prosperity, disturb yourself, for you are in solemn danger! Hardness of heart will almost inevitably come upon you. You are at ease from your youth—you have not been emptied from vessel to vessel—therefore your scent remains in you, and that scent is pride and carnal security.

The opposite condition of circumstances will, through sin, produce the same result. Affliction hardens those whom it does not soften. There are men who have been in many storms at sea and, though once they feared, they never tremble now. If the mast had to be cut away and the vessel were almost to go down, they have grown so desperate they would curse and swear in the teeth of the tempest! Those who have escaped many accidents and dire diseases, who have passed unscathed by the hot furnace of fever, or have risen from between the jaws of cholera, are too often men whom nothing can move. What the fire does not melt it anneals as steel. Alas, of how many may it be said, “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more.”

They resemble Ahaz of old, who, the more he was afflicted, the more he sinned—of whom the Spirit of God has written, “This is that king Ahaz.” This is obduracy, indeed, comparable to that of Pharaoh, whom the Lord hardened by judgments which ought to have melted him to repentance. And alas! Alas, that we should have to add it—holy influences will come in to complete this hardening and carry it, still, to a higher degree! The Gospel has a wonderfully hardening power over those who reject it. The sun shines out of the heavens upon wax and softens it, but at the same time it shines upon clay and hardens it. The sunlight of the Gospel shining upon hearers either melts them into repentance or else hardens them into greater obstinacy. You cannot be hearers of the Gospel without its having some effect upon you.

Some of you have attended this place ever since it was built [12 years earlier] and if you are not the better for it, you certainly are the worse. If the Gospel is not a savor of life unto life to you it will be a savor of death unto death. Among hardened sinners the Gospel-hardened sinner is one of the worst. Yet, further, when an unregenerate man dares to put on a Christian profession, this is perhaps the most rapid and certain process for consummating the devil’s work, for if a man will be audacious enough to join himself with the saints while he is indulging in private sin—if he will continue to come to the Communion Table when he knows that his base lusts are still indulged—and if, moreover, he has the face to boast of being a child of God when he knows that he is an utter stranger to Divine Grace, why, such a man is the raw material out of which Satan can make a Judas!

The devil himself could not make a Judas till he had found a false Apostle. You must look among hypocritical professors of religion if you would find the worst of men! And I must add, you may succeed best in your search if you can find a false-hearted minister. The higher the place in God’s garden the more the weeds stink. The hardest-hearted men of all are not those who have been guilty of crimes against society and have been put away into our jails—often a little kindness will melt these savages down. No, the worst of all are those demons in human shape who make a profession of being the people of God and all the while know that they are sinning wickedly with both hands! To cover a vile life with the coverlet of a Christian profession is a sign of reprobation. Take men, however, at any stage, this is still true—that the heart of flesh is not to be found in any unregenerate man.

II. WHEREVER TRUE TENDERNESS IS FOUND, IT IS A SPECIAL GIFT OF THE NEW COVENANT. A heart of flesh is a gift of Sovereign Grace and it is always the result of Divine power. No heart of stone was ever turned into flesh by accident, nor by mere Providential dispensations, nor by human persuasions. You might argue with a rock a long while before you would persuade it into flesh. Neither is such a change worked by a man’s own actions. How shall a stone, being a stone, produce in itself flesh?

A power from above the man must work upon him. According to the language of the Scriptures, “Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The Spirit of God must change the nature, or the heart of stone will never become a heart of flesh! Note that the first works of the Spirit of God upon the soul tend towards this tenderness, for when He comes to a man He convinces him of sin and so softens him. The man convinced of sin does not laugh any longer at sin, neither does he despise the wrath of God on account of it. When the Spirit of God darts the arrows of conviction into the soul, then the heart begins to bleed and the man is conscious of feelings and emotions to which he was a stranger before.

I trust there are some of you who understand this first work of the Spirit in the heart—He has begun to make you feel the guilt of sin, He has compelled you to tremble before an angry God and to dread the wrath to come—this early work of Grace has already made you sensitive as you never were before. And the further the Spirit’s work proceeds, the more tender will you become. When the soul comes to be really saved and to

obtain peace through Jesus Christ, one great mark of its salvation is tenderness in heart. Oh, what a place for tenderness the Cross is! When for the first time our eyes behold the Savior, we weep! We look and live, but we also look and mourn that we pierced the Lord. Who can behold a bleeding Savior suffering for his sin without being melted down? No heart of stone can bear contact with the Cross.

Let but Jesus dart a look of love and we are dissolved, as once Peter’s heart was melted and made to flow out in penitential tears. Only let us hear the accents of our Redeemer’s voice and we shall cry, “My soul melted while He spoke to me.” The fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us is enough to dissolve a heart of iron, if it could once know it. Now as these first works of the Spirit of God in conviction and conversion lead to tenderness, so it is true of all the Divine operations which follow in due course. The whole tenor of the Gospel is towards tenderness. I cannot remember a promise, I cannot recall a doctrine, I cannot remember a fact connected with the Gospel which could make a Believer hard-hearted. Can you? I think, if you will turn over all that you know and all that God has revealed concerning salvation, you will find nothing to make you stubborn and willful, but everything to make you tender and sensitive.

Oh, to think that salvation should be of the Sovereign Grace of God! How it humbles us. How it lays us in the dust. No more talking about man’s rights as a creature, man’s claims and what God ought to do! We are broken down and feel that the Lord may do exactly what He wills and thus we are made tender before His face. Oh, to know that there is no pardon except by faith in a Substitute! To understand that God must and will punish sin—how it makes us feel that sin is no trifle! How it leads us to abhor sin as a great evil and makes us jealous lest we should offend again! When we read that all our help was laid on Jesus Christ, how it cuts away, by the roots, all our self-confidence and makes us lie low at the foot of the Throne of God!

I might go through all the Truths of God and Doctrines and promises, if we had time, and I think I could prove to a demonstration that their legitimate effect is to render the heart tender, wherever they operate. So it is with every Christian Grace. All the Christian virtues promote warmth and tenderness of heart. Have you zeal for God? I know you will be fearful of sinning. You will hate the very garment spotted by the flesh. Have you patience under the Divine rod? That patience is only softness of heart in one of its sweetest forms. Have you much love? Then I am sure you have much tenderness, for in proportion as the heart is stony it is destitute of affection. Every one of the Divine circle of Graces has an intimate connection with the heart of flesh. And I also venture to say that the more tender a man is the more advanced in Grace he is—and that the more callous and unconcerned he is the further is he from what he should be. Let the unfeeling professor know, and rest assured that if he is a child of God at all, he is certainly in a weak and backsliding state, or his insensibility would be a great burden and grief to him.

Every Grace leans towards tenderness, and the whole current of the Divine life sets that way. You cannot be strong in piety unless you are tender in heart. Are you a child? Can a child be good if it is indifferent, haughty, obstinate and stony-hearted towards its parents? Are you a servant? Who is a good servant but he that is tender of his master’s reputation and anxious to fulfill his lord’s command? Are you a soldier? Where is there a good soldier that is not jealous of his captain’s honor and careful, lest by any means, he should break the martial law? There must be tenderness. It is an essential point. Unless it is melted down the hard metal cannot be poured into the mold and fashioned for use and beauty. The Lord Jesus will never set His seal upon cold wax. He stamps His image on hearts of flesh and not on stones. A tender conscience is an essential ingredient in the perfect Christian character and where it is not, neither is the life and work of God.

III. Let us dwell upon another point, that THIS TENDERNESS, WHEN IT IS GIVEN, IS OBSERVABLE UNDER SEVERAL ASPECTS. The man who has a heart of flesh given him becomes sensitive to fear. He trembles at the thought of a holy God in arms against him. He no longer jokes about Hell and eternity, as so many do, but he says, “My heart stands in awe of You and I am afraid of Your judgments.” He no longer argues that the Lord is too severe, but he admits that He is just when He judges and clear when He condemns. The renewed heart is afraid of what other men call little sins and flees from them as from a serpent. The regenerate man knows that there is death in every drop of sin’s wine and he will not venture to sip thereof, nor taste a mouthful of sin’s most royal dainties. He fears the Lord and dreads to offend because he is made alive, so as to know the Lord’s holiness and perceive His justice.

The stony heart neither knows nor fears and therefore abides in death. I have little fear for a soul that fears, but I tremble for those who never tremble. I have sometimes wished that certain, very-assured Christians, as they think themselves, who are, I fear, in very truth presumptuous pretenders—I wish they could and would have a dash of fear about them. Fear of the kind we now mean is a holy salt to a man’s character. Fear and trembling well become even the most eminent saint. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints.” “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Though I greatly deplore all doubts of God’s truthfulness, I do not equally deprecate doubts concerning our own condition, for there is such a thing as holy anxiety and I charge you never to think little of it, but remember the poet’s lines—

*“He that never doubted of his state,  
He may, perhaps, he may, too late.”*  
self-examination will often suggest holy fear and deep searching of heart—and it will reveal so much of sin in us that we shall be sent to our

knees, with weeping and supplication, to cry out for help and pardon. To live without fear is to live in sin, for one mark of a Believer is that he has the fear of God before his eyes. In this sense, “blessed is the man that fears always.” Again, a tender heart becomes sensitive as to the decisions of its enlightened conscience. The heart changed by Grace begins to weigh its own actions towards God and it comes to the conclusion—“I have acted unjustly towards my Creator and Benefactor. He has been all goodness to me. I have received, at His hands, countless benefits and yet I have ungratefully forgotten Him. When I heard of Him I treated Him slightingly. I have lived for myself but not for my good and gracious Creator.” The quickened conscience holds a daily court and its sentences are heard and respected by the heart of flesh.

In the ungodly man there is a conscience, but it is asleep and needs a cannon fired to wake it up, so that the stony heart is never troubled. Let our prayer be—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make.  
Awake my soul when sin is near,  
And keep it still awake.”*

The Christian feels that it is a horrible thing to sin against God, against the Savior’s love and against the influence of the indwelling Spirit. He starts back from sin—he is not only afraid of the punishment but he is wounded by the sin, itself. As smoke to the eyes, as thorns to the flesh and as gall to the palate, such is sin to the heart of flesh.

Then, again, the new heart, the fleshy heart, becomes sensitive of the Divine love. Is it not one of the most amazing things in the world that the story of Calvary does not flood with tears every eye that reads it? Was there ever such touching, affecting love as that shown by the Son of God towards His enemies when He left the dignities of Heaven for the shame and suffering of earth? Silly stories of love-sick maids, or the improbable plots of three-volume romances will bring showers of tears from those who read them—while this grand narrative, this wondrous tragedy of love—is as a thrice-told tale and the Book which contains it is often put upon the shelf as far too dry for reading! Though it concerns us all and we are lost without it—and with it are lifted up to be near akin to God—yet this dying love of Christ is disregarded.

How can it be otherwise while the heart is made of stone? When his heart is turned to flesh, then the love of God affects the man, humbles him, melts him, woos him, wins him, captivates him, enchants him, enamors him, inflames him with ardent thankfulness and draws him up towards Heaven! Divine Love begets in the renewed man a sensitiveness to gratitude. “Has Jesus done all this for me? Then what can I do for Him? Has He bought me with His blood? Then I am His and not my own, or the world’s. What can I do for Him who died to save my grateful soul?” The renewed heart feels that the love of Christ constrains it and it judges “that if Christ died for all, then were all dead and that He died for all, that they which live should not live from now on to themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again.”

Moreover, the heart becomes sensitive, from now on, to holy grief. When it has erred, it chastens and humbles itself for having grieved the Savior. It takes revenge upon itself if sin has been indulged. It becomes sensitive to joy and oh, what a joy a Christian feels—a joy to which the ungodly man must forever be a stranger! The renewed heart sings at the sound of the Savior’s footsteps and when His love is shed abroad, no precious ointment can be half so sweet! Oh, the exhilarations and delights we have known when we clearly see our acceptance in the Beloved! Oh, the feasts and the banquets when we have fellowship with the Crucified One! Oh, the ravishments and ecstasies when we look through the open gates of pearl and behold our eternal inheritance, the crowns of gold and the palms of victory!

By regeneration we are made capable of an unknown fullness of joy. Every power and faculty is so quickened as to be able to quiver with delight! Heaven itself seems to flash along every nerve when the heart is steeped in fellowship with Jesus! And so we become sensitive with pity for others. I would give nothing for your religion if you do not desire others to share in it. If you can, without emotion, think of a soul being damned, I fear that it will be your own lot. If you can look upon the ignorant, the perverse, the rebellious and think of their destruction with complacency, you are no child of God! Your Savior, who is the first-born of the Divine family, wept over Jerusalem. Have you no tears? Then you are not a member of the family of which He is the Head!—

*“Did Christ over sinners weep,  
And can our cheeks be dry?  
Let drops of sympathetic grief  
Distil from every eye.”*

A heart of stone says, “Let them go where they will: am I my brother’s keeper?” But a heart of flesh says, “Lord, help me by any means to save some; it shall be a delight to me to turn sinners from the error of their ways.” Where this tenderness of heart is carried to a high point, as it ought to be in every Christian, the Believer becomes delicately sensitive concerning the things of God. I have seen an instrument for weighing of so exceedingly delicate a nature that it has been affected by a particle of dust quite imperceptible by the naked eye. An invisible atom has turned the scale! We have different kinds of weighing machines. Some are so rough that they would hardly yield to the pressure of an ounce, but others quiver if the smallest particle falls upon them. The Believer’s heart should be like this last. A Christian’s heart should resemble the sensitive plant, which the moment it is touched, folds up its leaves as a sailor reefs his canvas, or like a wound in a man’s flesh which is pained by the faintest brush.

Spiritual sensitiveness is fullness of life—insensibility is death. To feel the slightest motion of the Holy Spirit is a sign of high spirituality. I would not wish to be, in my heart, like the Great Eastern upon the sea, needing

an Atlantic roller to stir it. I would rather desire to be as the angler’s float which mounts or sinks by the force of the least ripple. Spirit of the Lord, thus act upon my willing heart! I want to be so sensitive of the Spirit of God that I may be like the aspen leaf which trembles even when the breeze is not perceptible to others. We should watch to do God’s will and not need His whip and bridle to force us to obedience.

Yet I have known professors who have clearly seen a certain duty to be taught in the Bible, but they have said, “Well, we think it is Scriptural, but we need to have it brought to us by a deep impression on our mind and our way pointed out by Providential circumstances.” This is a disobedient spirit and ought to meet with grave censure! The Lord’s Word is our guide, not our impressions or our circumstances! And to the renewed heart it should be enough to know the Lord’s will and our obedience should be prompt. On the other hand, if anything is forbidden in the Word, or is clearly wrong, nothing can justify our continuance in it. We are bound, at once, to forsake it. The great need of this age is sensitiveness about revealed Truth and the Divine will.

We have a Church in our land in which there are three distinct classes of men who all declare that they believe the whole of the Book of Common Prayer—and it is clearly impossible that they should do so, since these parties have no points of agreement with one another and wage incessant war with each other. Yet they each one receive it all ex amino, all of it, when no man living, nor angel, nor devil could believe it all—the book itself being self-contradictory! This, however, is of small consequence to supple consciences trained to play with language. Some ministers of this Church know their position to be a doubtful one and yet retain it on the plea that their usefulness might be impaired if they left the Church—is this reasoning fit for Christians?! Are we to seek a supposititious usefulness by continuing where our conscience is ill at ease? Surely not! Our rule of conduct is the Divine will, and that only.

Oh, I long to see a race of men born among us like the old Covenanters who would die for the least word of Jesus and would give their blood for the smallest jewel of His crown! But now we are to be charitable and if any of us speak out for God, straightway we are hounded down for lack of charity—whereas it is our great charity for souls that makes us speak out and run all risks! We have charity for dying men and charity for the age to come! We see deadly error propped up by temporizers and we cannot be silent. If ministers of the Gospel set the example of wresting words and trifling with the Truth of God, where will this nation’s morals be in the next generation? Brothers, we who preach the Gospel must follow the highest conceivable standard of strict Truth, for God’s sake, for our office sake and for the people’s sake. We cannot afford to be lax in our solemn declarations, for we shall have to answer for them to our Lord at the Last Great Day.

If we are to be teachers of other men we must, ourselves, be beyond suspicion. We must be inflexible in the Truth of God and sooner die than be false of faith, or preach anything that savors of dishonesty or is tainted with equivocation. We shall never lead God’s troops to victory against error and falsehood if we vacillate ourselves! Oh, for great tenderness of heart towards the Truth of God! Even though scrupulosity could beget the revival of a fierce sectarianism, it were infinitely more to be desired than the soul-deceiving charity which is the Diana of this age and the destroyer of souls! Translated into plain English, the current charity of the times only means that it matters not one atom what God has said! Let us make our own systems and mutually agree to shelve all the inconvenient parts of Revelation. Let us be liberal to our fellow men out of our Lord’s estate— what matters our Lord’s honor so long as we make things pleasant all round? In the teeth of this, the sensitive heart will be faithful and will bear the censure of all men sooner than incur the displeasure of the Lord. Tenderness towards God we must have!

Oh, for the old Elijah spirit of stern determination, tempered with the John spirit of love to those whose errors we condemn! Jehovah must be King in this land and the idols must be utterly abolished!

IV. I shall close with a few reflections on the same subject. TENDERNESS OF HEART IS TO BE GREATLY PRIZED AND EARNESTLY CULTIVATED. Some among you may, for the first time, be distressed on account of sin. I rejoice because of it! Some of you are not what you used to be— gay and light-hearted. You are now thoughtful and, with that thoughtfulness, sorrowful. You came here this morning praying that God would give you peace, but you have not obtained it. I pray God to give you your wish, but may you never find peace unless it is the peace of God, peace through Jesus Christ. May your resolution be, “I will never rest until I rest in God’s rest, even in His own dear Son.”

Beloved, do not try to get rid of soul alarms, conviction, or sin except in God’s way. There are physicians of no value who would heal your wound if you would let them—do not endure them, for they will only film it over and leave an ulcer beneath which will cost you your soul. Ask the Lord to make your minister faithful to you, allow him to use the lance to open the wound and cut out the proud flesh. Yes, ask the Spirit of God to probe you to the quick sooner than allow you to be flattered into the conception that you are healed when you are not!

Go to the Lord for healing—all other healing is worthless. Say, “Lord, make sure work of it in me. Save me Yourself. Save me thoroughly. Deliver me from trusting in myself or my fellow man and bring me to rely, alone only Yourself and Your dear Son.” Do not go to amusements which will help you to forget your true condition. Don’t be danced or fiddled, or playacted, into indifference. Be anxious that this bruising and breaking should go on further, that you may be even more conscious of the exceeding guilt of sin. You will never prize the Savior until you loathe yourself. You will never love His blood until you have been ashamed of the crimson of your own sin. Jesus will never be to you a Savior till you are in your

own eyes a poor, lost, ruined sinner. Go to Jesus and put your trust in Him and harden not your heart against Him.

Next, I speak to you, O child of God. Cultivate tenderness of heart more and more. I would say to you who are Christians, do not believe anything, the legitimate result of which would be to make you callous in your spiritual feelings, or lax in your dealings with your follow men, or careless with your God. I dread lest any of the Truths of God which we profess should come to be so held in unrighteousness as to make us feel easy in sin. Whenever I find a Brother perfectly content with himself, I am afraid for him. I know he does not see the sin that God sees in him, or he would rather bemoan himself than give way to boasting. I delight to hear men preaching up a high standard of holiness—the higher the better! But if any man should say that he has reached it, I blush and tremble for him. He had better begin again upon the ladder of sanctification, for he has not put his foot on the first step of it yet—for that is humility.

Be very humble, lie very low. Be more and more conscious of your natural guilt and repent more earnestly each day. I proclaim before you all that I believe the very best place for a man to stand in is with his arms around the Cross, saying—

*“I the chief of sinners am,*

*But Jesus died for me.”*  
I am nothing, but Christ is everything. I am a mass of loathsomeness in myself, but nevertheless accepted in the Beloved. Daily may we fear lest we should fall into a routine religion without life and power. We can sing without real joy or praise. We can pray without any earnestness or fervency. We can read the Bible without feeding on its Truths. And we can know the doctrines of the Gospel without proving their influences upon the heart. Pray against this, yes, pray against all lifeless religion! I would have my soul vital all over and as sensitive towards God as though it were flayed of all earth-hardened skin upon it—every Truth, every promise, every Word of God should make me feel intensely, acutely and at once— tenderness of heart.

I beseech you who are Believers to strive after this. Remember how tender the Savior was. There was no stone about His heart. May you be as tender as He was and you will then be fashioned into the likeness for which God is preparing you by His eternal Spirit. Dread growing hard in your thoughts of sin! Dread growing cold in your thoughts of Christ! Dread growing stony in your thoughts of your fellow sinners! And let this promise be pleaded in your prayers before God, “I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” The Lord fulfill it to you for His Truth’s sake and His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 36. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #212 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE NEW HEART  
NO. 212

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.”  
Ezekiel 36:26.**

BEHOLD a wonder of Divine love. When God makes His creatures, one creation He regards as sufficient and should they lapse from the condition in which He has created them, He suffers them, as a rule, to endure the penalty of their transgression and to abide in the place into which they are fallen. But here He makes an exception. Man, fallen man, created by his Maker pure and holy, has willfully and wickedly rebelled against the Most High and lost his first estate. But behold, he is to be the subject of a new creation through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Behold this and wonder! What is man compared with an angel? Is he not little and insignificant?

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” God has no mercy upon them. He made them pure and holy and they ought to have remained His, but inasmuch as they willfully rebelled, He cast them down from their shining seats forever. And without a single promise of mercy He has bound them fast in the fetters of destiny, to abide in eternal torment. But wonder, you heavens, the God who destroyed the angels stoops from His highest Throne in Glory and speaks to His creature, man, and thus says unto him, “Now, you have fallen from Me even as the angels did. You have grossly erred and gone astray from My ways—not for your sake do I do this, but for My own name’s sake—behold I will undo the mischief which your own hand has done.

“I will take away that heart which has rebelled against Me. Having made you once, you have unmade yourself—I will make you over again. I will put My hand a second time to the work. Once more shall you revolve upon the pottery wheel and I will make you a vessel of honor, fit for My gracious use. I will take away your stony heart and give you a heart of flesh. A new heart will I give you. A new spirit will I put within you.” Is not this a wonder of Divine Sovereignty and of Infinite Grace, that mighty angels should be cast into the fire forever and yet God has made a Covenant

with man that He will renew and restore him?

And now, my dear Friends, I shall attempt this morning, first of all to show the necessity for the great promise contained in my text—that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit. After that, I shall endeavor to show the nature of the great work which God works in the soul, when He accomplishes this promise. And afterwards, a few personal remarks to all my hearers.

I. In the first place, it is my business to endeavor to show THE NECESSITY FOR THIS GREAT PROMISE. Not that it needs any showing to the quickened and enlightened Christian. But this is for the conviction of the ungodly and for the humbling of our carnal pride. O that this morning the gracious Spirit may teach us our depravity, that we may thereby be driven to seek the fulfillment of this mercy which is most assuredly and abundantly necessary, if we would be saved. You will notice that in my text God does not promise to us that He will improve our nature or that He will mend our broken hearts. No, the promise is that He will give us new hearts and right spirits.

Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house that is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No, it is rotten throughout, the very foundations have been sapped. There is not a single timber in it which has not been eaten by the worm from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation. There is no soundness in it. It is all rottenness and ready to fall. God does not attempt to mend, He does not shore up the walls and paint the door. He does not garnish and beautify, but He determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away and that He will build a new one.

It is too far gone, I say, to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be mended. If only a wheel or two of that great thing called “manhood” were out of repair, then He who made man might put the whole to rights. He might put a new cog where it had been broken off and another wheel where it had gone to ruin and the machine might work anew. But no, the whole of it is out of repair. There is not one lever which is not broken, not one axle which is not disturbed, not one of the wheels which act upon the others. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head it is all wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing. But He says, “I will give you a new heart and a right spirit will I put within you. I will take away the heart of stone, I will not try to soften it, I will let it be as stony as ever it was, but I will take it away and I will give you a new heart and it shall be a heart of flesh.”

Now I shall endeavor to show that God is justified in this and that there was an abundant necessity for His resolution to do so. For in the first place, if you consider what human nature has been and what it is, you will not be very long before you will say of it, “Ah, it is a hopeless case indeed.”

Consider, then, for a moment how bad human nature must be if we think how ill it has treated its God. William Huntingdon says in his autobiography that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt after he had been quickened by Divine Grace was this, “I felt such pity for God.” I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very expressive one, although I might prefer to say sympathy with God and grief that He should be so evilly entreated. Ah, my Friends, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised and that are trampled on by their fellows. But there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been. Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never one was treated as our God has been.

Let us look back upon our past lives—how ungrateful have we been to Him! It was He who gave us being and the first utterance of our lips should have been in His praise. And so long as we were here, it was our duty to have perpetually sung His glory. But Instead of that, from our birth we spoke that which was false and untrue and unholy. And since then we have continued to do the same. We have never returned His mercies into His bosom with gratitude and thankfulness. But we have let them lie forgotten without a single hallelujah—from our carelessness concerning the Most High you would think that He had entirely forgotten us— and that therefore we were trying to forget Him.

It is so very seldom that we think of Him that one would imagine that surely He never gave us occasion to think of Him. Addison said— *“When all your mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view I’m lost  
In wonder, love and praise.”*

But I think if we look back with the eye of penitence we shall be lost in wonder, shame and grief, for our cry will be, “What? Could I treat so good a Friend so badly? Have I had so gracious a Benefactor and have I been so unmindful of Him? And so devoted a Father and yet have I never embraced Him? Have I never given Him the kiss of my affectionate gratitude? Have I never studied to do something whereby I might let Him know that I was conscious of His kindness and that I felt a grateful return in my bosom for His love?”

But worse than this, we have not only been forgetful of Him, but we have rebelled against Him. We have assailed the Most High. If we knew that anything was God-like we hated it at once. We have despised His people, we have called them cants and hypocrites and Methodists. We have despised His Day. He set it apart on purpose for our good and that day we take for our own pleasure and our own labor instead of consecrating it to Him. He gave us a Book as a love token and He desired us to read it, for it was full of love to us. And we have kept it fast closed till the very spiders have spun their cobwebs over the leaves. He opened a House of Prayer and bade us go there and there would He meet with us and speak to us from off the mercy seat. But we have often preferred the theater to God’s House and have been found listening to any sound rather than the voice which speaks from Heaven.

Ah, my Friends, I say again there never was a man treated by his fellow creatures, even by the worst of men, so bad as God has been and yet while men have been ill-treating Him, He has still continued to bless them. He has put breath into the nostrils of man, even while he has been cursing Him. He has given him food to eat even while he has been spending the strength of his body in warfare against the Most High. And on the very Sabbath, when you have been breaking His Commandment and spending the day on your own lusts, it is He who has given light to your eyes, breath to your lungs and strength to your nerves and sinews. He has been blessing you even while you have been cursing Him. Oh, it is a mercy that He is God and changes not, or else we sons of Jacob would long ago have been consumed, and justly, too.

You may picture to yourselves, if you like, a poor creature dying in a ditch. I trust that such a thing never happens in this land, but such a thing might happen as a man who had been rich on a sudden becoming poor and all his friends deserting and leaving him. He begs for bread and no man will help him, until at last, without a rag to cover him his poor body yields up life in a ditch. This, I think, is the very extreme of human negligence to mankind. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was treated even worse than this. It would have been a thousand mercies to Him if they had permitted Him to die unregarded in a ditch. But that would have been too good for human nature. He must know the very worst and therefore God allowed human nature to take Christ and nail Him to a tree. He allowed man to stand and mock His thirst and offer Him vinegar and taunt and jeer Him in the extreme of His agonies. It allowed human nature to make Him its jest and scorn and stand staring with lascivious and cruel eyes upon His stripped and naked body.

Oh, shame on manhood—never could there have been a creature worse than man! The very beasts are better than man, for man has all the worst attributes of the beasts and none of their best. He has the fierceness of the lion without its nobility. He has the stubbornness of an ass without its patience. He has all the devouring gluttony of the wolf, without the wisdom which bids it avoid the trap. He is a carrion vulture but he is never satisfied. He is a very serpent with the poison of asps beneath his tongue, but he spits his venom afar off as well as near. Ah, if you think of human nature as it acts towards God, you will say, indeed, it is too bad to be mended—it must be made anew.

Again—there is another aspect in which we may regard the sinfulness of human nature—that is its pride. It is the very worst phase of man—that he is so proud. Beloved, pride is woven into the very warp and woof of our nature and we shall never get rid of it until we are wrapped in our winding sheet. It is astonishing that when we are at our prayers—when we try to make use of humble expressions, we are betrayed into pride. It was but the other day, I found myself on my knees, making use of such an expression as this—“O Lord, I grieve before You, that ever I should have been such a sinner as I have been. Oh that I should ever have revolted and rebelled as I have done.” There was pride in that. For who am I? Was there any wonder in it? I ought to have known that I was myself so sinful that there was no wonder that I should have gone astray.

The wonder was that I had not been even worse and there the credit was due to God, not to myself. So when we are trying to be humble, we may be foolishly rushing into pride. What a strange thing it is to see a sinful, guilty wretch proud of his morality! And yet that is a thing you may see every day. A man who is an enemy to God, proud of his honesty and yet he is robbing God. A man proud of his chastity and yet if he knew his own thoughts, they are full of lasciviousness and uncleanness. A man proud of the praise of his fellows, while he knows himself that he has the blame of his own conscience and the blame of God Almighty. It is a wild, strange thing to think that man should be proud, when he has nothing to be proud of. A living, animated lump of clay—defiled and filthy, a living Hell and yet proud.

I, a base-born son of one that robbed his Master’s garden of old and went astray and would not be obedient—of one that sunk his whole estate for the paltry bribe of a single apple—and yet proud of my ancestry? I, who am living on God’s daily charity to be proud of my wealth—when I have not a single farthing with which to bless myself, unless God chooses to give it to me? I, that came naked into this world and must go naked out of it, I, proud of my riches? What a strange thing! I, a wild asses colt, a fool that knows nothing, proud of my learning? Oh, what a strange thing, that the fool called man, should call himself a doctor and make himself a master of all arts when he is a master of none and is most a fool when he

thinks his wisdom culminates to its highest point.

And oh, strangest of all, that man who has a deceitful heart—full of all manner of evil concupiscence and adultery, idolatry and lust—should yet talk about being a good-hearted fellow and should pride himself upon having at least some good points about him which may deserve the veneration of his fellows, if not, some consideration from the Most High. Ah, human nature, this is, then, your own condemnation, that you are insanely proud—while you have nothing to be proud of. Write “Ichabod” upon it. The glory has departed forever from human nature. Let it be put away and let God give us something new—for the old can never be made better. It is helplessly insane, decrepit and defiled.

Furthermore, it is quite certain that human nature cannot be made better, for many have tried it but have always failed. A man trying to improve human nature is like trying to change the position of a weathercock, by turning it round to the east when the wind is blowing west. He has but to take his hand off and it will be back again to its place. So have I seen a man trying to restrain nature—he is an angry bad-tempered man and he is trying to cure himself a bit and he does. But it comes out and if it does not burn right out and the sparks do not fly abroad, yet it burns within his bones till they grow white with the heat of malice and there remains within his heart a residuum of the ashes of revenge. I have seen a man trying to make himself religious and what a monstrosity he makes himself in trying to do it, for his legs are not equal and he goes limping along in the service of God. He is a deformed and ungainly creature and all who look at him can very soon discover the inconsistencies of his profession.

Oh, we say it is vain for such a man to try to appear white, as well might the Ethiopian think he could make his skin appear white by applying cosmetics to it, or as well might the leopard think that his spots might be brushed away as for this man to imagine that he can conceal the baseness of his nature by any attempts at religion! Ah, I know. I tried a long time to improve myself, but I never did make much of it. I found I had a devil within me when I began and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better, I became worse. I had now the devil of selfrighteousness, of self-trust and self-conceit. And many others had come and taken up their lodging-place. While I was busy sweeping my house and garnishing it, behold the one that I sought to get rid of and which had only gone for a little season, returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they entered in and dwelt there. Ah, you may try and reform, dear Friends, but you will find you cannot do it. And remember even if you could, still it would not be the work which God requires. He will not have reformation, He will have renovation—He will have a new heart and not a heart changed a little for the better.

But, once again, you will easily perceive we must have a new heart when you consider what are the employments and the enjoyments of the Christian religion. The nature that can feed on the garbage of sin and devour the carrion of iniquity is not the nature that ever can sing the praises of God and rejoice in His holy name. The raven yonder has been feeding on the most loathsome food—do you expect that she shall have all the kindliness of the dove and toy with the maiden in her bower? Not unless you could change the raven into a dove. For as long as it is a raven its old propensities will cling to it and it will be incapable of anything above the raven’s nature. You have seen the vulture gorge to his very full with the very filthiest of flesh and do you expect to see that vulture sitting on the spray singing God’s praises with its hoarse screaming and croaking throat? And do you imagine you will see it feeding like the chick on the clean grain, unless its character and disposition is entirely changed? Impossible!

Can you imagine that the lion will lie down with the ox and eat straw like the bullock so long as it is a lion? No. There must be a change. You may put on it the sheep’s clothing but you cannot make it a sheep unless the lion-like nature is taken away. Try and improve the lion as long as you like—Van Amburgh himself, if he had improved his lions for a thousand years, could not have made them into sheep. And you may try to improve the raven or the vulture as long as you please, but you cannot improve them into a dove—there must be a total change of character. And then you ask me whether it is possible for a man that has sung the lascivious song of the drunkard and has defiled his body with uncleanness and has cursed God, to sing the high praises of God in Heaven as well as he who has long loved the ways of purity and communion with Christ?

I answer, no, never, unless his nature is entirely changed. For if his nature remains what it is, improve it as you may, you can make nothing better of it. So long as his heart is what it is, you can never bring it to be capable of the high delights of the spiritual nature of the child of God. Therefore, Beloved, there must assuredly be a new nature put into us.

And yet once again and I will have concluded upon this point. God hates a depraved nature and therefore it must be taken away before he can be accepted in Him. God does not hate our sin so much as He does our sinfulness. It is not the overflowing of the spring, it is the well itself. It is not the arrow that does shoot from the bow of our depravity. It is the arm itself that does hold the bow of sin and the motive that wings the arrow against God. The Lord is angry not only against our overt acts, but against the nature which dictates the acts. God is not so short-sighted as

merely to look at the surface—He looks at the source and fountain.

He says, “in vain shall it be, though you should make the fruit good, if the tree remain corrupt. In vain shall you attempt to sweeten the waters, so long as the fountain itself is defiled.” God is angry with man’s heart. He has a hatred against man’s depraved nature and He will have it taken away, He will have it totally cleansed before He will admit that man into any communion with Himself—and above all, into the sweet communion of Paradise. There is, therefore, a demand for a new nature and that we must have, or otherwise we can never see His face with acceptance.

II. And now it shall be my joyful business to endeavor, in the second place, to set before you very briefly THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN US.

And I may begin by observing that it is a Divine work from first to last. To give a man a new heart and a new spirit is God’s work and the work of God alone. Arminianism falls to the ground when we come to this point. Nothing will do here but that old-fashioned Truth of God men call Calvinism. “Salvation is of the Lord alone.” This Truth of God will stand the test of ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable Truth of the living God. And all the way in salvation we have to learn this Truth of God, but especially when we come here to this particular and indispensable part of salvation—the making of a new heart within us. That must be God’s work—man may reform himself—but how can man give himself a new heart? I need not enlarge upon the thought—it will strike you in a moment—that the very nature of the change and the terms in which it is mentioned here puts it beyond all power of man. How can man put into himself a new heart, for the heart being the motive power of all life, must exert itself before anything can be done?

But how could the exertions of an old heart bring forth a new heart? Can you imagine for a moment a tree with a rotten heart, by its own vital energy giving to itself a new young heart? You cannot suppose such a thing. If the heart were originally right and the defects were only in some branch of the tree, you can conceive that the tree, through the vital power of its sap within its heart, might rectify the wrong. We have heard of some kind of insects that have lost their limbs and by their vital power have been able to grow them again. But take away the seat of the vital power— the heart—lay the disease there and what power is there that can, by any possibility, rectify it, unless it be a power from without—in fact, a power from Above?

Oh, Beloved, there never was a man yet that did so much as the turn of a hair towards making himself a new heart! He must lie passive there—he shall become active afterwards—but in the moment when God puts a new life into the soul, the man is passive—and if there is anything of activity, it is an active resistance against it, until God, by overcoming and victorious Grace, gets the mastery over man’s will.

Once again, this is a gracious change. When God puts a new heart into man it is not because man deserves a new heart—because there was anything good in his nature that could have prompted God to give him a new spirit. The Lord simply gives a man a new heart because He wishes to do it. That is His only reason. “But,” you say, “suppose a man cries for a new heart?” I answer no man ever did cry for a new heart until he had one, for the cry for a new heart proves that there is a new heart there already. “But,” says one, “Are we not to seek for a right spirit?” Yes, I know it is your duty—but I equally know it is a duty you will never fulfill. You are commanded to make to yourselves new hearts, but I know you will never attempt to do it until God first of all moves you to. As soon as you begin to seek a new heart, it is presumptive evidence that the new heart is there already in its germ, for there would not be this germinating in prayer, unless the seeds were there before it.

“But,” says one, “Suppose the man has not a new heart and were earnestly to seek one, would he have it?” You must not make impossible suppositions. So long as the man’s heart is depraved and vile, he never will do such a thing. I cannot, therefore, tell you what might happen if he did what he never will do. I cannot answer your suppositions. If you suppose yourself into a difficulty you must suppose yourself out of it. But the fact is that no man ever did or ever will seek a new heart, or a right spirit, until, first of all, the Grace of God begins with him. If there is a Christian here who began with God, let him publish it to the world. Let us hear for once that there was a man who was beforehand with his Maker. But I have never met with such a case. All Christian people declare that God was first with them and they will all sing—

*“It was the same love that spread the feast, That sweetly forced me in,  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perished in my sin.”*

It is a gracious change, freely given without any merit of the creature, without any desire or goodwill coming beforehand. God does it of His own pleasure, not according to man’s will.

Once more, it is a victorious effort of Divine Grace. When God first begins the work of changing the heart, He finds man totally averse to any such a thing. Man by nature kicks and struggles against God. He will not be saved. I must confess I never would have been saved if I could have helped it. As long as ever I could, I rebelled and revolted and struggled against God. When He would have me pray, I would not pray—when He would have me listen to the sound of the ministry, I would not. And

when I heard and the tear rolled down my cheek, I wiped it away and defied Him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched, I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures. And when that would not do I tried selfrighteousness and would not then have been saved until I was hemmed in—and then He gave me the effectual blow of Grace—and there was no resisting that irresistible effort of His Grace.

It conquered my depraved will and made me bow myself before the scepter of His grace. And so it is in every case. Man revolts against his Maker and his Savior. But where God determines to save, save He will. God will have the sinner, if He designs to have him. God never was thwarted yet in any of His purposes. Man does resist with all his might, but all the might of man, tremendous though it is for sin, is not equal to the majestic might of the Most High when He rides forth in the chariot of His salvation. He does irresistibly save and victoriously conquer man’s heart.

And furthermore, this change is instantaneous. To sanctify a man is the work of the whole life. But to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant in one solitary second. Swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are today, an enemy of God with a wicked heart within—hard as a stone and dead and cold. But if the Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul and in that moment you will begin to tremble—begin to feel. You will confess your sin and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God’s Sovereign, effectual and irresistible Grace.

III. Now we have in this subject a grand field of hope and encouragement to the very vilest of sinners. My Hearers, let me very affectionately address you pouring out my heart before you for a moment or two. There are some of you here present who are seeking after mercy. Many a day you have been in prayer in secret, till your very knees seemed sore with your intercession. Your cry to God has been, “Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.” Let me comfort you by this reflection, that your prayer is already heard. You have a new heart and a right spirit. Perhaps you will not be able to perceive the truth of this utterance for months to come—therefore continue in prayer till God shall open your eyes so that you may see that the prayer is answered. But rest assured it is answered already.

If you hate sin, that is not human nature. If you long to be a friend of God, that is not human nature. If you desire to be saved by Christ, it is not human nature if you desire that without any stipulations of your own. If you are this day willing that Christ should take you to be His own, to have and to hold, through life and through death—if you are willing to live in His service and if needful to die for His honor, that is not of human nature—that is the work of Divine Grace. There is something good in you already. The Lord has begun a good work in your heart and He will carry it on even unto the end. All these feelings of yours are more than you ever could have attained of yourself. God has helped you up this Divine ladder of Grace and as sure as He has brought you up so many staves of it, He will carry you to the very summit till He grasps you in the arms of His love in Glory everlasting.

There are others of you here however, who have not proceeded so far, but you are driven to despair. The devil has told you that you cannot be saved. That you have been too guilty, too vile. Any other people in the world might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved. Hear me then, dear Friend. Have I not tried to make it as plain as the sunbeam all through this service that God never saves a man for the sake of what he is and that He does not either begin or carry on the work in us because there is anything good in us? The greatest sinner is just as eligible for Divine mercy as the very least of sinners. He who has been a ringleader in crime, I repeat, is just as eligible for God’s Sovereign Grace, as he that has been a very paragon of morality. For God wants nothing of us. It is not as it is with the plowman. He does not desire to plow all day upon the rocks and send his horses upon the sand. He wants a fertile soil to begin with, but God does not.

He will begin with the rocky soil and He will pound that rocky heart of yours until it turns into the rich black mold of penitential grief. Then He will scatter the living seed in that mold till it brings forth a hundredfold. But He wants nothing of you, to begin with. He can take you, a thief, a drunkard, a harlot, or whoever you may be. He can bring you on your knees, make you cry for mercy and then make you lead a holy life and keep you unto the end. “Oh,” says one, “I wish He would do that to me, then.” Well, Soul, if that is a true wish, He will. If you desire this day that you should be saved, there never was an unwilling God where there was a willing sinner.

Sinner, if you will to be saved, God wills not the death of any, but rather that they should come to repentance. And you are freely invited this morning to turn your eye to the Cross of Christ. Jesus Christ has borne the sins of men and carried their sorrows. You are bid to look there and trust there, simply and implicitly. Then you are saved. That very wish, if it is a sincere one, shows that God has just now been begetting you again to a lively hope. If that sincere wish shall endure, it will be abundant evidence that the Lord has brought you to Himself and that you are and shall be His.

And now reflect everyone of you—you that are not converted—that we are all this morning in the hands of God. We deserve to be damned—if God damns us, there is not a single word that will be heard against His doing it. We cannot save ourselves. We lie entirely in His hands—like a moth that lies under the finger, He can crush us now, if He pleases, or He can let us go and save us. What reflections ought to cross our mind, if we believe that? Why, we ought to cast ourselves on our faces as soon as we reach our  
homes and cry, “Great God, save me, a sinner! Save me! I renounce all merit for I have none. I deserve to be lost. Lord, save me, for Christ’s sake.” And as the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, there is not one of you that shall do this who shall find my God shut the gates of mercy against you!

Go and try Him, Sinner; go and try Him! Fall upon your knees in your chamber this day and try my Master. See if He will not forgive you. You think too harshly of Him. He is a great deal kinder than you think He is. You think He is a hard Master, but He is not. I thought He was severe and angry when I sought Him, “Surely,” I said, “if He accepts all the world beside, He will reject me.” But I know He took me to His bosom. And when I thought He would spurn me forever, He said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and as a cloud, your sins.” And I wondered how it was and I do wonder now. But it shall be so in your case. Only try Him, I beseech you. The Lord help you to try Him and to Him shall be the glory and to you shall be happiness and bliss, forever and ever. Amen.

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THE STONY HEART REMOVED  
NO. 456

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 25, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”  
Ezekiel 36:26.**

THE Fall of man was utter and entire. Some things, when they have become dilapidated, may be repaired. But the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is torn and rotten. He that would mend it with new cloth does but make the tear worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals. He who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottle will burst and his wine will be lost.

Old shoes might be good enough for Gibeonites. But we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible. If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out. If you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound and the marks may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure?

If the core were smitten with death, what power but the Divine could ever restore it to life? If a young man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid and the bone is by-and-by restored to its former strength. But if a man’s heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvelous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say—

*“Can anything beneath a power Divine  
The stubborn will subdue?  
It is Yours, eternal Spirit, Yours,  
To form the heart anew.  
To chase the shades of death away  
And bid the sinner live!  
A beam of Heaven, a vital ray,  
It is Yours alone to give.”*

But while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delights to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man. But to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delights to undertake strange things. To bring light out of darkness. Order out of confusion. To send life into the dead. To heal the leprosy. To work marvels of Divine Grace and mercy, and wisdom, and peace—these, I say, God delights to do. And so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to Him. And more, its impossibility to us commends it to Him and makes Him the more willing to undertake it, that He may thus glorify His great name.

According to the Word of God, man’s heart is by nature like a stone. But God, through His Grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this miracle of love, this miracle of Grace, which is to engage our attention tonight. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been worked in ourselves. I trust we shall talk experimentally, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of Divine love.

Two things we shall talk of tonight. First, the stony heart and its dangers. Secondly, the heart of flesh and its privileges.  
I. Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?  
1. First, because, like a stone it is cold. Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations. And it is thought to be a part of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but how soon it loses its heat! And though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man. It is warm enough towards sin. It grows hot as coals of juniper towards its own lusts. But naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God.  
You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment—but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, “What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth!” And another added, “But there is a greater wonder than that—to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly.”  
Ah, dear Friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warm the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus. No, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man. Though your hearts renewed by Divine Grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbor’s heart with the Divine heat. He will think you are a fool for being so enthusiastic. He will turn upon his heels and think you are a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him—the warmth that is in your heart, you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it. The heart of man, like marble, is cold as stone.  
2. Then, again, like a stone, it is hard. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone. It is harder than the diamond. It cannot be cut. It cannot be broken. It cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the Law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth’s great steam hammer, come down upon a man’s heart, and it has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking.  
We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it—we have marked the great battery of the Law with its ten great pieces of ordnance all fired against the heart of man—but man’s heart has been harder, even, than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships. And the great shots of the Law have dropped harmlessly against a man’s conscience—he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged sentence can cut your hearts? What warning needle can prick your consciences?  
Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard and impenetrable. Some of you now present have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you—but like Pharaoh, you have said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I will not bow my neck, neither will I do His will. I am my own master and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God.” O rocks of iron and hills of brass, you are softer than the proud heart of man!  
3. Again, a stone is dead. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it. It will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales. No smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the most happy story. It is dead. There is no consciousness in it. Prick it and it will not bleed, stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man’s heart is not like this as to natural things, yet spiritually this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion.  
“You are dead in trespasses and sins,” powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good, men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower. But real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of Heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melancthon may preach but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him. You may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and you may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead.  
Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we ever so wisely. Tears are lost on him. Threats are but as the whistling of the wind. The preaching of the Law and even of Christ crucified—all these are null and void and fall hopelessly to the ground, so long as the man’s heart continues what it is by nature—dead, and hard, and cold.  
4. Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man’s heart is like a stone because it is not easily to be softened. Lay a stone in water as long as you will and you shall not find it readily subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere and the sulphurous vapors of London. Certain stones crumble to decay, but the stone of a man’s heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue. It grows harder whether it is the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it.  
Mercy and love alike make it more solid and knit its particles closer together. And surely, until the Omnipotent, Himself, speak the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken. There is an invention, I believe, for liquefying flints, and then afterwards they may be poured out in a solution which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones. But you never can liquefy, except by a Divine power, the flinty heart of man. Granite may be ground, may be broken into pieces—but unless God gets the hammer in His hand, and even He must put both hands to it—the great granite heart of man will not yield in any way.  
Certain stones have veins and certain crystalloid stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow. But you can never find a vein in man’s heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges, with tears, with entreaties, with threats—it will not break. No, even the fires of Hell do not melt man’s heart, for the damned in Hell grow more hard by their agonies and they hate God and blaspheme Him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only Omnipotence, Himself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man.  
5. So then, man’s heart is cold, and dead, and hard—and cannot be softened. And then, again—and this is but an enlargement of a former thought—it is utterly senseless, incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science. We are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view.  
Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word. They often get so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts. But, alas! Their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone. If you have hot running wax you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear ever so hard upon the stamp, there is no impression—the surface shows no trace of your labor.  
So is man’s heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so. They do not like to hear human nature slandered, as they say. Well, Friend, if you have not this hard heart, why is it you are not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits the nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his Chapel and said, “Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don’t believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe and is not without spiritual power.” “Well,” said the doctor, have you repented and believed?” “No,” said the other. “Very well, then,” said he, “you deserve double damnation.”  
And so I say to the man who boasts that he has not such a hard heart as this—have you laid hold of Christ? Have you come to Him? If you have not, then out of your own heart you are condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God for having resisted the influences of God’s Spirit and rejected His Divine Grace. I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally byand-by, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.  
But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of final impenitence. If all these years the processes of nature have been at work within your heart and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish. Many of you are no strangers to the means of Divine Grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the Gospel preached ever since you were little ones. You attended Sunday school. You were likely in your boy hood to listen to old Mr. So-and-So, who often brought tears to your eyes.  
And of late you have been here, and there have been times with this congregation, when the Word seemed enough to melt the very rocks and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance. But you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely the natural inference from the logic of facts is you will continue as you are now. Means of Divine Grace will be useless to you. Privileges will become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over and eternity approaches—unblest, unsaved—and you will go down to the doom of the lost souls.  
“Oh,” says one, “I hope not.” And I add, I hope not, too. But I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the Gospel and you are getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it. As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith’s dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks. But afterwards he got so used to it that he could lie and sleep under the anvil. And there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God’s wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse. I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you—but asleep in your hearts—your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher, and your ears may be listening to his voice.  
And further, there is another danger. Hearts that are not softened grow harder and harder. What little sensibility they seem to have when they die. Perhaps there are some of you that can remember what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at

this hour which teaches a good moral—there is a mother putting her children to bed. The father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers. The little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers. There is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down. He is putting his hand to his head and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it.  
He recollects when he, too, was taught to pray at his mother’s knee. And though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear Hearers, that you do not grow worse and worse. For it will be so. We either grow ripe or rotten, one of the two, as years pass over us. Which is it with you?  
Then further, a man who has a hard heart is Satan’s throne. There is a stone they tell us, in Scotland, at Scone, where they were likely to crown their old kings. The stone on which they crowned the old king of Hell is a hard heart. It is his choicest throne. He reigns in Hell but he counts hard hearts to be his choicest dominions.  
And then again, the hard heart is ready for anything. When Satan sits upon it and makes it his throne, there is no wonder that from the seat of the scorner flow all manner of evil. And besides that, the hard heart is impervious to all instrumentality. John Bunyan, in his history of the “Holy War,” represents old Diabolus, the devil, as providing for the people of Mansoul a coat of armor, of which the breastplate was a hard heart. Oh, that is a strong breastplate! Sometimes when we preach the Gospel, we wonder that there is not more good done. I wonder that there is so much.  
When men sit in the House of God armed up to their very chins in a coat of mail, it is not much wonder that the arrows do not pierce their hearts. If a man has an umbrella, it is no marvel if he does not get wet. And so when the showers of Divine Grace are falling, there are many of you who put up the umbrella of a hard heart. And it is no marvel if the dew of Grace and the rain of Grace do not drop into your souls. Hard hearts are the devil’s lifeguards. When he once gets a man in an armor of proof—that of a hard heart—“Now,” he says, “you may go anywhere.”  
So he sends them to hear the minister and they make fun of him. He lets them read religious books and they can find something to mock there. He will then turn them even to the Bible—and with their hard heart they may read the Bible pretty safely—for the Word of God, the hard heart can turn to mischief and find something to find fault with even in the Person of Christ and in the glorious attributes of God, Himself. I shall not stay longer upon this very painful subject. But if you feel that your hearts are hard, may your prayer go up to God, “Lord, melt my heart. None but a bath of blood Divine can take the flint away. But do it, Lord, and You shall have the praise.”  
II. Secondly and briefly, A HEART OF FLESH AND ITS PRIVILEGES. “I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” In many— very many who are present tonight—my text has been fulfilled. Let us join in praying for others whose hearts are still stony, that God would work this miracle in them, and turn their hearts to flesh.  
What is meant by a heart of flesh? It means a heart that can feel on account of sin—a heart that can bleed when the arrows of God stick fast in it. It means a heart that can yield when the Gospel makes its attacks—a heart that can be impressed when the seal of God’s Word comes upon it. It means a heart that is warm, for life is warm—a heart that can think, a heart that can aspire, a heart that can love. Putting it all together—a heart of flesh means that new heart and right spirit which God gives to the regenerate.  
But in what way does this heart of flesh consist? In what way does its tenderness consist? Well, its tenderness consists in three things. There is a tenderness of conscience. Men who have lost their stony hearts are afraid of sin, even before sin they are afraid of it. The very shadow of evil across their path frightens them. The temptation is enough for them, they flee from it as from a serpent. They would not dally and toy with it, lest they should be betrayed. Their conscience is alarmed even at the approach of evil, and away they fly. And in sin, for even tender hearts do sin, they are uneasy. As well might a man seek to obtain quiet rest on a pillow stuffed with thorns, as the tender conscience get any peace while a man is sinning.  
And then, after sin—here comes the pinch—the heart of flesh bleeds as though it were wounded to its very core. It hates and loathes and detests itself that ever it should have gone astray. Ah, stony Heart, you can think of sin with pleasure, you can live in sin and not care about it. And after sin you can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue and say, “Who is my master? I care for none. My conscience does not accuse me.” But not so the tender broken heart! Before sin, and in sin, and after sin, it smarts and cries out to God.  
So also in duty as well as in sin, the new heart is tender. Hard hearts care nothing for God’s Commandments. Hearts of flesh wish to be obedient to every statute. “Only let me know my Master’s will and I will do it.” The hearts of flesh, when they feel that a Commandment has been omitted, or that the command has been broken, mourn and lament before God. Oh, there are some hearts of flesh that cannot forgive themselves, if they have been lax in prayer, if they have not enjoyed Sunday, if they feel that they have not given their hearts to God’s praise as they should.  
These duties which hearts of stone trifle with and despise, hearts of flesh value and esteem. If the heart of flesh could have its way, it would never sin, it would be as perfect as its Father who is in Heaven. And it would keep God’s Commandments without flaw of omission or of commission. Have you, dear Friends, such a heart of flesh as this?  
I believe a heart of flesh, again, is tender, not only with regard to sin and duty but with regard to suffering. A heart of stone can hear God blasphemed, and laugh at it. But our blood runs cold to hear God dishonored when we have a heart of flesh. A heart of stone can bear to see its fellow creatures perish and despise their destruction. But the heart of flesh is very tender over others. “Gladly its pity would reclaim and snatch the firebrand from the flame.” A heart of flesh would give its very lifeblood if it might but snatch others from going down to the pit, for its heart yearns and its soul moves toward its fellow sinners who are on the broad road to destruction. Have you, oh, have you such a heart of flesh as this?  
Then to put it in another light, the heart of flesh is tender in three ways! It is tender in conscience. Hearts of stone make no bones, as we say, about great mischiefs. But hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry, even for a minute, is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and torn before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done a great iniquity, “Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God’s Law?”  
But not so the heart of flesh. Great sins are little to the stony heart, little sins are great to the heart of flesh—if there are little sins. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron. Conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender. Like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch—it cannot bear the presence of evil. It is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that!  
Then again, the heart of flesh grows tender of God’s will. My Lord Willbe-Will is a great blusterer and it is hard to bring him down to subject himself to God’s will. When you have a man’s conscience on God’s side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim— *“Convince a man against his will  
He’s of the same opinion still,”*  
is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh, there are some of you that know right, but you still do wrong. You know what is evil, but you will to pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of Heaven, and bows like a twig in every breeze of God’s Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must dig it up by the roots. But the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the Divine influence and sweetly yields to it.  
To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a tenderness of the affections. The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, stolid. “Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?” The heart of flesh says*—  
“You know I love You, dearest Lord,  
But oh, I long to soar  
Far from this world of sin and woe,  
And learn to love You more.”*  
O may God give us a tenderness of affection that we may love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves!  
Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. “It is here the Spirit dwells, it is here that Jesus rests.” The soft heart is ready, now, to receive every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honor and praise of God. Oh, if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be! What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in Heaven! We may, indeed, pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a savor of life unto life and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defense against sin, while it is the best preparative for Heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from Heaven.  
Now, my voice fails me and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody’s sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine. So let us be brief and let us conclude—only we must press this enquiry home—Has God taken away the heart of stone and has He given you a heart of flesh? Dear Friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it. You may rub, as long as you like, the outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch water into wine.  
You may polish the exterior of your lantern but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree but all the pruning in the world won’t turn it into an apricot. So you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won’t change your heart. Polish your shilling but it will not change into gold. Nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done?  
Christ is the great heart-changer. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith, the nature is renewed. What do you say, Sinner? Do you believe that Christ is able to save you? Oh, trust Him, then, to save you—and if you do that—you are saved! Your nature is renewed and the work of sanctification which shall begin tonight, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection and you, borne on angel’s wings to Heaven, “glad the summons to obey,” shall enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ!

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COVENANT BLESSINGS  
NO. 1046

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.”  
Ezekiel 36:26, 27.**

LUTHER has well said that the experience of the minister is the best book in his library. I am persuaded it is so and that God often leads His servants through peculiar states of mind, not so much for their own benefit as for the sake of those to whom they may afterwards minister. It is not long ago since I felt myself, when engaged in devotion, cold and dead. And in looking into my own heart I saw no ground of comfortable assurance as to my being a possessor of the Grace of God—my feelings towards the great Father in Heaven were not, as far as I could judge, those of a child—my love towards Jesus Christ for His redemption was almost extinct.

I thought over the story of His Cross without emotion and I recalled to my mind the history of His everlasting love without gratitude. My soul was not, as it sometimes is, like the crystal lake which is ruffled with every passing breath of the breeze, but like some northern sea hardened into iron by the fierce reign of endless winter. The sublime Truths of infinite Grace stirred not my soul. My heart sank within me for a moment, but only for a moment, for there flashed across me this thought—“The Holy Spirit can produce within your heart all those emotions you are seeking for, all those desires you gladly would feel, all the melting, and the moving, and the yearning, and the rejoicing, which are significant of the Grace of God.”

Under the influence of that Truth of God, as in a moment, my deadness and coldness were driven away and I was filled with adoring love. Then I wondered greatly that the Lord should deign to handle such coarse material as our nature, that He should condescend to work upon such gross spirits, such groveling minds, such carnal understandings as ours. And when, by faith, I perceived that He could not only, then and there, give me to feel spiritual life but could maintain it against all hazards, and perfect it beyond all imperfections, and bring me safe into His eternal Kingdom and Glory—an act of faith exerted upon the Holy Spirit through the Cross of Christ made my soul eager for prayer, and my joy and peace in believing were more than restored to me!

Then I said within myself, there may be others in a similar case and especially there may be seeking souls who, seeing what must be worked in them before they can hope to be partakers of the eternal rest, may despair that such a work should ever be done, and looking only to themselves may be inclined to give up all hope, and conclude that within the pearly gates they can never enter. Perhaps, I thought, if I remind them that “the Spirit also helps our infirmities,” that Jesus Christ’s bequest to us, in virtue of His having gone to Heaven, is an Omnipotent One who can work all our worlds in us, causing us to will and to do of His own good pleasure—the thought may encourage their hearts and enable them to look with restful confidence to Him who works all our worlds in us.

Our text is a portion of that delightful rendering of the Covenant of Grace which is given us by Ezekiel, and we will, for a single moment, ask you to remember the persons with whom the covenant of Grace was made. An early version of the Covenant of Grace was given to Abraham and this in Ezekiel is a repetition, expansion, or explanation of the same. This Covenant, and that form of it made with Abraham, concern the same individuals. Let us, then, remind ourselves that the Covenant was not made with the fleshly seed of Abraham. If it had been, it would have run in the line of Ishmael as well as that of Isaac—but it was not made with Ishmael, for what says the Scriptures—“Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”

The Covenant of Grace was not made with the children who are born after the flesh as was Ishmael, but with those who are born according to the promise as was Isaac—who was not born by virtue of the energy of the flesh, for of Abraham it was said that he was as good as dead, and as for Sarah that she was long past bearing. But Isaac, the child of laughter, the child of joy, the heir of the promise, was born according to the power of God and not after the energy of nature. Isaac evidently typifies not the man of works but the man of faith. The man of works is born after the flesh. He has reformed himself. He has done his best—he continues to do his best. He is the child of his own energy. He is the result of human power. He is under the Law—he tries to save himself by the Law—he is, therefore, the son of Hagar the bond-woman and he is under bondage. His destiny may be learned from the words, “Cast forth the son of the bondwoman, he shall not be heir with my son.”

But the man of faith has received his faith supernaturally. It has been worked in him by the Holy Spirit. It is not the fruit of the creature’s power, it is the gift of God—it is the child of promise and it is the child of joy and laughter to him—it is a fresh spring of joy within his soul. The man of faith, therefore, is the heir of the promise and the partaker of the Covenant since he believes in Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. The man who rests upon the Grace of God and believes in God as holy Abraham did—he is a faithful man and, consequently, he is one of the sons of the father of the faithful. Let every man, therefore, who believes in Jesus Christ this morning know assuredly that every word of this text belongs to him and shall be fulfilled in him.

I earnestly pray that many sinners may put in their claim and say, “I have no works, but I believe in Jesus Christ. I come now and rest myself upon the bloody Sacrifice offered upon Calvary and I humbly receive the mercy of God through Jesus Christ by simply depending on Him.” To everyone who exercises faith in God, even though it is but a weak and struggling faith, the precious promise we are about to expound is a heritage which cannot be taken away from him! The main promise of the text before us is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Observe that the text divides itself thus—first, it contains an assured promise of preparation for the Spirit’s indwelling. Secondly, a plain promise of that indwelling. And, thirdly, the blessed results which flow from the promise.

I. Observe, first, we have here to all God’s covenanted people, or in other words, to all Believers, a promise of PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRIT’S INDWELLING. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” This promise is as a cluster of nuts, or a bough with many golden apples. Like the cherubim of Ezekiel it has four faces, all smiling upon the heirs of salvation. Like the new Jerusalem it lies four-square. It is a quadruple treasure worthy of fourfold consideration!

The first of the four blessings is the gift of a new heart. “A new heart also will I give you.” The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the old heart—it is a filthy place devoid of all good—and full of enmity to God. His very first operation upon our nature is to pull down the old house and build Himself a new one that He may be able to inhabit us consistently with His holy spiritual Nature. A new heart is absolutely essential. We must be born-again or the Spirit of Truth cannot abide within us. Observe where the inward work of Grace begins. All man’s attempts at the betterment of human nature begin from without, and the theory is that the work will deepen till it reaches that which is within. They profess to emancipate the man from the grosser vices, trusting that the reform will go further—that he will be brought under superior influences—and so be elevated in mind and heart.

Theirs is an outward ointment for an inward disease—a bandage upon the skin to stop the bleeding of the heart. Miserable physicians are they all! Their remedies fail to eradicate the deep-seated maladies of humanity. God’s way of dealing with men is the reverse. He begins within and works towards the exterior in due course. He is not a mere quack, who, seeing in a man the signs of disease, operates upon the symptoms, and never looks to the root of the mischief. It is very possible that by potent poisons a charlatan may check unpleasing indications—and he may kill the man in doing so. But the wise physician looks to the fountain of the disease, and if it is not possible to touch the core and center of it, he leaves the symptoms to right themselves.

If your watch is out of order the watchmaker does not consider it sufficient to clean the silver case, or to remove dust from the face—he looks within and may discover that this wheel is broken, this cog out of order—or the main spring needing to be replaced. He is not much concerned about setting the hands accurately at first, for he knows that the external manifestations of the correct time will follow from the setting to rights the time-keeping machinery within. Look at our brooks and rivulets which have been, by a lax legislature, so long delivered over to the tormentors to be blackened into pestiferous sewers—if we need to have them purged it is of no use to cast chloride of lime and other chemicals into the stream—the only remedy is to forbid the pollution, to demand that factories shall not poison us wholesale, but shall in some other manner consume their useless products! The voice of common sense bids us go to the original cause of the defilement and deal with it at its sources.

That is just what God does when He saves a sinner! He begins at the origin of the sinner’s sin and deals with his heart. My Brothers and Sisters, what a difficult work this is—“A new heart also will I give you.” If it had been said, “A new garment will I give you,” many of us could have conferred the same gift. If it had been said, “A new speech will I teach you,” this, also, with a little skill, might have been arranged. And, if the promise had been, “new habits will I create in you,” this, also, we could have attempted, and perhaps successfully, to imitate, for habits are to be engendered. But a new heart? Ah, here human power and wit are nonplussed. Jannes and Jambres in Egypt could imitate some of the miracles. They “did so with their enchantment,” and there is much in true religion which men can successfully counterfeit.

But, as in Egypt, a point was reached wherein the magicians were foiled, so that they confessed, “This is the finger of God.” So in the regeneration of our nature—in the changing the heart—the Lord alone is seen. Who shall pretend to give another a new heart? Go, boaster, and suspend the laws of gravitation! Recall the thunderbolt! Reverse the chariot of the sun! Transform the Atlantic to a lake of fire and then attempt to change the nature of the heart of man! This, God alone works, for He only does wondrous things! The affections are the most powerful part of our nature! They, to a great extent, mold even the understanding itself. And if the heart is defiled, all the mental faculties become disturbed in their balance. God, therefore, commences at the heart—and therein begins a work in which man cannot compete with Him, nor can he even help Him.

God must do it. The same God who made men must make them new, if the new-making is to begin with a change of heart. Blessed be God, He is Omnipotent enough to give us new hearts! He has wisdom enough to renew us! He has purity sufficient to cleanse us! He has abounding mercy to bear with us. Mark, He gives us “a new heart,” not an old heart touched-up and mended. Not an old heart a little purified and improved— but a new heart which enters into a new life, receives new inspirations, feeds on new food, longs for new happiness, performs new actions, and is, in fact—an inhabitant of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness! Brethren, I will read this sentence over again, “A new heart also will I give you.”

And I would call your attention to the style of the language. It is, “I will,” and yet again, “I will.” Jehovah’s Ego is the great word. It is not “I will, if,” or, “I will, perhaps,” or, “I will upon certain conditions,” but—“I will give.” He speaks in a God-like tone. It is royal language, the very word of Him who of old said, “Light be,” and light was! He who spoke the world into being now speaks the new world of Grace into being in the self-same majestic voice! Turn, now, to the second blessing—“A new spirit will I put within you.” Perhaps this clause may be explained as an interpretation of the former one. It may be that the new heart and the new spirit are intended to represent the same thing. But I conceive there is more than this.

“A new spirit”—does not the term indicate that a new vital principle is implanted in men? We have often explained to you that the natural man, is correctly and strictly speaking, a compound of soul and body only. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, and, as we bear the image of the first Adam, we are body and soul only. It is our own belief that in regeneration something more is done than the mere rectifying of what was there—there is in the new birth infused and implanted in man a third and more elevated principle—a spirit is begotten in him! And, as the second Adam was made a quickening Spirit, so in the new birth we are transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus, who is the second Adam. The implantation, infusion and putting into our nature the third and higher principle is, we believe, the being born-again. Regarded in this light, the words before us may be regarded as an absolute and unconditional promise of the Covenant of Grace to all the seed that a new spirit shall be put within them.

But, if we view it as some do, we shall then read it thus—the ruling spirit of man’s nature shall be changed. The spirit which rules and reigns in Godless Christless men is the spirit of a rebellious slave, the spirit of self. Every natural man’s main motive is himself. Even in his religion he only seeks self. If he is attentive to prayers and sermons, it is that he, himself, may be saved. And if he fears God, and dreads the terrors of His Law, it is on his own account—not that he cares for God’s Glory, God’s honor, or the rights of God—not one whit! He has no more interest in God than a rebellious slave has in the property of his master. He wears the yoke, but he groans under it. He would gladly enough escape from it if he could. He is only happy when he is breaking his master’s laws and fulfilling his own selfish will.

But, when the Spirit of God comes upon us to make our spirit a fit place for His residence, He takes away the spirit of the slave and gives us the spirit of a child—and from that moment the service of God becomes a different thing. We do not serve Him now because we are afraid of the whip, but nobler motives move us. Gratitude binds us to the Lord’s service and love gives wings to the feet of obedience. Now the Lord is no more regarded as a tyrant, but as a wise and loving parent. Whatever He may do with us we rejoice in His wisdom and goodness. We view Him no longer with suspicion and dread, but with confidence and joy. No more do we ask, “where shall I go from Your Presence?” But we desire to come near to Him. And in our sorrows our cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat.” It is a revolution, indeed, when the hatred and dread of a slave are exchanged for the loving subjection of a son! This is one of the precious privileges of the Covenant of Grace, which I trust, Beloved, many of you have already received, and which I hope others who have not received it will seek after. If they have believed in Jesus, a new spirit, a spirit of sonship is their privilege—let them not be content unless they have it now.

A third and further blessing of the text is the removal of the stony heart. “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.” I do not think the Lord removes, all at once, the evil heart out of any man’s flesh—there it remains to be fought with like the Canaanites in Canaan when Israel had entered there—to prove us and to try us. But He does take away the stony heart at once. The stony heart is a hard heart. The moment anything strikes a stone it repels the blow. When the Gospel is heard by a hard heart it throws it off again. It is not moved by it. It is not affected by it. You might as well throw feathers at a wall as preach Gospel sermons to hard hearts if your confidence is in the sermon itself! Only God’s power can make the feather-like sermon penetrate the heart of stone!

The Lord can do it, but the thing itself cannot be done by Nature. The natural heart is an impenetrable heart—you may make scratches on the surface—but you cannot enter within it to reach its inner core. What a marble heart by nature each one of us has! Till Grace visits us, the Truth of God cannot enter us any more than light can shine into a stone. A stony heart is unfeeling—you can make no impression upon it—it cannot smart, it cannot breathe, it cannot sigh, it cannot groan. A stony thing because a dead thing. Bruise it and that which would make flesh black and blue does not affect the stone. Cut it and that which would cause an agony to living flesh makes no disturbance in its granite mass. A cold, insensible thing—not to be warmed even by the rehearsal of the love of Calvary—such is our heart by nature.

Dear Hearers, such is the heart of every one of you till God deals with you—just a lump of stone! Of course we speak not literally but spiritually, yet what we assert is a solemn fact. God says, “I will take away the stony heart.” What a wonderful operation to take a stone out of the heart! How much more wonderful to take the stony heart, itself, right away and create a fleshy heart in its place! I would ask you again, though it may seem like a repetition, to notice how royally the Lord speaks. He does not say, “perhaps I will.” He does not say, “If you are willing I will,” but, he says, “I will.” Oh, it is gloriously worded, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.” The Lord’s Omnipotence can accomplish it!

We have heard of many expedients for softening hard hearts, but none of them are of any use. I know preachers who delight in talking of a mother’s tears, and a father’s gray hairs—of dying children and consumptive sisters, and I believe these are all legitimate topics. But no hearts are ever turned from stone to flesh merely by natural emotion. You may make a man weep over his dead child or his dead wife till his eyes are red—but his heart will be black for all that. Men’s hearts are changed by quite another agency than oratorical or rhetorical appeals to the natural affections. I readily admit that such appeals have their own sphere, but for the renewing of the heart something much more effectual is needed than natural emotion. It is written, “I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh,” and there is the secret of the matter!

The fourth promise of the preparation of the heart for the indwelling of the Spirit is this—“I will give you an heart of flesh,” by which is meant a soft heart, an impressible heart, a sensitive heart, a heart which can feel, can be moved to shame, to repentance, to loathing of sin, to desiring, to seeking, to panting, to longing after God. It means a tender heart, a heart that does not require a thousand blows to move it, but, like flesh with its skin broken, feels the very faintest touch—such is the heart which the Holy Spirit creates in the children of God! It is a teachable heart, a heart willing to be guided, molded, governed by the Divine will—a heart which, like young Samuel, cries, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears”—an obedient heart, ready to be run into the mold, putty beneath the sacred hand, anxious to be conformed to the heavenly Pattern.

This is an early work of Grace in the soul, for as soon as ever the Gospel is heard in power and the Spirit of God comes upon a man, long before he enters into the liberty where Christ makes men free, he ceases to have a heart of stone! Long before he can say, “Christ is mine,” he becomes tender and impressible under the Truth, and it is a great mercy it is so! It is a blessed sign of a work begun which will be effectually carried on where the heart trembles at God’s Word, where there are earnest desires towards Christ and the man is no longer a braggart rebel, but a trembling child come back to his father, and longing to cry, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You.”

Beloved, it is necessary, here, to add a word of caution to some of you. Do not mistake natural tenderness for that heart of flesh which God gives. There are many persons who are naturally very impressible, many among women, and some among men. For this characteristic they are rather, to me, admired than censured. But, let them not mistake this for a work of Grace. A heart of wax is soft, but it is not a heart of flesh. The softness of Nature is not the sensitiveness of Divine Grace. It is often the case that some persons who are religiously sensitive are equally sensitive the other way, and, while you can influence them for good, others can as easily influence them for evil. They happen to be just now religious because the associations surrounding them have that tendency, but were they under other influences they would be skeptical if not utterly irreligious.

They would have been lovers of the pleasures which others pursue had not home habits sobered their minds, for their hearts are still unrenewed. Mere religious impressibility is not Grace—it is Nature alone—and I even fear that to some it is a temptation to be so extremely impressionable. I am not always sanguine concerning persons who are readily excited, for they so soon cool down again. Some are like India rubber and every time you put your finger on them you leave a mark—but it is wasted time, because they get back into the old shape again as soon as you have done with them. I was preaching once, in a certain city, and a very worthy but worldly man went out of the congregation while I was in the middle of the sermon, the third sermon he had been hearing from me during the week.

One who followed him out asked him why he left, and he frankly replied that he could not stand it any longer, “for,” he said, “I must have become religious if I had heard that sermon through. I was nearly gone. I have been,” he added, “like an India rubber doll under this man. But when he goes away I shall get back into the old shape again.” Very many are of the same quality. They have so much natural amiability, good sense, and conscientiousness, that the Gospel ministry has a power over them and they feel its influence, though not so as to be saved by it. Beware, then, that you do not mistake the gilding of Nature for the solid gold of Grace.

When God’s Grace helps the preacher to wield the Gospel hammer and it comes down with power upon a piece of flint, how speedily the stone flies to shivers and what a glorious work of heart-breaking is done! And then the Lord comes in and gives, by His own almighty Grace, a heart of flesh! This is the change we need—the taking away of the stone—the giving of the heart of flesh. Let us read these four promises again, and I hope they will reach any poor trembling soul who may be saying, “I would, but cannot repent. I would but cannot feel. If anything is felt ‘tis only pain to find I cannot feel! My heart is so bad, so hard, so cold, I can believe in Christ but I cannot change my nature.”

Poor Soul, there is no need you should! For there is One who can do the work for you and these are His absolute promises to you if you are now looking to Christ upon the Cross and resting all your hopes in Him— “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

II. But time flies, and therefore let us consider, in the second place, THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. When the Spirit has thus prepared His habitation, He comes to reside within the renewed man. I call your attention to each word of the text. Observe first that the Lord says, “I will put My Spirit within you.” Now it does not say, “the influences of the Spirit shall come within you”—not that—but, “I will put My Spirit within you.” It is literally the fact that God Himself, the Eternal Spirit in “propria Persona,” in His own Person, resides and dwells within the renewed heart. I again remark that it is not said, “I will put the Grace of My Spirit, I will put the work of My Spirit,” but, “I will put My Spirit within you.”

It is the Holy Spirit Himself who, in very deed, lives in every heart of flesh—every new heart and right spirit. Can you get that thought? Simple as it is, it is one of the greatest marvels under the sun! An Incarnate God is a mystery—the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us—but here is another mystery! God dwells in every son of God. God dwells in us, and we in Him! The mystery of the Incarnation is no greater than that of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, nor does it appear to me to involve more condescension. I marvel at Christ’s dwelling with sinners and I marvel, equally, at the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in sinners! God Himself, for whom the universe is not too vast a temple! The ever blessed Spirit in whose Presence the heavens are not clean, yet says, “To this man will I look even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at My Word.”

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us implies the exercise of His influences, the bestowal of His gifts, and the implantation of His Graces. And, moreover, it involves the exercise of all His sacred offices, for where the Holy Spirit indwells He acts as a Teacher, an Illuminator, a Comforter, a Creator, a Strengthener, a Preserver—all that He is in all His offices He will be according to His own will to every man in whom He takes up His abode. Note a little word, also, in the text worthy of your attention. “I will put My Spirit within you.” It is not the spirit of angels. It is not the spirit of good men—it is God’s own Spirit who takes up His residence in every sinners when God renews it. “My Spirit.” And perhaps this may allude to the fact that this is the same Spirit which abode without measure in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a union of experience with Christ in the fact that the same oil which anointed Him anoints us. The same dew which fell upon His branch refreshes ours. The same holy fire which burned in His breast is kindled in ours. “I will put My Spirit within you.” Observe also carefully the words, “within you.” “I will put my Spirit within you.” We thank God that we come near to the Spirit of God when we devoutly read the Holy Scriptures, for He wrote them and His mind is in them. But we have a greater privilege than this! We thank God when the Spirit acts upon us under a sermon, or under any form of Christian teaching so that we feel the Spirit of God to be with us. But we have a privilege richer, even, than this. “I will put My Spirit”—not with you, nor side by side with you, nor in a book, nor in an oracle, nor in a temple, nor in one of your fellow men, but—“I will put My Spirit within YOU”—in your own souls, in your own renewed hearts!

This is marvelous! Augustine, when reflecting upon the various glories which come to God, and the benefits which accrue to men through redemption—none of which could have been revealed without the fall of Adam—exclaimed, “O beata culpa.” “Oh, happy fault!” And I have the same expression trembling on my lips. Where sin abounded Grace has much more abounded. Sin, which laid man in the dust and made him like a devil, afforded an opportunity for Mercy to step in and lift humanity higher than before! Where was man in Eden compared with man in Christ? In Paradise he was perfect in beauty, but in Jesus he wears a radiance superlative, for the Holy Spirit is within him!

In Adam man was made a living soul, but in Christ Jesus he has now risen to the dignity and majesty of a quickening Spirit. My brethren, where the Holy Spirit enters He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. When the ark came unto the Philistine temple, down went Dagon. And when the Holy Spirit enters the soul, sin falls and is broken. If the Holy Spirit is within, we may rest assured He will tolerate no reigning sin. He is a Spirit of burning, consuming our dross! He is a Spirit of light, chasing away our darkness. When He makes a heart His temple, He will scourge out the buyers and sellers who pollute it! He is not only the Purifier within but the Protector, too—from temptations that assail us from without He is as an unconquerable garrison to our soul making us impregnable to all assaults.

Treasonable sins lurk within us, but the Omniscient eye of God discerns each evil ambush and He lays His hands upon every sin which hides itself away in the dark recesses of our nature. With such an Indweller we need not fear—this poor heart of ours will yet become perfect as God is perfect—and our nature, through His indwelling, shall rise into complete meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Oh, what blessings are here, and in what royal language are they all promised! “I will put My Spirit within you.” How positive! How decisive! Suppose they will not accept the Spirit? Suppose they strive against the Spirit? Suppose their free will should get the mastery? Suppose nonsense!

When the Lord says, “I will,” nothing remains to be supposed. If He speaks to chaos, it is order. Do not ask, “Suppose chaos refuses to be arranged?” When Jehovah speaks to darkness, it becomes light! Do not ask, “But, suppose the darkness resists?” What shall resist His fiat? When the Lord comes forth in His Omnipotence who shall stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are you doing?” When the Spirit comes to deal in Sovereign Grace with the hearts of men, without violating their wills He has the power to accomplish His Divine purpose, and it shall be accomplished to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

III. Lastly, we must ask you to give your thoughts a moment to THE BLESSED RESULTS which come from all this. The indwelling Spirit leads every man in whom He reigns into obedience to the ways of God. I said that the work of Grace is commenced from within, but the work does not end there. Before we have considered the whole of the Covenant promise we shall find that change of life is guaranteed—a change apparent in works and actions, “You shall keep My judgments and do them.” We do not begin with works, but we go on to works. Faith first receives the blessing and then produces holy work. We will not allow the effect to take the place of the cause, but we are equally sure that the effect follows after the cause.

Now, observe the promise of the text before us—“I will cause you to walk in My statutes.” The soul that possesses the Spirit becomes active. It walks. It is not passive as one carried by main force—it works because the Spirit works in it, “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” The man who has no active godliness may fear whether he has any Grace at all. If I am only a receiver and have never brought forth fruit, I may fear that I am the ground that is “near unto cursing,” for if I were a field that the Lord has blessed I should yield Him a harvest. The Spirit causes us to walk, but yet we ourselves walk. He works in us to do, but the doing is actually our own. He does not repent, and He does not believe—He has nothing to repent of, and He has nothing to believe. Neither does the Spirit perform works for us—we are led to do these ourselves. We repent and we believe, and we do good works because He causes us to do so.

A willing walk with God is a sweet result of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. The Holy Spirit leads us to holy habits, for, mark the phrase, “I will cause you to walk in My ways.” The figure does not represent us as taking a run now and then, or as leaping a step or two and then lying down—but as walking on and on, steadily and continuously. Here excitement may produce momentary zeal and transient morality, but habitual holiness is the fruit of the Spirit. Note, next, the delight it implies. “I will cause you to walk in My ways”—not as a man who toils, but as one who walks at ease. The Believer finds it as sweet to walk in God’s ways as Isaac felt it sweet to walk in the fields at eventide. We are not slaves sweating in sore bondage, but children serving with delight! His Commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

It implies, too, holy perseverance—the words have the meaning of continuing to follow after holiness. It is a small matter to begin, but to hold out to the end is the testing point. The text promises to us a complete obedience—“I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments.” A Christian man is obedient to God—he minds the first table. He is just to man—he does not despise the second table. Statutes and judgments are equally dear to Believers. We are not willing to give a lame, one-sided obedience to God. The Holy Spirit, when He makes us devout God-ward, makes us honest man-ward. And the Holy Spirit also works a holy care for righteousness in the soul. “I will cause you to keep My judgments”—that is, to have an exactness of obedience—a precision, a deliberation, a willingness to find out God’s will and a care to attend to it in every jot and tittle.

A man in whom dwells the Holy Spirit is careful not to yield himself to the traditions of men but to the commands of God. He pays no attention to the statutes of the great councils of the Church, or the ordinances of popes, or the laws of priests, or the mandates of bishops. He searches out the will of the Lord, only. The knee of his conscience bows with lowly reverence before the Lord but nowhere else. He who has bound us to His altar has loosed all other bonds, so that the traditions of men and the ordinances of priests are contemptible to us. To God, and God alone the renewed heart renders obedience, but that obedience he does render!

Now, to what a delightful consummation has our text conducted us. It began with a renewed heart and it ends in a purified life. It commenced with taking away the stone and giving the flesh. Now it gives us the life of Christ written out in living characters in our daily practice. Glory be to God for this! O Soul, if you are a partaker of it, you will join in this thanksgiving! And if you are not renewed as yet, I beseech you do not go about to find these good things anywhere but where they are. At the foot of the Cross you will find a change of heart—where fell the drops of blood from Jesus’ nailed hands and feet—there is salvation! The Spirit of God will give you a right spirit, and, consequently, a pure life. Look not to your own efforts! Rake not the dunghill of your own heart! Look to the Holy Spirit through the blood of the precious Savior.

Now, to close. All this glorifies God doubly. It glorifies God that a man should walk in His ways. It glorifies God, yet more, that such obedience should be the result of Divine power. The outward life honors God, but the inward, spiritual, gracious work which that life produces, honors Him yet more abundantly. While this glorifies God doubly, it ennobles the soul supremely. To be made holy is to receive a patent of nobility. To be made holy by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, oh, what shall we say to this? Bring here the poorest peasant—let her, if you will, be an aged woman, wrinkled and haggard with labor and with years. Let her be ignorant of all learning, but, let me know that in her there is faith in Christ and that, consequently, the Holy Spirit dwells in her, and I will reverence her above all emperors and kings, for she is above them all!

What are these crowned ones but men who, perhaps, have waded through slaughter to a throne, while she has been uplifted by the righteousness of Jesus? Their dynasty is, after all, of mushroom growth— but she is of the blood royal of the skies! She has God within her! She has Christ waiting to receive her into His bliss! Heaven’s inhabitants without her could not be perfected, nor God’s purpose be fulfilled! Therefore is she noblest of the noble! Judge not after the sight of the eyes, but judge after the mind of God, and let saved sinners be precious in “your sight.”

Honor, also, the Holy Spirit. Speak of Him with lowly awe. Never take His name in vain. Take heed lest you blaspheme it. Reverently seek His company. Rejoice in His gifts. Love Him. Quench Him not. Strive not against Him. Bow beneath His power, and may He dwell in you and make you fit to dwell with Him forever, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT  
NO. 2200

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1891, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And I will put My Spirit within you.”  
Ezekiel 36:27.**

No preface is needed and the largeness of our subject forbids our wasting time in beating about the bush. I shall try to do two things this morning—first, I would commend the text. And, secondly, I would, in some measure, expound the text.

I. First, as for THE COMMENDATION OF THE TEXT, the tongues of men and of angels might fail. To call it a golden sentence would be much too commonplace—to liken it to a pearl of great price would be too poor a comparison! We cannot feel, much less speak, too much in praise of that great God who has put this clause into the Covenant of His Grace. In that Covenant, every sentence is more precious than Heaven and earth—and this line is not the least among His choice words of promise—“I will put My Spirit within you.”

I would begin by saying that it is a gracious Word. It was spoken to a graceless people, to a people who had followed “their own way” and refused the way of God—a people who had already provoked something more than ordinary anger in the Judge of all the earth, for He, Himself, said (v 18), “I poured My fury upon them.” These people, even under chastisement, caused the holy name of God to be profaned among the heathen wherever they went! They had been highly favored, but they abused their privileges and behaved worse than those who never knew the Lord. They sinned wantonly, willfully, wickedly, proudly and presumptuously and, by this, they greatly provoked the Lord. Yet to them He made such a promise as this—“I will put My Spirit within you.” Surely, where sin abounded Divine Grace did much more abound!

Clearly this is a Word of Grace, for the Law says nothing of this kind. Turn to the Law of Moses and see if there is any Word of God spoken therein concerning the putting of the Spirit within men to cause them to walk in God’s statutes. The Law proclaims the statutes, but only the Gospel promises the Spirit by which the statutes will be obeyed. The Law commands and makes us know what God requires of us, but the Gospel goes further and inclines us to obey the will of the Lord and enables us, practically, to walk in His ways. Under the dominion of Grace the Lord works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure!

So great a gift as this could never come to any man by merit. A man might so act as to deserve a reward of a certain kind, in measure suited to his commendable action, but the Holy Spirit can never be the wage of human service—the idea verges upon blasphemy! Can any man deserve that Christ should die for him? Who would dream of such a thing? Can any man deserve that the Holy Spirit should dwell in him and work holiness in him? The greatness of the blessing lifts it high above the range of merit and we see that if the Holy Spirit is bestowed, it must be by an act of Divine Grace—Grace infinite in bounty, exceeding all that we could have imagined. “Sovereign Grace over sin abounding” is here seen in clearest light. “I will put My Spirit within you” is a promise which drops with Graces as the honeycomb with honey! Listen to the Divine music which pours from this Word of Love. I hear the soft melody of Grace, Grace, Grace and nothing else but Grace. Glory be to God, who gives to sinners the indwelling of His Spirit!

Note, next, that it is a Divine Word— “I will put My Spirit within you.” Who but the Lord could speak after this fashion? Can one man put the Spirit of God within another? Could all the Church combined breathe the Spirit of God into a single sinner’s heart? To put any good thing into the deceitful heart of man is a great achievement, but to put the Spirit of God into the heart, truly, this is the finger of God! No, here I may say, the Lord has made bare His arm and displayed the fullness of His mighty power! To put the Spirit of God into our nature is a work peculiar to the Godhead and to do this within the nature of a free agent, such as man, is marvelous! Who but Jehovah, the God of Israel, can speak after this royal style and, beyond all dispute, declare, “I will put My Spirit within you”?

Men must always surround their resolves with conditions and uncertainties, but since Omnipotence is at the back of every promise of God, He speaks like a king, yes, in a style which is only fit for the eternal God! He purposes and promises and He as surely performs. Sure, then, is this sacred saying, “I will put My Spirit within you.” Sure, because Divine! O Sinner, if we poor creatures had the saving of you, we should break down in the attempt, but, behold, the Lord, Himself, comes on the scene and the work is done! All difficulties are removed by this one sentence, “I will put My Spirit within you.” We have worked with our spirit, we have wept over you and we have entreated you—but we have failed. Lo, there comes One into the matter who will not fail, with whom nothing is impossible! And He begins His work by saying, “I will put My Spirit within you.” The Word is of Grace and of God—regard it, then, as a pledge from the God of Grace.

To me there is much charm in further thought that this is an individual and personal Word of God. The Lord means, “I will put My Spirit within you.” That is to say, within you, as individuals. “I will put My Spirit within you” one by one. This must be so, since connection requires it. We read in verse 26, “A new heart also will I give you.” Now, a new heart can only be given to one person. Each man needs a heart of his own and each man must have a new heart for himself. “And a new spirit will I put within you.” Within each one this must be done. “And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh”—these are all personal, individual operations of Divine Grace! God deals with men one by one in solemn matters of eternity, sin and salvation. We are born one by one and we die one by one—even so we must be born again one by one—and each one, for himself, must receive Spirit of God. Without this, a man has nothing! He cannot be caused to walk in God’s statutes except by infusion of Grace into him as an individual.

I think I see among my hearers one man, or woman, who feels himself, or herself, to be all alone in the world and, therefore, hopeless. You can believe that God will do great things for a nation, but how shall solitary be thought of? You are an odd person, one that could not be written down in any list—a peculiar sinner with constitutional tendencies all your own. Thus says God, “I will put My Spirit within you”—within your heart—even yours! My dear Hearers, you who have long been seeking salvation, but have not known the power of the Spirit—this is what you need! You have been striving in energy of flesh, but you have not understood where your true strength lies. God says to you, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” And again, “I will put My Spirit within you.” Oh, that this Word might be spoken of the Lord to that young man who is ready to despair! To that sorrowful woman who has been looking into herself for power to pray and believe! You are without strength or hope in and of yourself, but this meets your case in all points. “I will put My Spirit within you”—within you as an individual! Enquire of the Lord for it! Lift up your heart in prayer to God and ask Him to pour upon you the Spirit of Grace and of supplications. Plead with the Lord, saying, “Let Your good Spirit lead me. Even me!” Cry, “Pass me not, my gracious Father; but in me fulfill this wondrous Word of yours, ‘I will put My Spirit within you.’”

Note, next, that this is a separating word. I do not know whether you will see this readily, but it must be so—this Word of God separates a man from his fellows. Men by nature are of another spirit from that of God and are under subjection to that evil spirit, the Prince of the power of the air. When the Lord comes to gather out His own, fetching out from among the heathen, He effects separation by doing according to this Word, “I will put My Spirit within you.” This done, the individual becomes a new man. Those who have the Spirit are not of the world, nor like the world—and soon have to come out from among the ungodly and to be separate—for difference of nature creates conflict. God’s Spirit will not dwell with the evil spirit—you cannot have fellowship with Christ and with Belial—with the Kingdom of Heaven and with this world.

I wish that the people of God would again wake up to the Truth of God that to gather out a people from among men is the great purpose of the present dispensation. It is still true, as James said at the Jerusalem Council, “Simeon has declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.” We are not to remain clinging to the old wreck with expectation that we shall pump water out of her and get her safe into port. No, the cry is very different—“Take to the lifeboat! Take to the lifeboat!” You are to quit the wreck and then you are to carry away from the sinking mass, that which God will save. You must be separate from the old wreck, lest it suck you down to sure destruction! Your only hope of doing good to the world is by yourselves being, “not of the world,” even as Christ was not of the world.

For you to go down to the world’s level will neither be good for it nor for you. That which happened in the days of Noah will be repeated, for when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men—and there was a league between the two races—the Lord could not endure the evil mixture, but drew up the sluices of the lower deep and swept the earth with a destroying flood. Surely, in that last day of destruction, when the world is overwhelmed with fire, it will be because the Church of God shall have degenerated and the distinctions between the righteous and the wicked shall have been broken down. The Spirit of God, wherever He comes, does speedily make and reveal the difference between Israel and Egypt—and in proportion as His active energy is felt, there will be an everwidening gulf between those who are led of the Spirit and those who are under the dominion of the flesh.

The possession of the Spirit will make you, my Hearer, quite another sort of man from what you are now, and then you will be actuated by motives which the world will not appreciate, for the world knows us not because it knew Him not. Then you will act, speak, think and feel in such a way that this evil world will misunderstand and condemn you. Since the carnal mind knows not the things that are of God—for those things are spiritually discerned—it will not approve your objectives and designs. Do not expect it to be your friend. The Spirit which makes you to be of the seed of the woman is not the spirit of the world! The seed of the serpent will hiss at you and bruise your heel. Your Master said, “Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hates you.” This is a separating Word of God, this. Has it separated you? Has the Holy Spirit called you alone and blessed you? Do you differ from your old companions? Have you a life they do not understand? If not, may God in mercy put into you that most heavenly deposit, of which He speaks in our text—“I will put My Spirit within you”!

But now notice, that it is a very uniting Word. It separates from the world, but it joins to God. Note how it runs— “I will put My Spirit within you.” It is not merely a spirit, or the spirit, but My Spirit. Now when God’s own Spirit comes to reside within our mortal bodies, how near akin we are to the Most High! “Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?” Does not this make a man sublime? Have you never stood in awe of your own selves, O you Believers? Have you regarded enough even this poor body as being sanctified and dedicated, and elevated into a sacred condition, by being set apart to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit? Thus are we brought into the closest union with God that we can well conceive of. Thus is the Lord our Light and our life, while our spirit is subordinated to the Divine Spirit. “I will put My Spirit within you”—then God Himself dwells in you! The Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead is in you! With Christ in God your life is hid and the Spirit seals you, anoints you and abides in you. By the Spirit we have access to the Father! By the Spirit we perceive our adoption and learn to cry, “Abba, Father.” By the Spirit we are made partakers of the Divine Nature and have communion with the thrice holy Lord!

I cannot help adding here that it is a very condescending Word—“I will put My Spirit within you.” Is it really so, that the Spirit of God who displays the power and energetic force of God, by whom God’s Word is carried into effect—that the Spirit who of old moved upon the face of the waters and brought order and life from chaos and death—can it be so that He will deign to sojourn in men? God in our nature is a very wonderful conception! God in the Babe at Bethlehem, God in the Carpenter of Nazareth, God in the “Man of Sorrows,” God in the Crucified, God in Him who was buried in the tomb—this is all marvelous! The Incarnation is an infinite mystery of love—but we believe it. Yet, if it were possible to compare one illimitable wonder with another, I should say that God’s dwelling in His people—and that repeated ten thousand times over—is more marvelous!

That the Holy Spirit should dwell in millions of redeemed men and women is a miracle not surpassed by that of our Lord’s espousal of human nature, for our Lord’s body was perfectly pure and the Godhead, while it dwells with His holy Manhood, does at least dwell with a perfect and sinless Nature. But the Holy Spirit bows Himself to dwell in sinful men! To dwell in men who, after their conversion, still find the flesh warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh—men who are not perfect, though they strive to be so—men who have to lament their shortcomings and even to confess with shame a measure of unbelief! “I will put My Spirit within you” means the abiding of the Holy Spirit in our imperfect nature. Wonder of wonders! Yet is it as surely a fact as it is a wonder. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Spirit of God, for, “if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His.”

You could not bear the suspicion that you are not His and, therefore, as surely as you are Christ’s, you have His Spirit abiding in you! The Savior has gone away on purpose that the Comforter might be given to dwell in you—and He does dwell in you. Is it not so? If it is so, admire this condescending God, and worship and praise His name! Sweetly submit to His rule in all things. Grieve not the Spirit of God. Watch carefully that nothing comes within you that may defile the Temple of God. Let the faintest monition of the Holy Spirit be law to you. It was a holy mystery that the Presence of the Lord was specially within the veil of the Tabernacle and that the Lord God spoke by Urim and Thummim to His people. It is an equally sacred marvel that now the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirits and abides within our nature and speaks to us whatever He hears of the Father. By Divine impressions which the opened ear can apprehend and the tender heart can receive, He speaks to us. God grant us to know His still small voice so as to listen to it with reverent humility and loving joy—then shall we know the meaning of these words, “I will put My Spirit within you.”

Nor have I yet done with commending my text, for I must not fail to remind you that it is a very spiritual Word. “I will put My Spirit within you” has nothing to do with our wearing a peculiar garb—that would be a matter of little worth. It has nothing to do with affectations of speech—those might readily become a deceptive peculiarity. Our text has nothing to do with outward rites and ceremonies, but goes much further and deeper. It is an instructive symbol when the Lord teaches us our death with Christ by burial in Baptism—it is to our great profit that He ordains bread and wine to be tokens of our communion in the body and blood of His dear Son—but these are only outward things and if they are unattended with the Holy Spirit they fail of their design.

There is something infinitely greater in this promise—“I will put My Spirit within you.” I cannot give you the whole force of the Hebrew, as to the words, “within you,” unless I paraphrase them a little, and read, “I will put My Spirit in the midst of you.” The sacred deposit is put deep down in our life’s secret place. God puts His Spirit not upon the surface of the man, but into the center of his being. The promise means—“I will put My Spirit in your heart, in the very soul of you.” This is an intensely spiritual matter, without admixture of anything material and visible. It is spiritual, you see, because it is the Spirit that is given—and He is given internally within our spirit. It is true the Spirit operates upon the external life, but it is through the secret and internal life, and of that inward operation our text speaks.

This is what we so greatly require. Do you know what it is to attend a service and hear God’s Truth faithfully preached and yet you are forced to say, “Somehow or other it did not enter into me; I did not feel the unction and taste the savor of it”? “I will put My Spirit within you,” is what you need. Do you not read your Bibles and even pray—and do not both devotional exercises become too much eternal acts? “I will put My Spirit within you” meets this evil! The good Spirit fires your heart. He penetrates your mind. He saturates your soul. He touches the secret and vital springs of your existence. Blessed Word of God! I love my text. I love it better than I can speak of it!

Observe once more that this Word is a very effectual one. “I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them.” The Spirit is operative—first upon the inner life in causing you to love the Law of the Lord—and then it moves you openly to keep His statutes concerning Himself and His judgments between you and your fellow men. Obedience, if a man should be flogged to it, would be of little worth. But obedience springing out of a life within—this is a priceless breastplate of jewels. If you have a lantern, you cannot make it shine by polishing the outside glass, you must put a candle in it—and this is what God does—He puts the light of the Spirit within us and then our light shines! He puts His Spirit so deep down into the heart that the whole nature feels it! It works upward, like a spring from the bottom of a well. It is, moreover, so deeply implanted that there is no removing it. If it were in the memory, you might forget it. If it were in the intellect, you might err in it. But, “within you,” it touches the whole man and has dominion over you without fear of failure. When the very kernel of your nature is quickened into holiness, practical godliness is effectually secured. Blessed is He who knows by experience our Lord’s Words—“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

If I should fail in expounding the text, I hope I have so fully commended it to you that you will turn it over and meditate upon it yourselves—and so get a home-born exposition of it! The key of the text is within its own self, for if the Lord gives you the Spirit, you will then understand His Words—“I will put My Spirit within you.”

II. But now I must work upon THE EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. I trust the Holy Spirit will aid me. Let me show you how the good Spirit manifests the fact that He dwells in men. I have to be very brief on a theme that might require a great length of time and can only mention a part of His ways and workings.

One of the first effects of the Spirit of God being put within us is quickening. We are dead by nature to all heavenly and spiritual things, but when the Spirit of God comes, then we begin to live. The man visited of the Spirit begins to feel—the terrors of God make him tremble, the love of Christ makes him weep. He begins to fear and he begins to hope—a great deal of the first and a very little of the second, it may be. He learns spiritually to sorrow. He is grieved that he has sinned and that he cannot cease from sinning. He begins to desire that which once he despised—he especially desires to find the way of pardon and reconciliation with God. Ah, dear Hearers! I cannot make you feel, I cannot make you sorrow for sin, I cannot make you desire eternal life—but it is all done as soon as this is fulfilled by the Lord, “I will put My Spirit within you.” The quickening Spirit brings life to the dead in trespasses and sins!

This life of the Spirit shows itself by causing the man to pray. The cry is the distinctive mark of the living child. He begins to cry in broken accents, “God be merciful to me.” At the same time that he pleads, he feels the soft tug of repentance. He has a new mind towards sin and he grieves that he should have grieved his God. With this comes faith, perhaps feeble and trembling—only a touch of the hem of the Savior’s robe—but still Jesus is his only hope and his sole trust. To Him he looks for pardon and salvation. He dares to believe that Christ can save even him. Then has life come into the soul when trust in Jesus springs up in the heart!

Remember, dear Friends, that as the Holy Spirit gives quickening at the first, so He must revive and strengthen it. Whenever you become dull and faint, cry for the Holy Spirit. Whenever you cannot feel in devotion as you wish to feel and are unable to rise to any heights of communion with God, plead my text in faith and beg the Lord to do as He has said, namely, “I will put My Spirit within you.” Go to God with this Covenant clause, even if you have to confess, “Lord, I am like a log. I am a helpless lump of weakness. Unless You come and quicken me I cannot live to You.” Plead importunately the promise, “I will put My Spirit within you.” All the life of the flesh will gender corruption. All the energy that comes of mere excitement will die down into the black ashes of disappointment. Only the Holy Spirit is the life of the regenerated heart! Have you the Spirit? And if you have Him within you, have you only a small measure of His life, and do you wish for more? Then go where you went at first! There is only one river of the Water of Life—draw from its floods. You will be lively enough, bright enough, strong enough and happy enough when the Holy Spirit is mighty within your soul!

When the Holy Spirit enters, after quickening he gives enlightening. We cannot make men see the Truth of God—they are blind—but when the Lord puts His Spirit within them, their eyes are opened. At first they may see rather hazily, but still they see. As the light increases and the eye is strengthened, they see more and more clearly. What a mercy it is to see Christ, to look unto Him and so to be lightened! By the Spirit, souls see things in their reality—they see the actual truth of them and perceive that they are facts. The Spirit of God illuminates every Believer so that he sees still more marvelous things out of God’s Law—but this never happens unless the Spirit opens his eyes. The Apostle speaks of being brought “out of darkness into His marvelous light” and it is a marvelous light, indeed, to come to the blind and dead! Marvelous because it reveals the Truth of God with clearness. It reveals marvelous things in a marvelous way! If hills and mountains, if rocks and stones were suddenly to be full of eyes, it would be a strange thing in the earth, but not more marvelous than for you and for me by the illumination of the Holy Spirit to see spiritual things!

When you cannot make people see the Truth of God, do not grow angry with them, but cry, “Lord, put Your Spirit within them!” When you get into a puzzle over the Word of the Lord, do not give up in despair, but believingly cry, “Lord, put Your Spirit within me!” Here lies the only true light of the soul. Depend upon it, all that you see by any light except the Spirit of God, you do not see spiritually. If you only see intellectually, or rationally, you do not see to salvation. Unless intellect and reason have received the heavenly Light of God, you may see, and yet not see—even as Israel of old. Indeed, your boasted clear sight may aggravate your ruin, like that of the Pharisees, of whom our Lord said, “But now you say, ‘We see,’ therefore your sin remains.” O Lord, grant us the Spirit within, for our soul’s illumination!

The Spirit also works conviction. Conviction is more forcible than illumination. It is the setting of a Truth before the eye of the soul, so as to make it powerful upon the conscience. I speak to many here who know what conviction means. Still, I will explain it from my own experience. I knew what sin meant by my reading, but yet I never knew sin in its heinousness and horror till I found myself bitten by it as by a fiery serpent, and felt its poison boiling in my veins! When the Holy Spirit made sin to appear sin, then was I overwhelmed with the sight and I would gladly have fled from myself to escape the intolerable vision. A naked sin stripped of all excuse and set in the light of the Truth of God is a worse sight than to see the devil himself! When I saw sin as an offense against a just and holy God, committed by such a proud and yet insignificant creature as myself, then was I alarmed.

Sirs, did you ever see and feel yourselves to be sinners? “Oh, yes,” you say, “we are sinners.” O Sirs, do you mean it? Do you know what it means? Many of you are no more sinners in your own estimation than you are Hottentots. The beggar who exhibits a sham sore knows not disease— if he did, he would have enough of it without pretences. To kneel down and say, “Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners,” and then to get up and feel yourself a very decent sort of person, worthy of commendation, is to mock Almighty God! It is by no means a common thing to get hold of a real sinner, one who is truly so in his own esteem. But it is as pleasant as it is rare, for you can bring to the real sinner the real Savior, and Jesus will welcome him! I do not wonder that Hart said—

*“A sinner is a saved thing,  
The Holy Spirit has made him so.”*  
The point of contact between a sinner and Christ is sin. The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins. He never gave Himself for our righteousnesses. He comes to heal the sick and the point He looks to is our sickness. When a physician is called in, he has no patience with things apart from his calling. “Tut, tut!” he cries, “I do not care about your furniture, nor the number of your cows, nor what income tax you pay, nor what politics you admire! I have come to see a sick man about his disease and if you will

not let me deal with it I will be gone.”

When a sinner’s corruptions are loathsome to himself. When his guilt is foul in his own nostrils. When he fears the death that will come of it, then it is that he is really convicted by the Holy Spirit—and no one ever knows sin as his own personal ruin till the Holy Spirit shows it to him! Conviction as to the Lord Jesus comes in the same way. We do not know Christ as our Savior till the Holy Spirit is put within us. Our Lord says—“He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” And you never see the things of the Lord Jesus till the Holy Spirit shows them to you. To know Jesus Christ as your Savior, as one who died for you in particular, is a knowledge which only the Holy Spirit imparts! To apprehend present salvation as your own, personally, comes by your being convinced of it by the Spirit. Oh, to be convinced of righteousness and convinced of acceptance in the Beloved! This conviction comes only of Him that has called you, even of Him of whom the Lord says, “I will put My Spirit within you.”

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit comes into us for purification. “I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” When the Spirit comes, He infuses a new life, and that new life is a fountain of holiness! The new nature cannot sin because it is born of God and, “it is a living and incorruptible seed.” This life produces good fruit and only good fruit. The Holy Spirit is the life of holiness. At the same time, the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul gives a mortal stab to the power of sin. The old man is not absolutely dead, but it is crucified with Christ. It is under sentence and before the eyes of the Law it is dead, but as a man nailed to a cross may linger long, yet he cannot live, so the power of evil dies hard, but die it must! Sin is an executed criminal—those nails which fasten it to the Cross will hold it fast till no breath remains in it. God the Holy Spirit gives the power of sin its death wound.

The old nature struggles in its dying agonies, but it is doomed and die it must. But you will never overcome sin by your own power, nor by any energy short of that of the Holy Spirit. Resolves may bind it, as Samson was bound with cords, but sin will snap the cords asunder. The Holy Spirit lays the axe at the root of sin and fall it must. The Holy Spirit within a man is “the Spirit of Judgment, the Spirit of Burning.” Do you know Him in that character? As the Spirit of Judgment, the Holy Spirit pronounces sentence on sin and it goes out with the brand of Cain upon it. He does more—He delivers sin over to burning. He executes the death penalty on that which He has judged. How many of our sins have we had to burn alive! And it has cost us no small pain to do it. Sin must be got out of us by fire, if no gentler means will serve—and the Spirit of God is a consuming fire. Truly, “our God is a consuming fire.” They paraphrase it, “God out of Christ is a consuming fire,” but that is not Scripture—it is, “our God,” our Covenant God, who is a consuming fire to refine us from sin! Has not the Lord said, “I will purely purge away all your dross, and take away all your tin”? This is what the Spirit does and it is, by no means, easy work for the flesh, which would spare many a flattering sin if it could.

The Holy Spirit bedews the soul with purity till He saturates it. Oh, to have a heart saturated with holy influences till it shall be as Gideon’s fleece, which held so much dew that Gideon could wring out a bowl full from it! Oh, that our whole nature were filled with the Spirit of God—that we were sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit! Sanctification is the result of the Holy Spirit being put within us.

Next, the Holy Spirit acts in the heart as the Spirit of preservation. Where He dwells, men do not go back to perdition. He works in them a watchfulness against temptation day by day. He works in them to wrestle against sin. Rather than sin, a Believer would die 10,000 deaths. He works union to Christ in Believers, which is the source and guarantee of acceptable fruitfulness. He creates in the saints those holy things which glorify God, and bless the sons of men. All true fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. Every true prayer must be “praying in the Holy Spirit.” He helps our infirmities in prayer. Even the hearing of the Word of the Lord is of the Spirit, for John says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and heard behind me a great voice.” Everything that comes of the man, or is kept alive in the man, is first infused and then sustained and perfected of the Spirit. “It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing.” We never go an inch towards Heaven in any other power than that of the Holy Spirit. We do not even stand fast and remain steadfast except as we are upheld by the Holy Spirit.

The vineyard which the Lord has planted, He also preserves, as it is written, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Did I hear that young man say, “I should like to become a Christian, but I fear I should not hold out”? How am I to be preserved? A very proper inquiry for, “He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.” Temporary Christians are not Christians! Only the Believer who continues to believe will enter Heaven. How, then, can we hold on in such a world as this? Here is the answer. “I will put My Spirit within you.” When a city has been captured in war, those who formerly possessed it seek to win it back again, but the king who captured it sends a garrison to live within the walls. And he says to the captain, “Take care of this city that I have conquered and let not the enemy take it again.” So the Holy Spirit is the garrison of God within our redeemed humanity and He will keep us to the end. “May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” For preservation, then, we look to the Holy Spirit.

Lest I weary you, I will be very brief upon the next point. The Holy Spirit within us is for guidance. The Holy Spirit is given to lead us into all the Truth of God. Truth is like a vast grotto and the Holy Spirit brings torches and shows us all the splendor of the ceiling. And since the passages seem intricate, He knows the way, and He leads us into the deep things of God. He opens up to us one Truth after another by His light and by His guidance, and thus we are “taught of the Lord.” He is also our practical Guide to Heaven, helping and directing us on the upward journey. I wish Christian people oftener inquired of the Holy Spirit as to guidance in their daily life. Know you not that the Spirit of God dwells in you? You need not always be running to this friend and to that to get direction—wait upon the Lord in silence—sit still in quiet before the oracle of God. Use the judgment God has given you, but when that suffices not, resort to Him whom Mr. Bunyan calls, “the Lord High Secretary,” who lives within, who is infinitely wise, and who can guide you by making you to “hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk you in it.” The Holy Spirit will guide you in life. He will guide you in death and He will guide you to Glory. He will guard you from modern error and from ancient error, too. He will guide you in a way that you know not—and through the darkness He will lead you in a way you have not seen—these things will He do for you and not forsake you.

Oh, this precious text! I seem to have before me a great cabinet full of rich and rare jewels. May God the Holy Spirit, Himself, come and hand these out to you and may you be adorned with them all the days of your life!

Last of all, “I will put My Spirit within you,” that is, by way of consolation, for His choice name is, “The Comforter.” Our God would not have His children unhappy and, therefore, He Himself, in the third Person of the blessed Trinity, has undertaken the office of Comforter. Why does your face wear such mournful colors? God can comfort you! You that are under the burden of sin, it is true no man can help you into peace, but the Holy Spirit can! O God, to every seeker here who has failed to find rest, grant Your Holy Spirit! Put Your Spirit within him and he will rest in Jesus! And you dear people of God who are worried, remember that worry and the Holy Spirit are very contradictory one to another! “I will put My Spirit within you” means that you shall become gentle, peaceful, resigned and acquiescent in the Divine will. Then you will have faith in God that all is well!

That text with which I began my prayer this morning was brought home to my heart this week. Our dearly beloved friend, Adolph Saphir, passed away last Saturday and his wife died three or four days before him. When my dear Brother, Dr. Sinclair Patteson, went to see him, the beloved Saphir said to him, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” Nobody would have quoted that passage but Saphir, the Bible student, the lover of the Word, the lover of the God of Israel. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” His dear wife is gone and he, himself is ill, but, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” This is a deep well of overflowing comfort, if you understand it well. God’s Providence is light as well as His promise—and the Holy Spirit makes us know this. God’s Word and will and way are all light to His people and in Him is no darkness at all for them. God Himself is purely and only light.

What if there is darkness in me? There is no darkness in Him and His Spirit causes me to fly to Him! What if there is darkness in my family? There is no darkness in my Covenant God and His Spirit makes me rest in Him! What if there is darkness in my body by reason of my failing strength? There is no failing in Him and there is no darkness in Him—His Spirit assures me of this! David says—“God my exceeding joy”—and such He is to us. “Yes, my own God is He!” Can you say, “My God, my God”? Do you need anything more? Can you conceive of anything beyond your God? Omnipotent to work all forever! Infinite to give! Faithful to remember! He is all that is good! Light only—“in Him is no darkness at all.” I have all light, yes, all things, when I have my God! The Holy Spirit makes us apprehend this when He is put within us. Holy Comforter, abide with us, for then we enjoy the Light of Heaven! Then are we always peaceful and even joyful, for we walk in the unclouded Light of God. In Him our happiness sometimes rises into great waves of delight, as if it leaped up to Glory. The Lord make this text your own—“I will put My Spirit within you.” Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 36:16-38.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—916, 489, 468. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #251 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT’S WORK  
NO. 251

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 8, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“And I will put My Spirit within you.”  
Ezekiel 36:27.**

THE miracles of Christ are remarkable for one fact, namely that they are none of them unnecessary. The pretended miracles of Mahomet and of the Church of Rome, even if they had been miracles, would have been pieces of folly. Suppose that Saint Denis had walked with his head in his hand after it had been cut off—what practical purpose would have been subserved thereby? He would certainly have been quite as well in his grave, for any practical good he would have conferred on men. The miracles of Christ were never unnecessary. They are not freaks of power. They are displays of power, it is true, but they all of them have a practical end. The same thing may be said of the promises of God.

We have not one promise in the Scripture which may be regarded as a mere freak of grace. As every miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, so is every promise that is given in the Word of God. And hence from the text that is before us, may I draw and I think very conclusively the argument, that if God in His Covenant made with His people has promised to put His Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made and it must be absolutely necessary, also, to our salvation that everyone of us should receive the Spirit of God.

This shall be the subject of this morning’s discourse. I shall not hope to make it very interesting, except to those who are anxiously longing to know the way of salvation. We start, then, by laying down this proposition—that the work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, if we would be saved.

1. In endeavoring to prove this, I would first of all make the remark that this is very manifest if we remember what man is by nature. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation—that if he hears the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply—you do not know what man is by nature—otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick, that he is faint, that he has grown callous and hardened and seared, but it says he is absolutely dead. Whatever that term “death” means in connection with the body, that it also means in connection with man’s soul—viewing it in its relation to spiritual things. When the body is dead it is powerless. It is unable to do anything for itself. And when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless and unable to do anything of itself or for itself.

When you shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when you shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin lids and walking down our streets alive and animate, as the result of their own power—then perhaps you may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures and may make themselves heirs of Heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, not till then. The drift of the Gospel is that man is dead in sin and that Divine life is God’s gift. And you must go contrary to the whole of that drift before you can suppose a man brought to know and love Christ, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit finds men as destitute of spiritual life as Ezekiel’s dry bones. He brings bone to bone and fits the skeleton together and then He comes from the four winds and breathes into the slain and they live and stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, and worship God. But apart from that, apart from the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God, men’s souls must lie in the valley of dry bones, dead and dead forever. But Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin. It tells us something worse than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to everything that is good and right. “The carnal mind is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). Turn all through Scripture and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God.

What did Christ say in that text so often quoted by the Arminian to disprove the very doctrine which it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without Divine influence? He said, first, “No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him.” But He said something more strong—“You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” No man will come. Here lies the deadly mischief. Not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong and that his will is desperately set against everything that is right. Go, Arminian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men will not come. They never will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come. You cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations.

They will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. Until the Spirit draws them, come they neither will, nor can. Hence, then, from the fact that man’s nature is hostile to the Divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another—hence it is necessary that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track and then give him strength to run in it. Oh, if you read man and understand him, you cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work. It has been well remarked by a great writer, that he never knew a man who held any great theological error, who did not also hold a doctrine which diminished the depravity of man.

The Arminian says man is fallen, it is true, but then he has power of will left and that will is free. He can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the Fall of man. On the other hand, the Antinomian says man cannot do anything, but that he is not at all responsible and is not bound to do it—it is not his duty to believe—it is not his duty to repent. Thus, you see, he also diminishes the sinfulness of man, and has not right views of the Fall. But once get the correct view—that man is utterly fallen, powerless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned—and you must be sound on all points of the great Gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is—once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his understanding darkened, his will perverse—and you must hold that if such a wretch as that is saved, it must be the work of the Spirit of God and of the Spirit of God alone!

2. I have another proof. Salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us, because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by anything else—for it is God’s chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. “It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” But what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to many Churches and Chapels into which you might step and say, “Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect.” You sit down and you say, “Well, if God means to work a great work, He will use a learned man like this.”

But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ, to any great degree? Go round your Churches, if you please, and look at them and then answer the question. Do you know any great men—men great in learning and wisdom—who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ? And where are souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows—who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly—and when the world speaks worst of him, feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel in which God is pleased to put His heavenly treasure.

I will dare to say it, that in every age of the world the most despised ministry has been the most useful. And I could find you at this day poor Primitive Methodist preachers who can scarce speak correct English, who have been the fathers of more souls and have brought to Christ more

than any one bishop on the bench. Why, the Lord has been pleased always to make it so, that He will clothe with power the weak and the foolish, but He will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position. Like the Apostle Paul, it is every minister’s business to glory in his infirmities.

The world says, “Pshaw upon your oratory! It is rough and rude and eccentric.” Yet, ‘tis even so, but we are content, for God blesses it. Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it. For now it is plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God and of God alone. It is said that once upon a time a man exceedingly curious desired to see the sword with which a mighty hero had fought some desperate battles. Casting his eye along the blade, he said, “Well, I don’t see much in this sword.” “No,” said the hero, “but you have not examined the arm that wields it.” And so when men come to hear a successful minister, they are apt to say, “I do not see anything in him.” No, but you have not examined the eternal arm that reaps its harvest with this sword of the Spirit. If you had looked at the jawbone of the ass in Samson’s hand, you would have said, “What? Heaps on heaps with this! No—bring out some polished blade—bring forth the Damascus steel!” NO. God must have all the glory and, therefore, not with polished steel, but with the jawbone must Samson get the victory.

So with ministers—God has usually blessed the weakest to do the most good. Well, now, does it not follow from this that it must be the work of the Spirit? Because, if there is nothing in the instrument that can do it, is it not the work of the Spirit when the thing is accomplished? Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined not to believe are compelled to believe. Now, who does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason, because there is nothing in the successful ministry which would warrant it. It must be that the Spirit works in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished.

You might as well expect to raise the dead by whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit. Melancthon went out to preach, you know, without the Spirit of the Lord and he thought he should convert all the people. But he found out at last that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon and he had to go back and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit before he saw a soul saved. I say that the fact that the ministry is blessed proves, since there is nothing in the ministry, that salvation must be the work of a higher power.

Other means, however, are made use of to bless men’s souls. For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you, is there anything in Baptism that can possibly bless anybody? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord’s Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is anything in the mere piece of bread that we eat, or in the wine that we drink?

And yet, doubtless, the Grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something, then, beyond the outward ceremony. There must, in fact, be the Spirit of God witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise none of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify. They could not help us to commune with Christ. They could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence—the influence of the Divine Spirit of God.

3. Let me again remind you, in the third place, that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact—that all which has been done by God the Father and all that has been done by God the Son would be ineffectual to us—unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects His people from before all worlds He chooses them to Himself. But let me ask you—what effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I possibly know? Can I climb to Heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists which hide eternity and open the seven seals of the Book and read my name recorded there? Ah, no—election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect which it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light.

And then, through my calling, I see my election and, knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. It is a precious thing—that doctrine of election—to a child of God. But what makes it precious? Nothing but the influence of the Spirit. Until the Spirit opens the eyes to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret—no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God—but the Spirit does it. He, by His Divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God. And then we are enabled to, “read our title clear to mansions in the skies.” Look, again, at the Everlasting Covenant. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by His Father from before all worlds and that in this Covenant the persons of all His people were given to Him and were secured. But of what use, or of what avail is the Covenant to us, until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the Covenant to us? The Covenant is, as it were, a holy tree laden with fruit. If the Spirit does not shake that tree and make the fruit fall—until it comes to the level of our standing—how can we receive it?

Bring here any sinner and tell him there is a Covenant of Grace, what is his advantage from knowing this? “Ah,” he says, “I may not be included in it. My name may not be recorded there. I may not be chosen in Christ.” But let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus and that man sees the Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and he cries with David, “It is all my salvation and all my desire.” Take, again, the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the place of all His people and that all those who shall appear in Heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace—seeing that Christ was punished in their place and that it would have been unjust if God punished them—seeing that He had punished Christ for them. We believe because Christ paid all their debts, they have a right to their freedom in Christ—that Christ having covered them with His righteousness— they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy. But of what avail is this to me, until the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ’s blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace?

You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by. It was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that He atoned for sins that were not His own. But you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps, even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the Cross and opened your eyes and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, then there was something in the blood, indeed! When His hand dipped the hyssop in the blood and when it applied that blood to your spirit, then there was a joy and peace in believing such as you had never known before! But ah, my Hearer, Christ’s dying is nothing to you unless you have a living Spirit within you. Christ brings you no advantage, saving, personal and lasting—unless the Spirit of God has baptized you in the fountain filled with His blood and washed you from head to foot.

I only mention these few, out of the many blessings of the Covenant, to prove that they are, none of them, of any use to us unless the Holy Spirit gives them to us. There hang the blessings on the Nail—on the Nail, Christ Jesus. But we are short of stature. We cannot reach them. The Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us and there they are. They are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach. But the Spirit of God opens the windows of Heaven, brings down the bread and puts it to our lips and enables us to eat. Christ’s blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine vat. But we cannot get there. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine and then we drink. But without the Spirit we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected and though the Son had never bought us with His blood. The Spirit is absolutely necessary. Without Him neither the works of the Father, nor of the Son, are of any use to us.

4. This brings us to another point. The experience of the true Christian is a reality. But it never can be known and felt without the Spirit of God. For what is the experience of the Christian? Let me just give a brief picture of some of its scenes. There is a person come into this hall this morning—one of the most reputable men in London. He has never committed himself in any outward vice. He has never been dishonest. He is known as a staunch, upright tradesman. Now, to his astonishment, he is informed that he is a condemned, lost sinner and just as surely lost as the thief who died for his crimes upon the cross. Do you think that man will believe it? Suppose, however, that he does believe it, simply because he reads it in the Bible. Do you think that man will ever be made to feel it? I know you say, “Impossible!” Some of you, even now, perhaps, are saying, “Well, I never should!” Can you imagine that honorable, upright tradesman, saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”?—standing side by side with the harlot and the swearer and feeling in his own heart as if he had been as guilty as they were and using just the same prayer and saying, “Lord, save, or I perish”?

You cannot conceive it, can you? It is contrary to nature that a man who has been so good as he should put himself down among the chief of sinners. Ah, but that will be done before he will be saved. He must feel that before he can enter Heaven. Now, I ask, who can bring him to such a leveling experience as that but the Spirit of God? You know very well proud nature will not stoop to it. We are all aristocrats in our own righteousness. We do not like to bend down and come among common sinners. If we are brought there, it must be the Spirit of God who casts us to the ground. Why, I know if anyone had told me that I should ever cry to God for mercy and confess that I had been the vilest of the vile, I should have laughed in their face. I should have said, “Why I have not done anything particularly wrong. I have not hurt anybody.” And yet I know this very day I can take my place upon the lowest form and if I can get inside Heaven I shall feel happy to sit among the chief of sinners and praise that Almighty love which has saved even me from my sins. Now, what works this humiliation of heart? Grace. It is contrary to nature for an honest and an upright man in the eyes of the world to feel himself a lost sinner. It must be the Holy Spirit’s work, or else it never will be done.

Well, after a man has been brought here, can you conceive that man at last conscience-stricken and led to believe that his past life deserves the wrath of God? His first thought would be, “Well, now, I will live better than I ever have lived.” He would say, “Now, I will try and play the hermit and pinch myself here and there and deny myself and do penance. And in that way, by paying attention to the outward ceremonies of religion, together with a high moral character, I doubt not I shall blot out whatever slurs and stains there have been.” Can you suppose that man brought at last to feel that, if ever he gets to Heaven, he will have to get there through the righteousness of Another? “Through the righteousness of another?” says he, “I don’t want to be rewarded for what another man does—not I. If I go there, I will go there and take my chances. I will go there through what I do myself. Tell me something to do and I will do it. I will be proud to do it, however humiliating it may be, so that I may at last win the love and esteem of God.”

Now, can you conceive such a man as that brought to feel that he can do nothing? That, good man as he thinks himself—he cannot do anything whatever to merit God’s love and favor? And, if he goes to Heaven, he must go through what Christ did? Just the same as the drunkard must go there through the merits of Christ, so this moral man must enter into life, having nothing about him but Christ’s perfect righteousness and being washed in the blood of Jesus. We say that this is so contrary to human nature, so diametrically opposed to all the instincts of our poor fallen humanity, that nothing but the Spirit of God can ever bring a man to strip himself of all self-righteousness and of all creature strength and compel him to rest and lean simply and wholly upon Jesus Christ, the Savior.

These two experiences would be sufficient to prove the necessity of the Holy Spirit to make a man a Christian. Let me now describe a Christian as he is after his conversion. Trouble comes, storms of trouble and he looks the tempest in the face and says, “I know that all things work together for my good.” His children die, the partner of his bosom is carried to the grave. He says, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” His farm fails, his crop is blighted. His business prospects are clouded—all seem to go and he is left in poverty—he says, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat. the flocks shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

You see him next laid upon a sick bed, himself, and when he is there, he says, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” You see him approaching at last the dark valley of the shadow of death and you hear him cry, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me, and You Yourself are with me.” Now, I ask you, what makes this man calm in the midst of all these varied trials and personal troubles, if it is not the Spirit of God? O, you that doubt the influence of the Spirit, produce the like without Him. Go and die as Christians die and live as they live and if you can show the same calm resignation, the same quiet joy and the same firm belief that adverse things shall, nevertheless, work together for good, then we may be, perhaps, at liberty to resign the point but not till then.

The high and noble experience of a Christian in times of trial and suffering proves that there must be the operation of the Spirit of God. But look at the Christian, too, in his joyous moments. He is rich. God has given him all his heart’s desire on earth. Look at him—he says, “I do not value these things at all, except as they are the gifts of God. I sit loose by them all and, notwithstanding this house and home and all these comforts, ‘I am willing to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.’ It is true, I want nothing here on earth. But still I feel that to die would be gain to me, even though I left all these.” He holds earth loosely. He does not grasp it with a tight hand, but looks upon it all as dust—a thing which is to pass away. He takes but little pleasure therein, saying—

*“I’ve no abiding city here,*

*I seek a city out of sight.”*  
Mark that man. He has plenty of room for pleasures in this world, but he drinks out of a higher cistern. His pleasure springs from things unseen. His happiest moments are when he can shut all these good things out and when he can come to God as a poor guilty sinner and come to Christ and enter into fellowship with Him and rise into nearness of access and confidence and boldly approach to the throne of heavenly grace.

Now, what is it that keeps a man who has all these mercies, from setting his heart upon the earth? This is a wonder, indeed, that a man who has gold and silver and flocks and herds, should not make these his god, but that he should still say—

*“There’s nothing round this spacious earth That suits my large desire.  
To boundless joy and solid mirth  
My nobler thoughts aspire.”*

These are not his treasure—his treasure is in Heaven and in Heaven only. What can do this? No mere moral virtue. No doctrine of the stoic ever brought a man to such a pass as that. No, it must be the work of the Spirit and the work of the Spirit alone, that can lead a man to live in Heaven, while there is a temptation to him to live on earth.

I do not wonder that a poor man looks forward to Heaven. He has nothing to look upon on earth. When there is a thorn in the nest, I do not wonder that the lark flies up, for there is no rest for him below. When you are beaten and chafed by trouble, no wonder you say—

*“Jerusalem! My happy home!  
Name ever dear to me.  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy and peace and you?”*

But the greatest wonder is, if you line the Christian’s nest ever so softly, if you give him all the mercies of this life, you still cannot keep him from saying—

*“To Jesus, the crown of my hope,  
My soul is in haste to be gone.  
Oh bear me, you cherubim, up,  
And waft me away to His Throne.”*

5. And now, last of all, the acts, the acceptable acts, of the Christian’s life, cannot be performed without the Spirit. And hence, again, the necessity for the Spirit of God. The first act of the Christian’s life is repentance. Have you ever tried to repent? If so, if you tried without the Spirit of God you know that to urge a man to repent without the promise of the Spirit to help him, is to urge him to do an impossibility. A rock might as soon weep and a desert might as soon blossom, as a sinner repent of his own accord. If God should offer Heaven to man, simply upon the terms of repentance of sin, Heaven would be as impossible as it is by good works. For a man can no more repent of himself, than he can perfectly keep God’s Law. Repentance involves the very principle of perfect obedience to the Law of

God. It seems to me that in repentance there is the whole law solidified and condensed. And if a man can repent of himself then there is no need of a Savior—he might as well go to Heaven up the steep sides of Sinai at once.

Faith is the next act in the Divine life. Perhaps you think faith very easy. But if you are ever brought to feel the burden of sin you would not find it quite so light a labor. If you are ever brought into deep mire, where there is no standing, it is not so easy to put your feet on a rock, when the rock does not seem to be there. I find faith just the easiest thing in the world when there is nothing to believe. But when I have room and exercise for my faith, then I do not find I have so much strength to accomplish it. Talking one day with a countryman, he used this figure—“In the middle of winter I sometimes think how well I could mow. And in early spring I think, oh, how I would like to reap. I feel ready for it. But when mowing time comes and when reaping time comes, I find I have not strength to spare.” So when you have no troubles, couldn’t you mow them down at once? When you have no work to do, couldn’t you do it? But when work and trouble come you find how difficult it is.

Many Christians are like the stag, who talked to itself, and said, “Why should I run away from the dogs? Look what a fine pair of horns I’ve got and look what heels I’ve got, too. I might do these hounds some mischief. Why not let me stand and show them what I can do with my antlers? I can keep off any quantity of dogs.” No sooner did the dogs bark, than off the stag went. So with us. “Let sin arise,” we say, “we will soon rip it up and destroy it. Let trouble come, we will soon get over it.” But when sin and trouble come, we then find what our weakness is. Then we have to cry for the help of the Spirit. And through Him we can do all things, though without Him we can do nothing at all. In all the acts of the Christian’s life, whether it is the act of consecrating one’s self to Christ, or the act of daily prayer, or the act of constant submission, or preaching the Gospel, or ministering to the necessities of the poor, or comforting the desponding— in all these the Christian finds his weakness and his powerlessness— unless he is clothed about with the Spirit of God.

Why, I have been to see the sick at times and I have thought how I would like to comfort them. And I could not get a word out that was worth their hearing, or worth my saying. And my soul has been in agony to be the means of comforting the poor, sick, desponding Brother. But I could do nothing and I came out of the chamber and half wished I had never been to see a sick person in my life. I had so learned my own folly. So has it been full often in preaching. You get a sermon up, study it, and come and make the greatest mess of it that can possibly be. Then you say, “I wish I had never preached at all.”

All this is to show us, that neither in comforting nor in preaching can one do anything right, unless the Spirit works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Everything, moreover, that we do without the Spirit is unacceptable to God. And whatever we do under His influence, however we may despise it, is not despised of God, for He never despises His own work and the Spirit never can look upon what He works in us with any other view than that of complacency and delight. If the Spirit helps me to groan, then God must accept the groaner. If you could pray the best prayer in the world without the Spirit, God would have nothing to do with it. But if your prayer is broken and lame and limping—if the Spirit made it—God will look upon it and say, as He did upon the works of creation, “It is very good.” And He will accept it.

And now let me conclude by asking this question. My Hearer, have you the Spirit of God in you? You have some religion, most of you, I dare say. Well, of what kind is it? Is it a homemade article? Did you make yourself what you are? Then, if so, you are a lost man up to this moment. If, my Hearer, you have gone no further than you have walked yourself, you are not on the road to Heaven yet. You have got your face turned the wrong way. If you have received something which neither flesh nor blood could reveal to you. If you have been led to do the very things which you once hated and to love that thing which you once despised and to despise that on which your heart and your pride were once set—then, Soul, if this is the Spirit’s work, rejoice! For where He has begun the good work He will carry it on.

And you may know whether it is the Spirit’s work by this—have you been led to Christ and away from self? Have you been led away from all feelings, from all doings, from all willings, from all praying as the ground of your trust and your hope and have you been brought naked to rely upon the finished work of Christ? If so, this is more than human nature ever taught any man. This is a height to which human nature never climbed. The Spirit of God has done that and He will never leave what He has once begun. You shall go from strength to strength and you shall stand among the blood-washed throng, at last, complete in Christ and accepted in the Beloved.

But if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber to weep, to repent and to look to Christ and may you now have a Divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer and send us away with a blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE COVENANT  
NO. 3048

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 11, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY MORNING IN 1856.

**“And I will put My Spirit within you.”  
Ezekiel 36:27.**  
THE Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Covenant. We have considered “God in the Covenant” and “Christ in the Covenant” [See Sermons  
#93 and 103, Volume 2—GOD IN THE COVENANT and CHRIST IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] and now, this morning,

we have to consider the Holy Spirit in the Covenant. For, remember, it is necessary that the Triune God should work out the salvation of the Lord’s people if they are to be saved at all. And it was absolutely requisite that when the Covenant was made, all that was necessary should be put into it and, among the rest, the Holy Spirit, without whom all things done even by the Father and by Jesus Christ would be ineffectual, for He is needed as much as the Savior of men, or the Father of spirits. In this age, when the Holy Spirit is too much forgotten, and but little honor is accorded to His sacred Person, I feel that there is a deep responsibility upon me to endeavor to magnify His great and holy name. I almost tremble, this morning, in entering on so profound a subject, for which I feel myself so insufficient. But, nevertheless, relying on the aid, the guidance and the witness of the Holy Spirit, Himself, I venture upon an exposition of this text, “I will put My Spirit within you.”

The Holy Spirit is given, in the Covenant, to all the children of God and received by each in due course. And yet upon our Lord Jesus Christ did the Spirit first descend and alighted upon Him as our Covenant Head, “like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments.” The Father has given the Holy Spirit without measure unto His Son—and from Him, in measure, though still in abundance, do all “the brethren who dwell together in unity” (or union with Christ) partake of the Spirit. This holy anointing flows down from Jesus, the Anointed One, to every part of His mystical body, to every individual member of His Church. The Lord’s declaration concerning Christ was, “I have put My Spirit upon HIM.” And He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted.” The Spirit was first poured upon Christ and from Him descends to all those who are in union with His adorable Person. Let us bless the name of Christ if we are united to Him—and let us look up to our Covenant Head, expecting that from Him will flow down the heavenly unction which shall anoint our souls!

My text is one of the unconditional promises of Scripture. There are many conditional promises in the Word of God given to certain characters, although even these promises are in some sense unconditional, since the very condition of the promise is by some other promise secured as a gift—but this one has no condition whatever. It does not say, “I will put My Spirit within them if they ask for Him.” It says plainly, without any reservation or stipulation, “I will put My Spirit within them.” The reason is obvious. Until the Spirit is put within us we cannot feel our need of the Savior, neither can we ask for or seek Him and, therefore, it is necessary that there should be an absolutely unconditional promise made to all the elect children of God—that they should have given to them the waiting Grace, the desiring Grace, the seeking Grace, the believing Grace which shall make them pant and hunger and thirst after Jesus! To everyone who is like Christ—“chosen of God and precious”—to every redeemed soul, however sunken in sin, however lost and ruined by the Fall, however much he may hate God and despise his Redeemer, this promise still holds good, “I will put My Spirit within you” and, in due course, every one of them shall have that Spirit who shall quicken them from the dead, lead them to seek pardon, induce them to trust in Christ and adopt them into the living family of God!

The promise is also concerning an internal blessing to be bestowed—“I will put My Spirit within you.” Remember, we have the Spirit of God in His written Word and with every faithful minister of the Gospel the Spirit is likewise vouchsafed to us in the ordinances of Christ’s Church. God is perpetually giving the Spirit to us by these means. But it is in vain for us to hear of the Spirit, to talk of Him, or to believe in Him unless we have a realization of His power within us! Here, therefore, is the promise of such an internal blessing—“I will put My Spirit within you.”

We come now to consider this promise in all its comprehensiveness. May the Holy Spirit Himself assist us in so doing! We shall take the various works of the Holy Spirit, one by one, and shall remember that in all the works which He performs, the Spirit is put in the Covenant to be possessed by every Believer.

I. In the first place we are told by Christ, “IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENS.”  
Until He is pleased to breathe upon the soul, it is dead to any spiritual life. It is not until the Spirit, like some heavenly wind, breathes upon the dry bones and puts life into them, that they can ever live. You may take a corpse and dress it in all the garments of external decency. You may wash it with the water of morality—yes, you may bedeck it with the crown of profession and put upon its brow a tiara of beauty. You may paint its cheeks until you make it like life itself. But remember, unless the Spirit is there, corruption will, before long, seize on the body. So, Beloved, it is the Spirit who is the Quickener—you would have been as “dead in trespasses and sins” now as ever you were if it had not been for the Holy Spirit who made you alive! You were lying, not simply “cast out in the open field,” but worse than that—you were the very prey of mortality! Corruption was your father, the worm was your mother and your sister—you were noxious in the nostrils of the Almighty. It was thus that the Savior beheld you in all your loathsomeness and said to you, “Live.” In that moment you were “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Life entered into you at His bidding—then it was that the Spirit quickened you! The words of Jesus, so He told His disciples, “They are Spirit, and they are life.” You were made alive entirely through the might of the quickening Spirit— *“The Spirit, like some heavenly wind  
Blows on the sons of flesh—  
Creates a new—a heavenly mind  
And forms the man afresh.”*  
If, then, you feel at any time death working in you, as doubtless you will, withering the bloom of your piety, chilling the fervor of your devotions and quenching the ardor of your faith, remember that He who first quickened you must keep you alive. The Spirit of God is the sap that flowed into your poor, dry branch because you were grafted into Christ. And as by that sap you were first made green with life, so it is by that sap, alone, you can ever bring forth fruit unto God. By the Spirit you drew your first breath when you cried out for mercy—and from the same Spirit you must draw the breath to praise that mercy in hymns and anthems of joy! Having begun in the Spirit, you must be made perfect in the Spirit. “The flesh profits nothing.” The works of the Law will not help you. The thoughts and devices of your own hearts are of no avail. You would be cut off from Christ, you would be more depraved than you were before your conversion, you would be more corrupt than you were previous to your being regenerated—“twice dead, plucked up by the roots”—if God the Holy Spirit were to withdraw from you! You must live in His life, trust in His power to sustain you and seek of Him fresh supplies when the tide of your spiritual life is running low.  
II. WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AN ASSISTANT SPIRIT IN ALL THE DUTIES WE HAVE TO PERFORM.  
The most common Christian duty is that of prayer, for the meanest child of God must be a praying child. Remember, then, that it is written, “The Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought.” The Spirit of God is in the Covenant as the Great Aid to us in all our petitions to the Throne of Grace. Child of God, you know not what to pray—rely, then, on the Spirit as the Inspirer of prayer who will tell you how to pray! Sometimes you know not how to express what you desire—rely upon the Spirit, then, as the One who can touch your lips with the “live coal from off the altar,” whereby you shall be able to pour out your fervent wishes before the Throne of God. Sometimes even when you have life and power within you, you cannot express your inward emotions—then rely upon that Spirit to interpret your feelings, for He “makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.” When, like Jacob, you are wrestling with the Angel and are nearly thrown down, ask the Holy Spirit to nerve your arms. The Holy Spirit is the chariot wheel of prayer. Prayer may be the chariot, the desire may draw it forth, but the Spirit is the very wheel whereby it moves. He propels the desire and causes the chariot to roll swiftly on and to bear to Heaven the supplication of the saints when the desire of the heart is “according to the will of God.”  
Another duty to which some of the children of God are called is that of preaching. And here, too, we must have the Holy Spirit to enable us. Those whom God calls to preach the Gospel are assisted with might from on high. He has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” It is a solemn thing to enter upon the work of the ministry. I will just make an observation here for in this place there are young men who are striving to enter into the ministry before they scarcely know the alphabet of the Gospel. They set themselves up as preachers of God’s Word when the first thing they ought to do is to join the infant class in a school and learn to read properly. I know there are some to whom God has given the desire to seek the glory of His name and the welfare of souls and who humbly wait till He has opened the way. God bless them and speed them! But—would you believe it?—a young man was baptized and received into the Church one Sunday—and he positively went off to a College on the Monday or Tuesday to ask if they would receive him! I asked him whether he had ever preached before, or addressed half-adozen Sunday scholars. He said, “No.” But what surprised me most was that he said he was called to the work before he was converted! It was a call from the devil, I verily believe—not a call from God in the least degree! Take heed that you touch not God’s Ark with unholy fingers! You may all preach if you can, but take care that you do not set yourselves up in the ministry without having a solemn conviction that the Spirit from on high has set you apart—for if you do, the blood of souls will be found on your skirts! Too many have rushed into the Holy Place uncalled of God who, if they could have rushed out of it on their dying beds would have had eternal cause for gratitude! But they ran presumptuously, then preached unsent and, therefore, unblessed! And when dying, they felt a greater condemnation from the fact that they had taken on themselves an office to which God had never appointed them! Beware of doing that! But if God has called you, however little talent you may have, fear not anyone’s frown or rebuke. If you have a solemn conviction in your souls that God has really ordained you to the work of the ministry and if you have obtained a seal to your commission in the conversion of even one soul, let not death or Hell stop you—go straight on and never think you must have certain endowments to make a successful preacher! The only endowment necessary for success in the ministry is the endowment of the Holy Spirit.  
When preaching in the presence of a number of ministers last Friday, I told the Brothers, when one of them asked how it was God had been pleased to bless me so much in this place, “There is not one of you whom God could not bless ten times as much if you had ten times as much of the Spirit.” For it is not any ability of the man—it is not any human qualification—it is simply the influence of God’s Spirit that is necessary! And I have been delighted to find myself abused as ignorant, unlearned and void of eloquence—all which I knew long before, but so much the better—for then all the glory belongs to God! Let men say what they please, I will always confess to the truth of it. I am a fool! “I have become a fool in glorying,” if you please. I will take any opprobrious title that worldlings like to put upon me, but they cannot deny the fact that God blesses my ministry, that harlots have been saved, that drunks have been reclaimed, that some of the most abandoned characters have been changed and that God has worked such a work in their midst as they never saw before in their lives! Therefore, give all the Glory to His holy name! Cast as much reproach as you like on me, you worldlings—the more honor shall there be to God who works as He pleases, and with what instrument He chooses, irrespective of man!  
Again, dearly-Beloved, whatever is your work, whatever God has ordained you to do in this world, you are equally certain to have the assistance of the Holy Spirit in it. If it is the teaching of an infant class in the Sunday school, do not think you cannot have the Holy Spirit! His succor shall be granted as freely to you as to the man who addresses a large assembly. Are you sitting down by the side of some poor dying woman? Believe that the Holy Spirit will come to you there as much as if you were administering the sacred elements of the Lord’s Supper. Let your strength for the lowliest work as much as for the loftiest be sought from God! Spiritual plowman, sharpen your plowshare with the Spirit! Spiritual sower, dip your seed in the Spirit so it shall germinate—and ask the Spirit to give you Grace to scatter it that it may fall into the right furrows! Spiritual warrior, whet your sword with the Spirit and ask the Spirit, whose Word is a two-edged sword, to strengthen your arm to wield it!  
III. The next point we refer to shall be that THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD AS A SPIRIT OF REVELATION AND OF INSTRUCTION.  
He brings us “out of darkness into marvelous light.” By nature we are ignorant, extremely so, but the Holy Spirit teaches the family of God and makes them wise. “You have an unction from the Holy One,” said the Apostle John, “and you know all things.” Student in the School of Christ, would you be wise? Ask not the theologian to expound to you his system of divinity, but, sitting down meekly at the feet of Jesus, ask that His Spirit may instruct you. For I tell you, student, though you should read the Bible many a year and continually turn over its pages, you would not learn anything of its hidden mysteries without the Spirit. But perhaps, in a solitary moment of your study, when suddenly enlightened by the Spirit, you may learn a Truth of God as swiftly as you see the lightning flash. Young people, are you laboring to understand the Doctrine of Election? It is the Holy Spirit alone who can reveal it to your heart and make you comprehend it. Are you tugging and toiling at the Doctrine of Human Depravity? The Holy Spirit must reveal to you the depth of wickedness of the human heart. Are you wanting to know the secret of the life of the Believer as he lives by the faith of the Son of God and the mysterious fellowship with the Lord he enjoys? It will always be a mystery to you unless the Holy Spirit shall unfold it to your heart. Whenever you read the Bible, cry to the Spirit, “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.” The Spirit gives eye-salve to the blind and if your eyes are not now open, seek the eye-salve and so you shall see—yes, and see so clearly that he who has only learned in man’s school, shall ask, “How knows this man letters, having never learned?”  
Those who are taught of the Spirit often surpass those who are taught of man. I have met with an entirely uninstructed clod-hopper in the country who never went to school for one hour in his life—who yet knew more about the Holy Scriptures than many a clergyman trained at the University! I have been told that it is a common practice for men in Wales, while they are at work breaking stones on the road, to discuss difficult points in theology which many a Divine cannot master! How? Because they humbly read the Scriptures, trusting only to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believing that He will lead them into all Truth—and He is pleased so to do. All other instruction is very well. Solomon says “that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.” We should all seek to know as much as can be known, but let us remember that in the work of salvation real knowledge must be obtained by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And if we would learn in the heart and not merely in the head, we must be taught entirely by the Holy Spirit. What you learn from man, you can unlearn—but what you learn of the Spirit is fixed indelibly in your heart and conscience—and not even Satan himself can steal it from you. Go, you ignorant ones, who often stagger at the Truths of Revelation—go and ask the Spirit, for He is the Guide of benighted souls! Yes, and the Guide of His own enlightened people, too, for without His aid, even when they have been “once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift,” they would not understand all Truths of God unless He led them into it.  
IV. I desire further to mention that GOD WILL GIVE THE SPIRIT TO US AS A SPIRIT OF APPLICATION.  
Thus it was that Jesus said to His disciples, “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” [See Sermons #465,

Volume 8—THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST; #2213, Volume 37—‘HONEY IN THE MOUTH!’— Mr. Spurgeon’s last sermon to the Members and Associates of the Pastors’ College Evangelical Association, on April 24th, 1891 and #2382, Volume 40—THE SPIRIT’S CHIEF OFFICE——

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

the matter still more plain, our Lord added, “All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” Let me remind you how frequently Jesus impressed on His disciples the fact that He spoke to them the words of His Father—“My Doctrine,” said He, “is not Mine, but His that sent Me.” And again, “The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.” As Christ thus made known the will of God the Father to His people, so the Holy Spirit makes known to us the words of Christ. I could almost affirm that Christ’s words would be of no use to us unless they were applied to us by the Holy Spirit! Beloved, we need the application to assure our hearts that they are our own, that they are intended for us and that we have an interest in their blessedness! And we need the unction of the Spirit to make them bedew our hearts and refresh our souls.

Did you ever have a promise applied to your heart? Do you understand what is meant by application as the exclusive work of the Spirit? It is as Paul says the Gospel came to the Thessalonians, “not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.” Sometimes it comes all of a sudden—your heart may have been the scene of a thousand distracting thoughts, billow dashing against billow till the tempest rose beyond your control. But soon some text of Scripture, like a mighty fiat from the lips of Jesus, has stilled your troubled breast and immediately there has been a great calm—and you have wondered from where it came. The sweet sentence has rung like music in your ears. Like a wafer made of honey it has moistened your tongue. Like a charm it has quelled your anxieties while it has dwelt uppermost in your thoughts all day—reining in all your lawless passions and restless strivings. Perhaps it has continued in your mind for weeks! Wherever you went, whatever you did, you could not dislodge it nor did you wish to do so, so sweet, so savory was it to your soul. Have you not thought of such a text as that as the best in the Bible, the most precious in all the Scriptures? That was because it was so graciously applied to you!

Oh, how I love applied promises! I may read a thousand promises as they stand recorded on the pages of this Sacred Volume and yet get nothing from them. My heart would not burn within me for all the richness of the store—but one promise brought home to my soul by the Spirit’s application has such marrow and fatness in it that it would be food enough for forty days for many of the Lord’s Elijahs! How sweet it is, in the times of deep affliction, to have this promise applied to the heart— “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you”! Perhaps you say, “That is all enthusiasm.” Of course it appears so to you, if, as natural men you discern not the things of the Spirit! But we are talking about spiritual things to spiritual men and to them it is no mere enthusiasm—it is often a matter of life or death. I have known numerous cases where almost the only plank on which the poor troubled saint was able to float was just one text of which, somehow or other, he had got so tight a grasp that nothing could take it away from him! Nor is it only His Word which needs to be applied to us. “He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you,” may be referred, likewise, to our Savior’s precious blood. We sometimes sing—

*“There is a Fountain filled with blood”—*  
and we talk of bathing in it. Now faith does not apply the blood to the soul—that is the work of the Spirit. True, I seek it by faith, but it is the Spirit who washes me in “the fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness.” It is the Spirit who receives of the things of Christ and shows them to me. You would never have a drop of blood sprinkled on your heart unless it was sprinkled by the hand of the Spirit. So, too, the robe of Christ’s righteousness is entirely fitted on us by Him. We are not invited to appropriate the obedience of Christ to ourselves—but the Spirit brings all to us which Christ has made for us. Ask, then, of the Spirit, that you may have the Word applied, the blood applied, pardon applied and Grace applied—and you shall not ask in vain—for Jehovah has said, “I will put My Spirit within you.”

V. But now we have to mark another very important point. WE MUST RECEIVE THE SPIRIT AS A SANCTIFYING SPIRIT.  
Perhaps this is one of the greatest works of the Holy Spirit— sanctifying the soul. It is a great work to purge the soul from sin. It is greater than if one should wash a leopard till all his spots were obliterated, or an Ethiopian till his sable skin became white, for our sins are more than skin-deep—they have entered into our very nature! Should we be outwardly washed white this morning, we would be black and polluted before tomorrow! And if all the spots were taken away today, they would grow again tomorrow, for we are black all through! You may scrub the flesh, but it is black to the last—our sinfulness is a leprosy that lies deep within. But the Holy Spirit sanctifies the soul. He enters the heart, beginning the work of sanctification by conversion. He keeps possession of the heart and preserves sanctification by perpetually pouring in fresh oil of Grace till at last He will perfect sanctification by making us pure and spotless, fit to dwell with the blest inhabitants of Glory!  
The way the Spirit sanctifies is this—first He reveals to the soul the evil of sin and makes the soul hate it. He shows it to be a deadly evil, full of poison—and when the soul begins to hate it, the next thing the Spirit does is to show it that the blood of Christ takes all the guilt away and, from that very fact, to lead it to hate sin even more than it did when it first knew its blackness. The Spirit takes it to “the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.” And there He tolls the death-knell of sin as He points to the blood of Christ and says, “He shed this for you, that He might purchase you unto Himself to be one of His peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Afterwards, the Holy Spirit may, at times, allow sin to break out in the heart of the child of God that it may be more strongly repressed by greater watchfulness in the future. And when the heir of Heaven indulges in sin, the Holy Spirit sends a sanctifying chastisement upon the soul until the heart, being broken with grief by the blueness of the wound, evil is cleansed away and Conscience, feeling uneasy, sends the heart to Christ who removes the chastisement and takes away the guilt!  
Again, remember Believer, all your holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit. You have not a Grace which the Spirit did not give you! You have not a solitary virtue which He did not work in you. You have no goodness which has not been given to you by the Spirit. Therefore, never boast of your virtues or of your Graces. Have you now a sweet temper, whereas you once were passionate? Boast not of it—you will be angry if the Spirit leaves you. Are you now pure, whereas you were once unclean? Boast not of your purity, the seed of which was brought from Heaven—it never grew within your heart by nature—it is God’s gift. Is unbelief prevailing against you? Do your lusts, your evil passions and your corrupt desires seem likely to master you? Then I will not say, “Up, and at ‘em!” but I will say—Cry mightily unto God that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit— so shall you conquer at last and become more than conqueror over all your sins—seeing that the Lord has engaged to put His Spirit “within you.”  
VI. When I have spoken of two more points, I shall conclude. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS PROMISED TO THE HEIRS OF HEAVEN AS A DIRECTING SPIRIT to guide them in the path of Providence.  
If you are ever in a position in which you know not what road to take, remember that your “strength is to sit still,” and your wisdom is to wait for the directing voice of the Spirit saying to you, “This is the way, walk you in it.” I trust I have proved this myself and I am sure every child of God who has been placed in difficulties must have felt, at times, the reality and blessedness of this guidance. And have you never prayed to Him to direct you? If you have, did you ever find that you went wrong afterwards? I do not mean the sort of prayers that they present who ask counsel, but not of the Lord—“who walk to go down into Egypt…to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh,” and then ask God to bless them in a way that He never sanctioned. No, you must start fairly by renouncing every other trust. It is only thus that you can make proof of His promise, “Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” Take with you, then, child of God, an open confession. Say, “Lord, I desire, like a sheet of water, to be moved by the breath of the Spirit. Here I lie, ‘passive in Your hands.’ Gladly would I know no will but Yours. Show me Your will, O Lord! Teach me what to do and what to refrain from doing.”  
To some of you this may seem all fanaticism. You believe not that God the Holy Spirit ever guides men in the way they should take. So you may suppose if you have never experienced His guidance. We have heard that when one of our English travelers in Africa told the inhabitants of the intense cold that sometimes prevailed in his country, by which water became so hard that people could skate and walk upon it, the king threatened to put him to death if he told anymore lies, for he had never felt or seen such things. And what one has never seen or felt is certainly fit subject for doubt and contradiction. But with regard to the Lord’s people who tell you that they are led by the Spirit, I advise you to give heed to their sayings and seek to make the trial for yourselves! It would be a good thing if you were just to go to God, as a child, in all your distresses. Remember that as a Solicitor whom you may safely consult, as a Guide whose directions you may safely follow, as a Friend on whose protection you may safely rely, the Holy Spirit is personally present in the Church of Christ and with each of the disciples of Jesus! And there is no fee to pay but the fee of gratitude and praise, because He has directed you so well!  
VII. Just once more—THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE GIVEN TO GOD’S CHILDREN AS A COMFORTING SPIRIT.  
This is peculiarly His office. Have you ever felt, immediately before a great and grievous trouble, you have had a most unaccountable season of joy? You scarcely knew why you were so happy or so tranquil. You seemed to be floating upon a very Sea of Elysium—there was not a breath of wind to ruffle your peaceful spirit, all was serene and calm. You were not agitated by the ordinary cares and anxieties of the world. Your whole mind was absorbed in sacred meditation. By-and-by, the trouble comes and you say, “Now I understand it all. I could not, before, comprehend the meaning of that grateful lull, that quiet happiness, but I see now that it was designed to prepare me for these trying circumstances. If I had been low and dispirited when this trouble burst upon me, it would have broken my heart. But now, thanks be to God, I can perceive through Jesus Christ how this ‘light affliction, which is but for a moment,’ works for me, ‘a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’” But, mark you, I believe that it is worthwhile to have the troubles in order to get the comfort of the Holy Spirit—it is worthwhile to endure the storm in order to realize the joys!  
Sometimes my heart has been shaken by disgrace, shame and contempt, for many a brother minister, of whom I thought better things, has reviled me—and many a Christian has turned on his heels away from me because I had been misrepresented to him and he has hated me without a cause. But it has so happened that at that very time, if the whole Church had turned its back on me and the whole world had hissed me, it would not have greatly moved me, for some bright ray of spiritual sunshine lit up my heart and Jesus whispered to me those sweet words, “I am My Beloved’s, and My Beloved is Mine.” At such times the consolations of the Spirit have been neither few nor small with me! O Christian, if I were able, I would bring you yet further into the depths of this glorious passage but, as I cannot, I must leave it with you. It is full of honey—only put it to your lips and get the honey from it. “I will put My Spirit within you.”  
In winding up, let me add a remark or two. Do you not see here the absolute certainty of the salvation of every Believer? Or rather, is it not absolutely certain that every member of the family of God’s Israel must be saved? For it is written, “I will put My Spirit within you.” Do you think that when God puts His Spirit within men, they can possibly be damned? Can you think God puts His Spirit into them and yet they perish and are lost? You may think so if you please, Sir, but I will tell you what God thinks—“I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes; and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” Sinners are far from God by wicked works and they will not come unto Him that they may have life. But when God says, “I will put My Spirit within you,” He compels them to come to Him!  
What a vain pretense it is to profess to honor God by a Doctrine that makes salvation depend on the will of man! If it were true, you might say to God, “We thank You, O Lord, for what You have done—You have given us a great many things and we offer You Your wages of praise, which are justly due to Your name, but we think we deserve more, for the deciding point was in our free will.” Beloved, do not any of you swerve from the free Grace of God, for the babblings about man’s free agency are neither more nor less than lies, right contrary to the Truth of Christ and the teachings of the Spirit.  
How certain, then, is the salvation of every elect soul! It does not depend on the will of man—he is “made willing” in the day of God’s

power. [See Sermon #74, Volume 2—A WILLING PEOPLE AND AN IMMUTABLE LEADER. This remarkable sermon was given by God to Mr. Spurgeon in his sleep, during the night of Saturday, April 12, 1856, and preached by him the next morning!] He shall be called at the set time

and his heart shall be effectually changed, that he may become a trophy of the Redeemer’s power. That he was unwilling before is no hindrance, for God gives him the will, so that he is then of a willing mind. Thus, every heir of Heaven must be saved because the Spirit is put within him and thereby his disposition and affections are molded according to the will of God!

Once more, how useless is it for any persons to suppose that they can be saved without the Holy Spirit! Ah, dear Friends, men sometimes go very near to salvation without being saved—like the poor man who lay by the side of the pool of Bethesda, always close to the water, but never getting in. How many changes in outward character there are which very much resemble conversion but, not having the Spirit in them, they fail after all! Deathbed repentances are often looked upon as very sincere, although too frequently, we fear, they are but the first gnawing of the worm that never dies. I have read, this week, an extraordinary anecdote, told by Dr. Campbell, of a woman who, many years ago, was condemned to death for murdering her child and was hung in the Grass Market at Edinburgh. She very diligently improved the six weeks allowed her by the Scottish law, previous to her execution, and the ministers who were with her continually gave it as their opinion that she died in the sure and certain hope of salvation. The appointed day came. She was hung, but it being very rainy, and no awning having been prepared, those who had the charge of her execution were in a great hurry to complete it and get under shelter—so she was cut down before the legal time and, as the custom is, the body was given up to her friends to be buried. A coffin was provided and she was moved in it to East Lothian where her husband was going to bury her. They stopped at a public-house on the road, to refresh themselves, when, to their great surprise and alarm, in rushed a boy and said he heard a noise in the coffin! They went out and found that the woman was alive! The vital powers had been suspended, but the life was not extinct and the jolting of the cart had restored her circulation. After a few hours she became quite well. They moved their residence and went to another part of the country. But the sad part of the tale is that the woman was as bad a character afterwards as she ever was before and, if anything, worse. She lived as openly in sin and despised and hated religion even more than she had previously done.

This is a most remarkable case. I believe that you would see that the great majority of those who profess to repent on their deathbeds, if they could rise again from their graves, would live a life as profane and godless as ever. Rely on this—it is nothing but the Grace of the Spirit of God that makes sure work of your souls. Unless He shall change you, you may be changed, but it will not be a change that will endure! Unless He shall put His hand to the work, the work will be marred, the pitcher spoiled on the wheel. Cry unto Him, therefore, that He may give you the Holy Spirit, that you may have the evidence of a real conversion and not a base counterfeit! Take heed, Sirs, take heed! Natural fear, natural love, natural feelings are not conversion! Conversion, in the first instance, and by all subsequent edification, must be the work of the Holy Spirit and of Him alone! Never rest comfortable, then, until you have the Holy Spirit’s operations most surely effected in your hearts!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3519 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A GOSPEL PROMISE  
NO. 3519

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1916.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments, and do them.” Ezekiel 36:27.**

THE blessing here promised is one of the most essential that men can need, or that God can give. Without this blessing, all the other benefits of the Covenant would be null and void. It is vain to have a Savior if we have not spiritual power to believe in Him! Of what use is it to us that there should be provided precious promises if we have no faith worked in us by the Holy Spirit whereby we can grasp those promises, plead them in prayer and obtain their fulfillment? Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, but holiness grows not in any human heart by nature. Therefore, without the Spirit of God, who is the Author of holiness, no man could ever become an heir of immortality, or enter into the rest which remains for the people of God! The Holy Spirit is needed for the very least form of spiritual life and is equally necessary for its highest development. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot go through the first gate— and without the Spirit we cannot pass the last. No man can say in his heart that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit—much less can any man attain to the perfection which is necessary to Heaven except through the work and power of the Spirit of the living God!

I am always apprehensive lest by any means in my ministry I should even seem to obscure this blessed and indispensable agency of the Holy Spirit. Oh, if the Spirit of God is not honored—if He takes offense at our neglect—if He withdraw from us—of what use will be our congregations? Of what use our earnestness, even if we could maintain it? To what purpose your assembling for prayer if you had not any wish to gather? Without Him, we can do nothing! He breathes all the animation into the Christian Church! Jesus is gone from us into Heaven, but He continues to reign and rule in our midst by His Vicegerent, the Holy Spirit! Let us honor Him. Let us rely upon Him. Let us earnestly seek Him. Let it be ours to declare Him, those of us who have to speak, and yours to receive Him, those of you who have to hear!

I. WHO IS THIS SPIRIT?  
He is spoken of in this text and often elsewhere. It is very necessary that we should talk over the commonplaces of the Gospel and the simplicities of the Word of God. I do not doubt but that there are some here who do not understand the Doctrine of the Divine Trinity. I have been annoyed—I would have been amused but for the sadness of the reflection—at the ignorance of some who have come in here and learned, for the first time, the most elementary Truths of the Gospel. They know them, now, and rejoice in them! They are even able to teach others. But when they first came, though not uneducated people, but well versed in some other matters—they had no more knowledge of the plan of Salvation, or even of the plain and simple fundamental Truths of the Gospel of Jesus—than if they had come here from the center of China, or some region into which our Bible had never been carried! Let it then be understood that the Holy Spirit, of whom we so often speak, is a Person. He is not a mere influence. We speak of “the influences of the Holy Spirit,” and very properly so, but those influences proceed from a Person who works upon the minds of men by His influence. It is right to pray for the influences of the Holy Spirit, but it is not right to think of the Holy Spirit, Himself, as though He were an influence, for He is a Person!

Actions are ascribed to Him which could not be ascribed to influences. He is said to be grieved, to be vexed, to have despite done unto Him. Wonderful things are ascribed to Him, which influences could not accomplish! The Spirit of God brooded over this earth when it was as yet without form and void—and darkness was upon the face of the deep. He brought order out of confusion. He garnished the heavens. The beauty of the Tabernacle is attributed to the skill that He Inspired. Or, turning to the holier Tabernacle of our Savior’s body, it was formed and fashioned by the power of the Holy Spirit! The holy Thing that was born of Mary was not born of natural generation, but by the energy of the Holy One of Israel. Not an influence, but a Person was the agent! And when our Lord was raised again from the dead, His Resurrection is ascribed in Scripture to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit worked many signs and wonders in the early Church. He enabled the Apostles to speak with many tongues. Through Him they had power to work many miracles. He even gave commandment to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto He had called them. And still, Beloved, He is in the Church and we have fellowship with Him! We commune with Him! We can bear our witness that He makes intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered, that He helps our infirmities and performs for us a thousand offices of love which make us feel, experimentally and consciously, that the agent of such things is a very Person!

He is, moreover, God —truly God! Never let us think lightly of the Holy Spirit, as though He were in any secondary sense, Divine. In your Baptism the three names were put together. You were baptized into the triple name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Take care that the three Persons be always associated in your minds with equal affection and with equal awe! The Benediction, which so constantly concludes our worship, gives to each His place—“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Father, and the fellowship or communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” The Holy Spirit, then, is Divine! We do not now attempt to prove that which it is our business at present dogmatically to assert. The thing is capable of abundant proof from Holy Writ. Let it suffice that we teach you the fact. How is it that the Father is God, that the Son is God and that the Holy Spirit is God—and yet that there are not three Gods, but one God? I cannot tell you. I know it is so, for so it is revealed—but how it is so, it is not for us to guess because it is not revealed or explained. Our understanding can adventure as far as the testimony and no farther! Many attempts have been made by Divines to find parallels in Nature to the Unity and the Trinity of God, but they all seem to me, to fail. Perhaps the very best one is that of St. Patrick, who, when preaching to the Irish and wishing to explain this matter, plucked a shamrock and showed them its three leaves all in one—three, yet one. Yet there are flaws and faults even in that illustration! It does not meet the case. It is a Doctrine to be emphatically asserted as it is expounded in that Athanasian Creed, the soundness of whose teaching I do not question, for I believe it all, though I shrink with horror from the abominable anathema which asserts that a man who hesitates to endorse it, will, “without doubt perish everlastingly.”

It is a matter to be reverently accepted as it stands in the Word of God and to be faithfully studied as it has been understood by the most scrupulous and intelligent Christians of succeeding generations. We are not to think of the Father as though anything could detract from the homage due to Him as originally and essentially Divine, nor of the only begotten Son of the Father as though He were not “God over all, blessed forever,” nor of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, as though He had not all the attributes of Deity! We must abide by this, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Jehovah.” But we must still hold to it that in three Persons He is to be worshipped, though He is but One in His essence. Understand, then, you who know but little of the Doctrines of the Gospel, that you must worship the Holy Spirit and exercise your faith on Him as God! Lay particular stress upon this, because it is written, “Whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.” Such awful sanctity surrounds the Spirit of God! As I think of Him, I seem to see Sinai in a blaze with a bound set around about—and I hear a Voice that says to me, “Draw not near here, for this is holy ground.”

That unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit, I know not what it is— in vain might I assay to define it. It stands like a beacon, as if God saw that an ungodly and stiff-necked generation would vex the Holy Spirit and venture far in blasphemy! Therefore, while all manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, the sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven. Take heed you do not harden your heart, lest you should commit it! I do not believe you have. I know you have not if you desire to be saved. I am sure you have not if you are willing to come and put your trust in Jesus Christ. Still, I admonish you to take care and treat with reverence the very thought of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Instructor of your souls. Your second question will be—

II. HOW DOES HE FULFILL THIS PROMISE?  
We understand by these words that those who formerly loved sin shall be made to love righteousness. That those who found it hard, at one time, to break off their evil ways, shall be induced to run with alacrity in the way of God’s Commandments. Now this is a great thing to be promised and a very great thing to be obtained! By no human power could it be brought to pass. As easily might the Blackamoor change his skin to whiteness, or the leopard get rid of his spots, as could the man who is accustomed to do evil reverse the entire current of his habits and instincts—and learn to do well! The Divine Power that first fashioned the soul of man must re-mold it. Only the Creator who made the instrument can re-tune it, or restore its harmony! No unskillful hands can mend it. People sometimes quibble at the Doctrine of Human Impotence, but I can assure you that the actual evidence is far more convincing than the abstract theory! The practical pastoral experience that some of us have had would soon convince anyone that there is ample evidence of its truthfulness. We meet with those who have been a little awakened at our Prayer Meetings and revival services. What, do you think, is the first thing we have to concern about them? Why, some of them have never been in the habit of thinking about their souls, before, and the moment they do begin to think, like a lad introduced into a carpenter’s shop who has never seen tools, before, they cut themselves with every tool they attempt to handle! These poor souls never were introduced to the spiritual world. Self-examination is a novelty to them. If they think of sin, it drives them to despair! Or if they think of mercy, that drives them to presumption! Whatever Truth of God we put before them, they misuse and pervert it. They do not seem to have the sense or the wit to use any Truth in a right way! You may teach the young enquirer with much earnestness, but you will find it difficult to guide him.  
For instance, if he seems resolved to despair, you shall try to comfort him and use as many arguments as you can, but he will despair if he has made up his mind to do it! Some of these remind me of certain game that sportsmen try to hunt out of their holes. It seems in vain to send the ferret after them. When I have used arguments to get them out of one hole, they take refuge in another! And when I have stopped up scores of holes and have said to myself, “I shall have you now—you cannot answer that!” Suddenly they seem to have found out quite another branch of lies and delusions. They are gone from me and all my work is lost! Ah, then it is that the pastor feels that he must have the power of the Holy Spirit to help him, or else even the awakened and anxious sinner will evade conversion, put away from himself eternal life and perish in his sin! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, experience will often prove more than controversy is prone to allow of the necessity of work of the Holy Spirit! And if in merely dealing with the elementary lessons of religion we find such palpable evidence of human inability, how much more is this the case in the matter of making a lover of sin become a lover of holiness? You may show him the proprieties of morality. You may lay before him the inevitable results of sin. You may charm him with the rewards of virtue, but the adder is too deaf for all your charming—and when you have charmed, and charmed, and charmed again—he still retains his venom and is still an adder!  
But how does the Holy Spirit effect this? He operates, it is true, in many ways. He does it often by His quickening power. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all spiritual life. Speak of regeneration, the Holy Spirit is the Regenerator. No man can receive that Divine Life which comes into him at the new birth except by the Spirit of God. We are raised from our death in sin into a new and holy life by the working of the Holy Spirit, and by that alone. Now, if someone here, hitherto incapable of a holy life, or of serving God right because of his natural depravity, should be quickened by the Holy Spirit, what a change would be at once worked upon him! What the spiritually dead man cannot do, the spiritually enlivened man can readily perform. How the Spirit quickens we know not. “The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” The effects are visible enough. You soon perceive that the man who was callous, without feeling, without emotion, becomes tender of conscience, eager in desires and sensitive in his anxieties. He becomes, in fact, a living man, though he was steeped in death before!  
The Holy Spirit continues to make a man practically new by the illumination He bestows. The man is blind—the Holy Spirit touches his eye with heavenly eye-salve and he begins to see. The sinner, with the Bible in his hand, though anxious to understand it in a measure, makes a sorry muddle of its Doctrines and precepts apart from the instructions of that blessed Commentator—the Holy Spirit! The Bible is full of the Light of God, but the heart of man is very dark. To what purpose is the Scripture opened to the understanding if the eyes of the understanding are covered with a thick film? It is the Holy Spirit who irradiates the Truth of God which He has revealed broadcast over every object that lies in our path. In reading the Bible to find comfort and direction, take care to lift up your hearts to Him who wrote it! As an author best understands his own books, so will the Spirit, who Inspired the volume, let you at once into the secret meaning of that which the pens of Inspired men have recorded. Wait upon God for instruction—His instruction is sure to lead you to holiness, for He instructs you in the evil of sin! He lets you see its heinousness, its demerit, its ingratitude and infamy. He instructs you in the beauty of holiness and shows you the example of your Master. He teaches you the Law of God and writes it upon the fleshly tablets of your heart. In this way, as an Illuminator as well as a Quickener, He makes us run in the ways of God’s statutes!  
Moreover, the Holy Spirit operates as a Comforter. Many men are wretched by reason of their sins, yet unwilling to renounce them. We have known people continue in present transgression because they are utterly hopeless of ever being forgiven their misdeeds in the past. But when the Spirit of God breathes holy comfort into the desponding sinner’s mind, he then says to himself, “I will not fling myself away after all. It is not meet that I, who have a better destiny before me, should live like those who have resolved to follow their own lusts, reckless of consequences—those who have made a covenant with Hell and a league with death! No, a thousand times no! If God does all this for me, and brings His dear Son to me, and tells me of pardons bought with blood, then away shall go my old sins and henceforth it shall be my joy to serve with all my might the Heavenly Friend who has been so kind to me.” The Holy Spirit is always to His people the Comforter. Are any of you sad? Does that sadness make you unbelieving? Does the unbelief act upon you as a temptation to sin? Go to the Comforter to take away the root of the mischief! So shall you run in the way of God’s Commandments because He has enlarged your heart and guided your footsteps!  
The Holy Spirit also operates in the hearts of some as an Intercessor, helping their prayers. Some of you are downcast and desponding because you cannot pray. “Oh,” you think, “if I could but pray!” What strange ideas possess people’s mind as to praying! One who took my hand the other day said to me, “I wish I could pray as you do, Sir, but pray I cannot.” Poor soul, when I saw his tears and heard his cries to God, very broken as they were, I wished that I could pray as he did, then! What is the use of fit words, fine sentences, fluent speech? These seem to me full often to be such deceitful acquirements that I would gladly dispense with them, if I might stammer out my soul’s desires and feel myself to be all the more sincere because I lacked expression to clothe my thought! Oh, no—the Lord does not require your long addresses! A groan, a sigh, a sob that seems to swell in your soul and become too big to find a way of escape—that is prayer! When you cannot pray, remember the Spirit also helps our infirmities. It is His office to utter groans for us which we cannot utter. And by enabling the man to pray, He enables the man to be holy, for prayer is a mainstay of holiness. To draw near to God, the Fountain of all perfection, is to be helped against besetting sin—and the blessed Helper in prayer also becomes, in this respect, a Help to us in the paths of righteousness.  
I do hope that any of you who have been saying, “I cannot do this,” and, “I cannot do that,” will understand that it is quite true that you cannot—but it is equally true that the Holy Spirit can help you to do all things! You can do everything through His almighty aid! Wait upon Him with earnest desires and say to Him, “Come, Holy Spirit, help a poor feeble worm. Help me to mourn my sin. Help me to look to Jesus with the eyes of faith. Help me to give up my sins. Help me when I am tempted, that I may withstand the subtle arts of Satan. Help me to overcome my bad temper, to get rid of the pride and naughtiness of my heart. Kill my sloth. Take away my disposition to put off and procrastinate. Enable me to decide for Christ right now and to come, all guilty as I am, and wash in the Fountain of His precious blood, that I may be saved.” I tell you it is the Holy Spirit’s office to do this! He is never so happy, if I may use such a phrase concerning the ever-blessed One, as when He is thus, by His quickening, His illuminating, His comforting influences, bringing poor guilty souls to Jesus and, by Him, to the paths of holiness!  
Furthermore, one of the Holy Spirit’s proper offices is to sanctify the people of God. Jesus Christ gives us a justifying righteousness which is imputed to us—the Holy Spirit gives us a sanctifying righteousness which is imparted to us. The blessed Jesus brings to us His own righteousness and clothes us with it. The Holy Spirit works in us a personal conformity to the will of God in our hearts, productive of fruit in our lives as a sequel to that obedience even unto death, wherewith Christ made satisfaction for our offenses and discharged the high obligation of that obedience we owed. This holiness is not the holiness of Christ, as some vainly say, but it is a personal holiness worked in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit. You, dear Hearers, have perhaps said to yourselves, “I cannot be saved because I am not holy.” The truth is you cannot be holy because you are not saved—being saved comes first! Holiness is never the root—it is always the fruit! It is not the cause, it is the effect! You must come to Jesus as you are and trust Him—and then He will give you the Holy Spirit to work in you the new heart, the new desire—and to make you a new creature. You say, “I cannot make myself holy.” That is true. You ought to do so, but

the power is gone and alas, the will likewise! But if God has given you the will, He points you to Him with whom the power is rested, namely, the Holy Spirit, who will dwell in you and sanctify you through the Word of Truth and the application of the precious blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ.  
Nor must I omit to notice that one of the Spirit’s great works is to dwell in His people. The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer in Christ! He has never been absent from him since he became a disciple. We may invoke His Presence as we sing—  
*“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all Your quickening powers.”*  
But that is a prayer for His special manifestation. The Holy Spirit is here. He lives in the Church. He has come as a Comforter who shall abide with us forever. He dwells in the bodies of His people—God is in His Temple. And, mark you, it is by this indwelling that the holiness of the Believer is kept up. If the Holy Spirit left him, he would return, like a dog to his vomit, but because the Holy Spirit looks out of these eyes and throbs in this hear and moves these hands, when the man is freely obedient to the Divine Power, the man is kept in the paths of integrity and his end is everlasting life! To gather up all these thoughts in one, whatever offices the Holy Spirit sustains to God’s people, the result of all these offices will be to keep the man from going back to his old ways and to cause him to walk in God’s statutes, and to keep God’s judgments and do them! Do you wish, then, to be saved from sin and to be made holy? Look to the wounds of the bleeding Savior and remember that He has promised to give you the Holy Spirit, by whom you shall be made holy and kept in holiness till you stand hereafter without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the Eternal Throne! In closing, I want to—  
III. SAY A FEW GOOD AND COMFORTABLE WORDS TO SOME OF YOU WHO MAY BE ANXIOUS TO POSSESS THIS SPIRIT OF GOD IN YOUR HEARTS.  
“Ah,” complains one, “the Holy Spirit would never look on me!” Why do you have such a thought? Do you think to honor Him by such reflections? Far rather do you shame yourself. Know you not that He has looked on many such as you are and they are alive to tell of His condescending love? Will you look to Jesus? Will you cast yourself upon the Great Surety who has deigned to become the Scapegoat for sinners? If so, the Holy Spirit has looked on you! The first desire you have towards God comes from Him! These inward strivings which you feel now (tenderly do I wish that you may not stifle or quench them) come from Him! That fear, that anxiety, that longing may be and I trust they are, the initiative of a blessed work of the Holy Spirit within your soul! Judge not of the Holy Spirit as though He were reluctant. Nehemiah spoke of the Spirit of God as “the Good Spirit.” So He is! He is the very essence of goodness, taking goodness in the sense of benevolence. He is good to men, full of generous love towards them. We read of “the love of the Spirit.” Sweet words! What must it be to appreciate them and to prove their meaning! The love of the Spirit! I marvel that the Spirit of God should come down into the valley of dry bones. I wonder that He should have contact with such corruption as ours and make us live! I am surprised that He has not left us long ago, dullards as we are in His school, yet He patiently teaches us. It is amazing to me that He should dwell in such poor temples as our clay bodies. Still, He does. He condescendingly abides with us. You speak of the love of Jesus in coming down to earth and enduring all its misery and shame—you cannot speak too well of that—but do not forget that the Holy Spirit has been abiding here these 1,800 years and still the dispensation of His government lasts—He is still waiting and striving, persuading, preciously illuminating, grandly quickening! Thus He will continue to do until the Lord Jesus, Himself, shall descend from Heaven with a shout and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit shall be perfected in the world to come! The Holy Spirit, then, is a good Spirit, and that should encourage you to go to Him with a full confidence in His Person and works.  
He is sometimes called, “the free Spirit.” David says, “Uphold me with Your free Spirit.” He is not bound by our bondage. He is not retrained, thank God, by the restriction of our desires. He is not withheld, even though our inability and our iniquity entangle us. He waits not for man, neither tarries He for the sons of men. As the dew comes in the morning on the dumb grass that cannot speak for it. As the stiff breeze blows over the silent mountains that cannot ask for it. And as on the sea, which cannot lift up its billows until the wind shall stir them, which comes unsought, unasked—even so is the Spirit’s advent! So freely in real truth does He come. Oh, you vilest of sinners, you outcast, you who are turned off by those who once loved you—the Holy Spirit can even come to you! He is a free Spirit—not even your sins can withhold Him! He can conquer your desperate depravity and come to reign and rule in your breast where devils have held a carnival these many years!  
I adore the power of God that He exerts over the minds of men, insomuch as that while I stand here to preach to you, willing or not willing as you may be to heed His message, my Lord and Master will have His own way! What though you may be in the most unfit state to attend to the Gospel call—though you may have come to ridicule the preacher, or catch him tripping in his speech, or it may be you have designed to spend a merry hour—the Divine Fiat is mightier than your fitful mood! How often has the Eternal Archer shot His arrows through and through the scorners and left them as though they were dead, and then, having touched them with His life-giving finger, He has said, “Live!” The change has been worked, though they knew nothing of it at the time! The Lord, according to His good pleasure, has done the work and thus can this blessed free Spirit effect His purpose. Oh, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, pray for the unsaved! Pray for sinners, you who can pray! Full often have I thought what a blessed thing it is that the Spirit of God can obtain admission where we cannot. There is a house that is closed and barred against the Gospel. The squire of the parish, perhaps, says that any of his servants going to the Meeting House, he will discharge. He will take care that he will have none of this Methodism anywhere in his district! Very well, Sir, if you propose to keep it out, you will need to have a great many watchmen, for, you know, if there is a sweet perfume in your house, you must use your diligence to keep it hermetically sealed, or else it will escape and diffuse its odor through every room by degrees! The name of Jesus Christ is “like ointment poured forth”—it has a wonderful diffusiveness about it!  
Ere long the squire will discover that one of his servants has caught the sweet infection. Gladly would he turn her away, were she not such a good nurse-girl that he cannot afford to lose her! And I have noticed that there is a Divine contagion in the Grace of God that brings salvation. In families, neighborhoods, townships and great cities it will spread with strange rapidity! One or two conversions, like drops of rain, portend a shower! I knew a man who burned all the Bibles he had in his house—at least he thought he had burned them all—but he had two daughters who kept their books secreted under their pillows. When he found it out, he was mad with rage. What he was going to do, I do not know. His wife told him at length that she was of their mind and took their part. “Ah, well,” he said, “it is a nuisance that I cannot live without being pestered with this religion.” Yes, and by the Grace of God they shall not “live without being pestered.” If they will not come and hear the Word from the minister, they shall hear it somehow else! A tract shall find him over whose head a sermon flies—and half a sentence shall break a rock in pieces where appeals from the pulpit might have been of no use! Have good courage, then, you who seek the salvation of others, and you that are afar off from God, yourselves—do not despair for the Spirit of God is a free Spirit—He can come even to you!  
Very powerful, too, is the Spirit of God, as well as good and free. There is no form of human obstinacy which He cannot overcome. Some operations of the Holy Spirit may be resisted and defeated. This I say without feeling that I cast any slur upon His Deity. A man, though he may be ever so strong, need not put out all his strength, and when he puts out only a little of his strength a child may be able to overcome him. He may, perhaps, intend that it should be so. So the Holy Spirit, in His common operations is vexed, and grieved, and quenched by the ungodly. Quite otherwise when He comes to “the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe,” or when the Lord makes bare His arm in the eyes of all the people—then the Spirit comes as a Spirit of Irresistible Power! Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” See how Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth against the Church of God, cries, “What must I do to be saved? Who are You, Lord?” Soon he rises up to be led by the hand for three days in brokenness of heart to seek for the Light of God’s Countenance! How quickly can God turn the most fierce persecutors into the most earnest preachers of the Gospel! Be of good heart, dear Friends, for God’s cause in the world! We shall see yet greater things if we do but ask for them in faith and faithfully expect them.  
If God does not raise up good men in the colleges to preach the Gospel, He will find them in the warehouses and offices of our merchants. Or failing these, He will call them from the dregs of the population—it may be even from the dens and kens of thieves if nowhere else! Who knows but He may provoke us to jealousy by a people of a strange tongue. My Master knew how to find Luther among the monks and to fish out some of the bravest Reformers from among the idolatrous priests! And He can do the same again! The Church may come to a very bad tide, but there never shall be such a bad tide but the Church, like a galley with oars, shall be able to float! She shall not strike on the rocks. Have hope, you soldiers of Christ! While the ministry of the Holy Spirit can be invoked, never whisper of despair! Oh, Sinner, have hope for yourself, willful and wicked as you may have been! If you cannot amend your ways and change your heart, He can do it for you! The iron bands of habit He can snap. The adamantine net of lasciviousness He can break in pieces! From the degrading abominations of drunkenness He can extricate you! All the charms of worldliness He can dissolve! He can set you free, though you are now a captive fast in the inner prison with your feet in the stocks! While the Holy Spirit lives, while Jesus intercedes, while the Father is willing to receive prodigals, let no one despair! Grace makes the most worthless creatures welcome to the most inestimable blessings! What Paul said to saints I venture to say to sinners, “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 14:21-31.**

In this “sacred farewell” talk of our Lord’s, He gives us many a Revelation of the soul’s way of communion with Him.  
21, 22. He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me: and he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Many a time have we asked that question with great admiration of the special Sovereign Grace of God, that He should manifest Himself to us, and not to the world. It is an unanswerable question. It is, “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. Where the Grace of God has created love between us and Christ, there is a window through which Christ can manifest Himself to us. Why He gave us that love, we do not know, but when He has given us that love He will not deny us communion with Himself.

24-26. He that loves Me not, keeps not My sayings: and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. The Holy Spirit does not teach us any new Doctrine! Fix that in your minds, for in the present age we have numbers of persons who talk about being inspired with the Holy Spirit, and who come with all kinds of crudities and fooleries. Believe them not! The Holy Spirit says no other and no more than the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, said, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you.” The canon of Revelation is closed! None can add to it without a curse. Do not accept any testimony that would add to it. Keep to what is here found and pray the Holy Spirit to lead you into the clear understanding of it.

27, 28. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. Christ had, Himself, less than the Father in His state of humiliation. And now He is returning to the Father to be re-clothed with honor and majesty. Should we not rejoice in that?

29-31. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go. And He went to His death bravely determined to do the Father’s will, though it meant the drinking up of that bitter cup which made His very soul to tremble within Him! God give us such love to Christ as Christ had to the Father!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2743 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MISTAKEN NOTIONS ABOUT REPENTANCE  
NO. 2743

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1879.

**“Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”  
Ezekiel 36:31.**

We noticed, in our reading, in what a kingly style the Lord speaks all through this chapter. He does not say “if” or “but,” but He says, “you will” and “you shall” and this teaches us that God is Omnipotent even in the regions of free agency. It would be preposterous to say that man is not a free agent! There are some who, in order to glorify the Grace of God, have sought to deny the free agency of man—I do not mean that they have done it in so many words, but, practically, the effect of their language has been to deny it. But man is perfectly free and God violates not the human will—yet I cannot explain to you how it is—He is as much able to rule perfectly free agents as He is to control the atoms of inert matter. It is Omnipotence which compels yonder starry orbs to obey the laws which God has made and to travel in their appointed courses, but, to my mind, it is even more marvelous Omnipotence which leaves men free agents and controls not their will, but yet sweetly triumphs over them and wins for God the accomplishment of His Divine Purposes!

Will you attempt to exclude God from the realm of mind? Do you dare to think that He has not all power there? Then, your god is not mine, for my God “does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” The operations of His Grace are attended with such Omnipotent energy that He is able to say to men, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” Yet, while the Lord speaks thus to them, they are still men—as much men as they were before and, indeed, their manhood is more perfect than it was before—yet God wins His way and does with them according to His own will.

Yet the Lord is pleased, in some cases, to explain to us the processes by which He works. For instance, in the production of the repentance described in this chapter, He tells us that it is the result of His superabundant love. By lavishing His goodness upon undeserving persons who willfully rejected His authority and despised His vengeance, He at last brought them to submission. They smarted for their sin, yet they sinned on—and then God dealt with them in another fashion—He blessed them and pardoned them. He gave them back the mercies He had withdrawn from them. He gave them more, and more, and more, and more, until, by the wondrous power of His Grace, He slew their enmity and caused love to take its place! He conquered their love of sin and then a hatred of the sin which had grieved their God sprang up in their minds. This is a very blessed process and in every phase it magnifies the love and goodness of the Lord. So, while we think and speak of it, we bless and praise and magnify the name of the Most High whose love is thus manifested to the unworthy.

That is not, however, quite the subject on which I am going to speak at this time, although it leads up to it. There are many persons who are truly awakened and anxious about their souls and who are really seeking to be reconciled to God, but there is a great difficulty in their way. They say that they cannot repent. I am frequently receiving letters of this kind—“I want to become a Christian. I am anxious to be reconciled to God. I do, I think, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but my faith is feeble and I am afraid I am not saved because I cannot feel that sorrow for sin which I would like to feel. If I could, I would break my heart and weep for my iniquities, but, alas, I do not find myself to be of an emotional character and I cannot stir my soul to that intense anguish of which I have heard some speak. May I still hope that faith will save me? May I come and trust in Jesus Christ, for I do not feel that I have the repentance I ought to feel?” So many are these cases that I thought I would devote the sermon of this evening to them and see if, in some way or other, by God’s gracious guidance, I may not roll away the stone which has long been in the way of true seekers after Christ.

I shall deal, first, with some mistaken ideas of what repentance is. Then, with some mistaken ideas of the place which repentance occupies. And lastly, with some mistaken ideas of the way in which repentance is produced in the heart.

I. Many persons have MISTAKEN IDEAS OF WHAT REPENTANCE IS. Some confuse it with morbid self-accusation. It must have struck you, in reading the autobiographies of certain good men, that in the description of their lives before conversion, they put the coloring on very heavily. I do not think they are always wise in so doing, but it must not be forgotten that very often they write their own biographies in later years when, through having seen much of God’s love, they get a clearer apprehension

of what sin really is. They do not write their life history when its various events occur and I do not suppose that, at the time, they regarded themselves as being such sinners as they afterwards believed themselves to have been.

I advise you, dear Friends, to beware of making yourselves out to be worse than you really are. There are some persons who could not do so if they tried, but there are others who, having been, by Divine Providence, brought up in the ways of godliness, have never gone into open sin as some of their fellows have done. They have been sinful enough, God knows, and as they themselves will know when later years shall have shed more light on their character, but let them not try to mimic the expressions of persons of more advanced years. Do not call yourself, “the chief of sinners,” if you are not. And do not suppose that repentance means the exaggeration of your evil life into something more evil than it really was. It is enough for you to go and confess the truth and to be sorrowful that you have once forgotten your God—that your thoughts have been turned away from the true center—that you have lived for yourself and hence have been an enemy of the Most High. Go and confess that to the Lord, but do not bring against yourself a morbid self-accusation which is not true in God’s sight.

Again, some think that repentance means the dread of Hell and a sense of wrath. Men ought to dread Hell—it is a thing to be dreaded, indeed, as they know who are enduring its torments. Men ought to fear the wrath of God. It is a very solemn reflection that every unconverted person in the world has the wrath of God abiding upon him and will have it abiding on him until he escapes to the refuge provided in the Atonement of Christ Jesus. But a sense of God’s wrath against sin is not repentance! It generally goes with it, it frequently attends it—but repentance is a change of mind with regard to sin—with regard to everything and it is a consciousness that sin is sin—that you have committed it. It is a sorrow to you that you have committed it and a resolve, in God’s strength, that you will escape from it—a holy desire and longing to be rid of sin which has done you so much mischief. In the words of the child’s hymn—

*“Repentance is to leave  
The sins we loved before,  
And show that we in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more.”*

And there is very much of real repentance which is not accompanied by a dread of Hell at all. It is sweetened by a sense of love rather than embittered by a dread of vengeance. Do not, therefore, confuse things that differ.

A very gross mistake is made by some who imagine that unbelief, despondency and despair are repentance. These things are wide as the poles asunder! No doubt there are many who ultimately come to Christ who, for a time, think they are too great sinners to be saved. Do I commend them for thinking so? Far from it! They imagine a lie! And how can it be right for us to believe that which is untrue? No doubt many who come to Christ do, for a while, despair of ever being saved—but is it necessary that you and I should do so? By no means, for to despair of being saved is to give the lie to God’s own Truth—and that can never be the right thing for anyone to do! God is true and He has declared that whoever will trust His Son shall be saved. If I turn round and say, “I cannot be saved and I cannot trust Christ,” I do, as far as in me lies, pour indignity upon God! I insult Him, for I doubt His Word and I distrust His Son, who is worthy of all confidence! That sort of thing cannot be repentance—on the contrary, it is something that needs to be repented of! If you have no such doubts and no such despair, be glad you have not, for they are not of God—they are evil! To come like a little child and say, “I know that I have done wrong, and I am very sorry for it and I wish to be set right. I find that Christ can set me right and I trust Him to do it”—that is the way to repent of sin and trust the Savior! And he who does so is accepted of the Father.

Neither let anybody mistake S atanic temptations for repentance. It is very true that when some persons are coming to Christ, Satan is very eager to keep them away and, therefore, he plays all kinds of tricks in order to turn them aside, or to cast them down lest they should be saved. But do you think that these Satanic temptations are any part of true repentance? Then you make me smile—you might as well say that if a child were coming to his father and a dog were to howl at him and try to frighten him away, that the howling of the dog were a part of the child’s coming. By no means they are a hindrance to him and, I pray you, never think that the devil’s temptations can do you any good! The less of him you have, the better will it be for you. It is better to go seven miles over hedge and ditch to miss the devil, than to have one conflict with him— and if you do not have conflicts with Satan in coming to Christ, do not wish for them or think that they are at all necessary to your being truly a believer in Jesus! Come to Him and welcome! And if there is nothing in your way, come all the more readily and cast yourself down at His dear feet and take the mercy which He freely gives to all who trust Him!

Do not let me be misunderstood in another observation that I make, namely, that the repentance which saves the soul—the repentance which is necessary to salvation—is not a full and complete view of the guilt of sin. You will understand me when I say that no man living has ever had a full and complete view of the guilt of sin, but that we all see the guilt of sin more as we grow in Grace than we do at the first. The value of Divine Grace grows with a man. As experience strengthens his judgment and enlightens his heart, his true estimate of the guilt of sin will daily increase. I suppose that the truest repentance is that of a man who is just entering Heaven. Therefore, the repentance which saves is not absolutely perfect or fully developed. If there is but this germ of it—that you sincerely wish to be delivered from sin—if you sincerely hate the sin which you did once love—you have the repentance that saves you!

And though you will hate sin more, by-and-by, and you will be able to avoid it more, by-and-by, as you are more completely sanctified by the Holy Spirit, yet the necessary thing at the first, by which a soul closes with Christ, is a turning from sin, a loathing of it—and if you have that, you have true repentance! But not otherwise. Repentance is also a sense of shame for having lived in it and a longing to avoid it. It is a change of the mind with regard to sin—a turning of the man right round. That is what it is and it is worked in us by the Grace of God. Let none, therefore, mistake what true repentance is and seek for what they need not wish to have.

II. Now, secondly, we are to consider SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT THE PLACE WHICH REPENTANCE OCCUPIES.  
I do not suppose I am addressing very many who have fallen into the popular notion that repentance is the procuring cause of the Grace of God, yet it is a very common notion. “Well, I do my best,” says one, “and God is just, so I have no doubt I shall have my due reward.” But you commit sin, do you not? “Yes,” he replies, “but then I am sorry for it and I try to get right again as soon as I can.” According to that notion, repentance is a sort of compensation for sin. If it is really so, the next time I am in that gentleman’s debt, I shall not think of paying him—I shall simply tell him I am sorry I am in his debt and, of course, he will wipe out the score! He objects to that and says it would be unjust—yet that is the style in which he acts towards his God! God forbid that we should ever think that repentance can, of itself, put away any sin!  
The same evil, however, comes up under other forms, and there are some who think that repentance is a preparation for Grace. They hope they shall receive the Grace of God if they repent. But, my dear Friend, if you repent, that very fact is a proof that you already have one of the results of Grace and that God has looked upon you in love! For you to say, “I must first repent,” reminds me of the supposed Romish miracle of Saint Denis who, having his head cut off, picked it up in his hands and walked away with it, I forget how many miles. A French wit said, when he heard the legend, “Ah, it was easy enough for him to walk so many miles after he had taken the first step—that was the only one that had any difficulty about it! If he could manage that, he could manage all the rest.” In like manner, if repentance is the first step towards God, and the sinner can take that by himself, well, then, he can take all the rest and he need not trouble himself about the Grace of God because it is not needed! The man can do the whole work of Salvation to the very end if he can, by himself, take the first step! Ah, my dear Friend, repentance is not a preparation for Grace, it is the first result of Grace working within the soul. One of the earliest products of a Divine visitation is the humbling of the heart on account of sin—and this is the beginning of true repentance.  
There are others who think that repentance is a qualification for faith in Christ. Such a person says, “If I have repented of sin, I can then believe in Jesus. If I am conscious of my guilt, I may then come and cast myself upon Christ.” My dear Friend, I know that you will never cast yourself upon Christ until you are conscious of sin, for men do not usually eat till they feel hungry and they do not clothe themselves till they realize that they are naked. It is well for you to have a sense of your iniquity, but, at the same time it is no qualification for believing in Jesus. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The only qualification a physician seeks in his patient is that he is sick. The qualification for pardon from Christ is guilt. The qualification for imparting His fullness is your emptiness—that is all! And if you feel yourself to be so empty that you do not even feel your emptiness—if you feel yourself to be so hard that you do not even think you feel your hardness—well, then, you are just the kind of man that Jesus Christ came to save. If there is no good thing in you whatever—no, if there is no repentance in you—yet it is still true that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And He still sends His servants to you with this plain Gospel command, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”  
“Still,” says one, “repentance must be the ground of our belief. Do I not believe that I am saved because I repent?” Stop! There is a muddle there! What is the ground of my trusting Christ? That is what I mean by believing. I will tell you. My only ground for trusting Christ is this—that I am told, by God’s Word, that He can save sinners and I believe He can. And that then I am commanded to trust Him to save me, and I do it. My warrant for believing is God’s Word—not my sense of sin or anything in me. How then, do I know that I am saved? I know, as I stand before you, that I am a saved man. Why do I know that? Because it is written, “He that believes on Him is not condemned,” and I do believe, trust, rely on Jesus Christ! Sometimes I feel as if I were not saved, but my feelings must go overboard if they come into conflict with the plain declaration of God’s Word! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” The ground of a man’s belief that he is saved is not that he repents, but that he has trusted Jesus Christ, who is able to save him, and that God has declared that whoever trusts Christ is saved!  
“Then,” says one, “there must be repentance and believing.” Yes, I know that, and repentance goes well, side by side with believing. If I were asked whether a man repented first, or believed first, I should reply, “Which spoke in a wheel moves first when the wheel starts?” When Divine life is given to a man, these two things are sure to come—repentance and faith—but if anyone should say, “He must repent first before he believes,” I would contest that point very strongly! And if, on the other hand, a man should say, “There is such a thing as a belief which is not attended with repentance which will save the soul,” I would contest that point with equal ardor! No, they come together as the first marks of the new birth in the soul. This is the practical point which concerns you—no metaphysics of theology need perplex your mind. What you have to do with is God’s command and that command is, as I just reminded you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” And if you do that, you have repentance in the germ—and that repentance will grow and increase—but you must take heed not to put your repenting into the place of Christ. I will say this—bold and naked as the saying may seem to be—if you put your repenting into the place of Christ, you make an antichrist of them! And if you trust for salvation to your repentance, or even to your faith, you might as well trust to your sins!  
Nothing is to be trusted to but the finished work of Jesus Christ upon Calvary’s bloody tree! No feelings, no emotion, no believing, no conversion, even, must ever be put into the place of that one eternal Rock of refuge—the blood and merit of Jesus Christ! Fly there, poor Soul! Whatever you are, or are not, fly there! Cast your guilty self on Christ and rest there, for there alone can you find salvation! Learn this lesson—not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent— not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to Him that He may give you a broken heart—not to come to Him because you are fit to come, but to come to Him because you are unfit to come! Your fitness is your unfitness. Your qualification is your lack of qualification. You are to be nothing, in fact, and to come to Christ as nothing— and when you so come, then will repentance come!  
What, then, is the true place of repentance? It is this—I trust Christ, just as I am, to forgive me. I have God’s assurance that I am forgiven, seeing that I am trusting Christ. What, then, do I feel? I am forgiven. My transgression is covered—my iniquities are all washed away. O my Savior, how I love You! And the next thought is, “O my sins, how I hate you!” This feeling naturally grows out of a sense of Divine Love. Am I pardoned? Am I fully forgiven? Can I ever be cast into Hell? Am I, indeed, a child of God? Then, how could I ever have lived as I once did? Can I ever play the fool after that fashion again? No, my Lord, Your love shall bind me fast and nail me to the Cross of Christ, my Savior—therefore I am dead to sin—I cannot live any longer therein, because You have saved me!  
We do not repent in order to be saved, but we repent because we are saved. We do not loathe sin and, therefore, hope to be saved, but, because we are saved, we therefore loathe sin and turn altogether from it. May the Lord bless these words to the correction of some of the mistakes which are so frequently made!  
III. Now I come, in the last place, to notice SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS AS TO THE WAY IN WHICH REPENTANCE IS PRODUCED IN THE HEART.  
“I cannot repent,” says one. “I want to make myself repent, but I cannot.” Of all things in the world, that is one of the most absurd and impossible! Shut yourself up in a room, sit down on a chair, and try to make yourself repent. You could not do it. Did a man ever try to make himself love a woman? No, but he was smitten at the first glimpse of her face—he could not help himself and, before he was aware, the deed was done! And it is just the same with repentance—it comes as a secondary thing. Through meditation and thinking over certain other things, the sacred passion of repentance comes upon us, but it is not a direct operation of the mind that can be performed at will any more than faith is. If you were to find something in the newspaper that you doubted and you were to sit down, and say, “I will make myself believe it,” you could not do it. You would have to examine the matter, consult the proper authorities and see about the dates and facts—and then your believing would come of itself through those considerations—but you could not, as a distinct and direct act, compel your mind to believe in anything of the kind, much less to believe in Christ! So it is in relation to our regret on account of sin—it comes from other considerations.  
There are some who have said, “Well, if we are to repent of sin, we ought to attend some exciting meetings. When everybody all around us gets warm and begins to cry, perhaps we shall also be melted to tears.” I have no doubt that a great many have been melted and have felt a good deal as the result of crowded meetings, but I very greatly question whether the repentance which comes of God is created by excitement. Indeed, I know it is not! It has to come from more substantial causes and influences than ever can be brought to bear by the mere eloquence of man, or the excitement of a multitude of people gathered together. “But, suppose,” says another friend, “I were to sit down and meditate upon the wrath of God, upon the Judgment Day and upon the woes of Hell—would not that produce repentance?” Yes, perhaps it would—such meditations might have a very salutary influence upon you and might tend to awaken in your mind serious thoughtfulness—but I am not certain that they would lead you to repentance. I will try to show you how God brings sinners to repentance, for that will help you who are now seeking it. How, then, does the Lord lead men to repentance?  
According to this chapter, the first thing He does is, to change their nature—“I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” This is regeneration—the change of nature. The heart of unimpressionable stone, naturally hard, is removed and a sensitive, impressionable heart is given—a fleshy heart, so that the man can feel. If you really want to repent, this is the message I have to deliver to you, “You must be born-again.” If I wish to grow olives, I must have an olive tree. “Can the fig tree bear olives?” “Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?” The thorn must be turned into a grapevine, and the thistle into a fig tree, if we are to get from them grapes and figs. And, therefore, again I say to you that if you would bring forth repentance, you must be born-again.  
“Oh,” says one, “there is not much comfort in such teaching as that, for it drives us away from all hope.” That is exactly what I want to do with you! I want to convince you of the simple fact that there is no hope for you in and of yourselves! But that you must come and find all your hope, your regeneration and everything else in Jesus Christ, from whom alone it comes to all who trust Him.  
But how does God work repentance in the soul when He has renewed the nature? As we read the chapter, we noticed that He gave great mercy to the undeserving. So, then, if you wish to obtain repentance, the way to secure it, by the Grace of God, is through a consideration of the goodness of God to you. Think, dear Friends, of the many years that God has spared you and of the almost miraculous escapes which some of you have had. Think of how all the while you were provoking Him and going on from ill to ill and from one sin to another, yet, in His long-suffering, He bore with you and thus was leading you to repentance! Think of the fact that at this moment you are “not in torment, not in Hell,” but you are where the Gospel of God’s Grace is freely preached to you and where pardon may be bestowed upon you—where God is still dressed in the white robes of mercy and has not yet come in the scarlet robes of judgment! Oh, the goodness of God, to have spared a tree that has cumbered the ground so long—to have spared a rebel who has provoked Him so grievously! Such thoughts as these have a tendency to lead men to say, “I will sin no longer. I will love sin no longer because God has been so merciful to me.”  
But let me tell you that when God works repentance in the heart, He does more than this. He not only gives the man blessings, He also gives him forgiveness. And when the man sees that he is forgiven, he says, “What? Forgiven? Then how can I live any longer in sin? I hate my sin.” The Lord says to him, “You are My child. I will feed you, clothe you, and train you for My house above.” “Your child?” he exclaims, “a child of God after all that I have done?” And he begins to take vengeance on his sins and to drive them out of his heart, for how can we, who are the children of God, endure the presence of sin?  
That forgiven man begins to pray. I can distinctly recollect one of the first answers I ever had to prayer. And when I woke to the consciousness that God did really hear and answer my supplication, I tell you that I loathed sin. I could not bear to do anything to grieve a God who really listened to my cry. Then, when I was delivered out of great trouble and was enriched with very great mercy, I felt, “How could I ever have been what I have been? How could I have lived as I have lived?” And when I found out that God would continue to visit me with His loving kindness as long as I lived, and that I should be His favored child forever and ever, then did I hate sin more than I had ever done before—and I was grieved and cried out unto the Lord by reason of the bondage I had been under—and I longed to be clean rid of every trace of sin! I do not know that I felt, at such times, any dread of Hell. It was quite the reverse, but I hated sin because of God’s love to me. That is the way in which God brings repentance into the hearts of His children. He loves them so much and does so much for them, that they cannot continue any longer in sin.  
Now, dear seeking Soul, do you see the tack to go upon? Your business is to believe in Christ Jesus just as you are and to trust Him to save you—and then to believe what the Word of God says concerning those who trust in Jesus, namely, that they are saved, forgiven, loved of God and at peace with Him. Do you believe that? As you believe it, you will feel, “My heart melts under a sense of this superlative love. Now I can and do repent of sin—the very thing which seemed impossible to me before.”  
If I had time, I would like to show you that every blessing of the Covenant of Grace leads us to repentance. Take the Doctrine of Election. “What?” says the man, “Have I been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world? Then, how could I live in sin?” Take the Doctrine of Redemption. “What?” he says, “Am I redeemed from among men—bought with the precious blood of Christ. Then how can I go and live as others live?” Take the Doctrine of Final Perseverance. “What,” he says, “does the Grace of God give me the guarantee that I shall hold out to the end? Then, God forbid that I should at any time turn aside from the paths of integrity!”  
You may take the Gospel ordinances, as well as its doctrines, and you will find that they all lead you to repentance. Have you been to the Communion Table, sitting and feasting with Christ, and have you not even there said, “Alas, that I should ever have had in my hand the cup of devils, and have been, as once I was, a companion of those who hated the name of Christ”? I am sure, Beloved, that, if you have been with the Lord in private prayer and He has lifted you up to His bosom and revealed to you His secret thoughts of love, you have smitten upon your breast and said, “Such love as His to such a worm as I am is altogether too great. Such love to one who was so provokingly, so aggravatingly sinful—oh, how could I have done so? O my Lord, I do love You! I could wash Your feet with my tears and I resolve to devote myself to holiness and to that alone.” No, Beloved, there is nothing that God gives us that leads us to sin, but the gifts and Grace of God all lead us to repentance! So that is the way by which repentance is fashioned in the soul.  
So this is my last word upon the subject. If any of you are still under bondage in this matter and say that you cannot repent—if you really wish to have a tender and deep sense of sin—do not sit down and study your sin! Do not sit down and study the penalty of it, but begin to think of the supreme love of God in Christ Jesus! Think of the greatness of that mercy which is as high above you as the heavens are above the earth! Believe that He can save you. Do more than that—trust yourself with Christ that He may save you—and you are saved the moment you do that! Do not believe it because I say it, but because God declares it over and over again. “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.”  
Believe in Jesus! Cling to Him and to Him, alone, and repentance must come into your soul! Old Donne, the famous preacher, used to say, “Hang on Him that did hang on the tree,” and that is what I will say to you, “Hang on Him that did hang on the tree.” And, then, until He falls, you will never fall! If Christ is first, last, midst and everything to you, He will give you repentance, He will give you the heart of flesh, He will give you a sensitive conscience, He will give you the pure and cleansed life! But you must not think to bring any of these to put them into His place, but—again I say it—just hang on Him that did hang on the tree!  
The Lord bless you and help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

Verses 16-19. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before Me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Therefore I poured My fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols with which they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. When God comes forth to deal with men according to their deserts, there will always be times of dire distress. The land of Israel was made into a wilderness. The habitations of men were burnt by fire, the inhabitants fell by the sword, or they were carried away captive—untold miseries became the lot of God’s revolting people.

20. And when they entered unto the heathen, where they went, they profaned My holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of His land. For the heathen did not remember the sin of Israel—they only saw that they had been cast out of their land by their God—so they blamed Jehovah and not His guilty people. Thus, God’s holy name was doubly profaned.

21. But I had pity for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, where they went. If the Lord could see no ground of mercy in them, yet, so full of mercy is He that He would find a reason for exercising pity for His own name’s sake! If loving kindness cannot come to them by any other means, then it shall come for God’s name’s sake.

22-24. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake which you have profaned among the heathen, where you went. And I will sanctify My great name which was profaned among the heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. He says that He will do this for His holy name’s sake. If the heathen profaned that name because they saw Israel scattered, they should be made to eat their own words when God gathered Israel again to their own land!

25, 26. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. What grand language this is! How different it is from the stern commands of the Law! The Law says, “Make your hearts clean; put away the evil of your doings,” but the Gospel Covenant of Grace says, “A new heart also will I give you, and I will cleanse you from all your iniquities.”

27-30. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. What splendor of love is this to a people who, mind you, had done nothing whatever to deserve it—who were just as undeserving as in the day when the Lord smote them and scattered them among the heathen! For no reason whatever but His own Free Grace, and for the Glory of His holy name would God do these extraordinary deeds of love. What a wondrous God He is! Rightly do we sing—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*

31, 32. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations, Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. There was nothing for them to boast of in all the mercies they received. No merit of their own had brought them back the corn and oil—it was all of God’s infinite Sovereign Grace because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. How royally He talks—like such a King as He is—the Sovereign Lord of all!

33-35. Thus says the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built up. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities have become fenced and are inhabited. As much as they noticed, before, the chastising hand of God, so much shall even the heathen be compelled to perceive the great goodness of God in restoring the land to all its former glory!

36, 37. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD built up the ruined places, and planted that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus says the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. The blessing shall come, but not without prayer for it—not without a hopeful expectancy of it—not without a faithful belief in it. “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.”

37, 38. I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts. Like the multitudes of lambs that were brought up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover—such should be the number of the chosen people once again.

38. So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD. The result of all this wondrous mercy was to be that they were to be ashamed of their former sins—loathe their past iniquities—and so to know the Lord as to turn from their evil ways and live unto Him.

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WHAT SELF DESERVES  
NO. 3506

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 18, 1870.

**“You will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.”  
Ezekiel 36:31.**

IT HAS been the supposition of those who know not by experience that if a man is persuaded that he is pardoned and that he is a child of God, he will necessarily become proud of the distinction which God has conferred upon him. Especially if he is a believer in Predestination—when he finds that he is one of God’s chosen, it is supposed that the necessary consequence will be that he will be exceedingly puffed up and think very highly of himself. This, however, is but theory—the fact lies quite another way—for if a man is truly subjected to the work of Grace in the heart, and if he is then brought to trust in Jesus and to see his sin put away by the great Sacrifice, instead of being lifted up, he will be exceedingly cast down in his own sight. And as he goes on to perceive the singular mercy and peculiar privileges which God’s Grace has bestowed upon him, instead of being exalted, he will sink lower and lower in his own esteem, until, when he shall make a full discovery of Divine Love, he will become nothing, and Christ will be All-in-All. Mercy never makes us proud! As mercy is given to the humble, it has a humbling effect. Wherever it comes, it makes a man lie low before the Throne of the heavenly Grace, and leads him to ascribe all honor and glory to the God from whom the mercy comes.

It appears from our text that when Israel shall be forgiven her long years of departure from God, one of the effects of the mercy will be that she will loathe herself—and that same effect has already been produced in some of us to whom God’s abounding mercy has come! In fact, in every man and woman here who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, there has been one uniform experience upon this matter—we have been led to loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the sin we have done before the Lord our God! I shall try to go into this matter, trusting to be rightly guided to say fitting and useful words at this time.

First, my Brothers and Sisters, what is it that we have come to loathe in ourselves? Secondly, why do we loathe it? And thirdly, what is the necessary result in us, or should be, of this self-loathing? First, then—

I. WHAT IS IT THAT THE PARDONED SINNER LOATHES? You will perceive that he is a pardoned sinner. The verse is inserted here in a position where it plainly belongs to those whom God has renewed in heart, whose sins are forgiven, who are fully justified and accepted. It is consistent with the full enjoyment of salvation to loathe yourself. This is the strange paradox of the Christian faith. He who justifies himself is condemned—he who condemns himself is justified. He who magnifies himself, God breaks down and casts in pieces—he who throws himself prostrate before the Throne of God’s Justice, he it is that God lifts up in due time! What is it, then, that we loathe in ourselves today?

Our reply is, first of all, we loathe every act of our past sin. Look back, you that have been brought to Jesus! Look back upon the past. Your lives have differed. Some here have, by God’s mercy, been kept from gross outward sin before their conversion. Others have run wantonly into it to great excess. Whichever may have been our pathway before conversion, we do now unashamedly loathe all the sin of it, whether it were the open sin or the sin of the heart. Especially do we loathe, tonight, those sins which we excused at the time (and which we excused afterwards) because we said, “Others did so,” because we could not see we did any hurt to our fellow men thereby. We loathe them because if they did not relate to man, but only to God, it was the more vicious of us that we should rebel altogether against Him. “Against You, You only, have I sinned,” is a part of the bitterness of our confession tonight. There were some sins that were sweet to us at the time—we rolled them under our tongue, poisonous though they were—and we called them sweet morsels. We would revolt against them tonight with abhorrence! Be gone, you damnable sins! By your very sweetness to me, I detect you. Fool that I must have been that such a thing as you could have been sweet to me! What eyes must I have had to have seen any beauty in you! How estranged from God to love the things so foul and vile! We would recall tonight those greater sins of our life—sins, perhaps, which entangled others. Sins which we perpetrated in the face of knowledge after many warnings—desperate, atrocious sins! Oh, what mercy that we were not cut down while we were living in them! We turn them over and remember them, not, I trust, as some do—I am afraid, when they speak of their past lives, as if they were talking about their battles and they were old soldiers—never mention your sins without tears! Do not write much about them, if at all. It is best to do with them as Noah’s sons did with their father’s nakedness, go back and cast a mantle over all. God has forgiven them. Remember them only that you may repent and that you may bless His name, but never mention them without loathing them—utterly loathing them as if they were disgusting to your spirit and you could not speak of them without the blush mantling on your cheek!

My Brothers and Sisters, in addition to loathing every act of sin, I think I can hope, if our acts are right, we do, through God’s mercy, loathe all the sins of omission. I will put them in this form. The time we wasted before our conversion. Perhaps some of you were not brought to Christ until you were thirty, or forty, or fifty years of age. It is a very, very happy circumstance to be saved while you are younger—a case for eternal thankfulness! But let us think of the time we wasted, precious time, in which we might have served God—time in which we might have been learning more of Him, studying His Word and making ourselves more fit to he used by Him in later years. How much of our time ran to waste! I would especially loathe wasted Sabbaths. Some of us wasted them at home in idleness. Some wasted them abroad in company. Others of us wasted them in God’s House. I would loathe myself for having wasted Sabbaths, under sermons, hearing as though I heard them not—joining in devotions in the posture, but not in the heart! And what is this but to break the Sabbath under the very garb of keeping it?—thinking other thoughts and caring for other things while eternal matters were being proclaimed in my hearing! Oh, let us loathe ourselves to think that even 20 years should have gone to waste, much more thirty, or forty, or 50 years—even sixty—should have been suffered to glide by, bearing nothing upon their bosom but a freight of sin, carrying nothing to the Throne of God that we would wish to have remembered there! Those of us who have been converted to God would this night loathe every refusal which we gave to Christ in those days of our unregeneracy. Do you remember, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, those early knockings at the door of your heart by a gentle mother’s word, or was it a father? Or was it, perhaps, a Sunday School teacher, or perhaps some dear one now in Glory? Oh, that ever I should have refused the Savior, had He but presented Himself to me but once! Infatuation not to be excused, to close the heart against even one of these! But many times! Some of us were very favorably circumstanced. Our mother’s tears fell thick and fast for us when we were children. She would pray with us. When we read the Scriptures with her, she talked to us. Her words were very faithful, very tender, and her child could not help feeling them, but waywardly he pushed aside the tears and still forgot his mother’s God!

Then you know with many of us the entreaties of our youth melted into the instructions of our riper years. Do you not remember many sermons under which Christ has knocked with His pierced hand at the door of your heart? You that sit here from time to time, I know the Lord does not leave you without some strivings of heart—at least, I hope He does not. I pray the Master to help me to put His words so that they may disturb you and not let you make a nest in your sins! But as yet you have said, “No,” to Christ, and given Him the go-by, even until now! As for such as are now saved, I am sure they have among their most bitter pangs of regret this—that they should ever at any time, and that they should so often and so many times have said to the Savior, “Depart from me! I will not know You, neither do I desire Your salvation.” And if, my Brothers and Sisters, in addition to having refused Christ, we have come into actual collision with Him by setting up our own Pharisaic estimate of ourselves, we surely ought to loathe ourselves tonight! We said in our heart, “I am good enough.” The filthy rags of our own righteousness have had the impertinence to compare with the fair white linen of Christ’s Righteousness! We thought we could put away our own sins by some method of our own, and that Cross, which is Heaven’s wonder and Hell’s terror, are despised so as to think we could do without it! We might well loathe ourselves for this even if we had never committed any other transgression than this! Oh, foul pride! Oh, base and loathsome pride that can make a sinner think he can do without a Savior, and so presumptuously imagine that Christ was more than was necessary and the Cross was a work of supererogation.

Did any of us go further than this? And did we ever commit persecuting acts against Christ and His people? Perhaps some of you did, and now you are His servants. You laughed at that Christian woman. Why, you would go down upon your knees now if you could find her, to beg a thousand pardons, now you know her to be a child of God! You did then act very harshly and severely towards one who was a true lover of the Savior. Perhaps you spoke opprobrious words, or did worse. As Cranmer put his hand into the fire and said, “Oh, unworthy right hand,” because it had written a recantation of Christ and His Truth years before, I am sure you would say it, now, if you have written one unkind word, or said one ungenerous word concerning a Believer in Christ. And oh, if you have ever openly blasphemed, I know you loathe yourself, standing here tonight, to think those lips once cursed God and, joining in the Prayer Meeting with your prayers, to think that those lips once imprecated curses upon your fellow men! I know your feeling must be one of very deep prostration of spirit. And even if we have not gone so far, we feel, as you do, that we loathe ourselves for our iniquities and for our abominations. Thus might I continue to speak to your hearts, but I trust, my Brothers and Sisters, it will be needless to do so, for you already loathe yourselves for your sins.

Let me close this first part of the subject by just remarking that there are some persons here who, if the Lord should ever convert them, would always have a strong loathing for themselves. I mean, first, hypocrites. There are such in this church, there never was a church without them! They come to the Communion Table and yet have no part nor lot in the matter. We know of some that have been here Sabbath after Sabbath, and they are habitual drunks, undiscovered by us—who intrude themselves into the assemblies of the faithful and yet, at the same time, make much mock and sport of our holy religion. Oh, if you are ever saved, what heart-breakings you will have! How you will hate yourselves! I shall not say one hard word about you, but I do pray God’s Grace will make you feel a great many hard things about yourself. And while you look up into the dear face of the Crucified and find pardon there, may you afterwards cover your face with shame and weep to think of the mercy you have found! So, too, those who once professed Christ and have gone away altogether—they may be here. I should not wonder but what in this throng there are some that used to be religious people—put on an appearance and did run well. Now for years they have neglected prayer. That woman, once a church member, married an ungodly husband, and many a bitter day she has had since then—and tonight she has strayed in here. Ah, woman, may God bring you back and you will loathe yourself for having given up Christ for the love of a poor dying man! And others that have gone into the world for Sunday trading, or for some sort of gain, given up Christ, like Judas, who betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. Oh, if you are ever saved, you will hate yourselves! I am sure this will be your cry within yourself, “Savior, You have forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself! You have blotted out my sins like a cloud, but I shall always remember them and lay very low at Your feet all my praises while I think of what You have done for me.” Yes, and you there have a dear one who is a persecutor, a blasphemer, an opposer of the Gospel, an infidel—may you become one of those who shall abundantly loathe yourself when you shall taste of the rich, free mercy of God!

Thus I have set forth what it is that a man loathes. But let me remark it is not merely his actions he loathes, but himself, to think that he could do such things! He loathes the fountain to think that it could yield such a stream! He loathes his own evil nature, the deep corruption and depravity of his heart, to think he should be so ungrateful and treat the Lord of Mercy in so ungenerous a way! But now we must turn to the second part of the subject.

II. HOW IS IT, AND WHY, THAT PARDONED SOULS LOATHE THEMSELVES?  
Reply. First, their nature is changed. God, in conversion, makes us new men. We are not altered, improved, or mended, but a new life is given us—we become new creations in Christ Jesus! It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us to be born-again—and as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit—and it hates the old corrupt nature, loathes it, and fights against it to the death! And further, the moving cause for loathing ourselves is the receipt of Divine Mercy. “Oh,” says the soul when it finds itself forgiven, “did I rebel against such a God as this? What? Has He struck out all my sins from the roll, cast them all behind His back, and does He declare that He loves me still? Then wretch that I am that I should have revolted and rebelled against such a God as this!” It is just as John Bunyan puts it. There is a city besieged and they determine that they will fight it out to the last. They will make every street to run with blood, but they will hold it out against the king who claims the city for himself! But when his troops march up and set their ranks around the city and it is all surrounded, the trumpet sounds for a parley, and the messenger comes forward with the white flag! And they find to their surprise that the conditions offered are so honorable, so generous, so much to their own advantage, that the king appears not to be their enemy at all, but, in fact, to be their best friend! He will enlarge their liberties far above what they were. He will beautify their city—it was ugly before. He will come and dwell in it! He will make it the metropolis of the country! He will give it markets—he will give it all it needs. “Why,” says John Bunyan, “whereas before they were going to fortify the walls and die to a man, they fling open the gates and they are ready to tumble over the walls to him, they are so glad to find that he treats them so generously.” And it is even so with us when we find that He blots out our sin, that He is all love and all compassion, we yield to Him at once! And then shame comes—to think that it should ever have been necessary for us to yield, that we should ever have taken up arms against Him at all! It is a beautiful incident in English history when one of our kings was carrying on war against his rebellious son and they met in battle—and the son was just about to kill the father—when the father’s visor was lifted up and he saw that it was his father whom he was about to kill! So the sinner, fighting against his God, thinks He is his enemy, but all of a sudden he beholds it is his own Father that he has been fighting against—and he drops the weapon of his rebellion, feeling ashamed that he should have rebelled against such mercy and such favor! That is why we are ashamed, and I do pray that some here may be ashamed in the same way, for I think I hear Jehovah bewailing Himself tonight, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Your God is good—be ready to repent and be forgiven— rebel no more!  
Now after the receipt of Divine Mercy has brought in this feeling, the feeling is continued and promoted by everything that happens to us. For instance, every Doctrine a Christian learns after he is converted makes him loathe himself. Suppose he learns the Doctrine of Election. “What?” He says, “was I chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, and did go after filthiness and uncleanness with this body? Was I dishonest and a liar, and yet loved of God before the stars began to shine?” That Doctrine makes a man loathe himself! Then he learns the Doctrine of Redemption and he reads, “These are they who are redeemed from among men”—a special and Particular Redemption. Did Jesus then die for me, as He did not die for all? Had He a special eye to me in that Sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross? Oh, then I will smite my breast to think there ever should have been such a hard heart towards a Savior who loved me so! There is no Doctrine but what, when the heart learns it, the spirit bows down with deep shame to think it ever should have rebelled! So it is with every fresh mercy the Christian enjoys. Surely he wakes up every morning with a fresh mercy, but especially at peculiar times when our prayers have been heard, when we have been rescued out of deep distress, we lift up our eyes to Heaven and as we bless God for all His favors to us, we say, “And can it be that I was once a rebel in arms against such a God as You? My God, my Father, did I ever blaspheme Your name? Did I ever read Your Book as a common book? Did I ever neglect Your mercy, my Savior? Then shame on me when You have always been so good, so kind to me.”  
And as the Christian grows in Grace and mounts to more elevated platforms of experience, this self-loathing gets deeper when the Spirit bears witness with him that he is a child of God—when he rises as a child to feel that he is an heir, and that being an heir, he claims his heritage to sit with Christ in the heavenly places! The more he sees of God’s marvelous kindness to him, the more he looks back to his past life and to the depravity of the heart within and he says, “Shame on your head! Cover your face with confusion! Silence me before You! Oh, Most High, to think that after such mercy as this I should have remained so ungrateful to You.” And I suppose that as long as the Christian lives, and the further he goes in the Grace of God, the deeper he goes in a lower estimate of himself. It will always be so until, as he gets to the gates of Heaven, among all his joys and the growing sense of Divine Favor, there will be a still deeper sense of repentance for all the transgressions of his heart! And now I shall need your attention a few moments longer while I dwell upon the third and last point. When a soul is thus made to loathe itself—  
III. WHAT FOLLOWS?  
Well, there follows, first of all, self-distrust. A man who remembers what he has been, and has a due sense of what his sin was, will never trust himself again. He thought at one time that he could resist sin. He imagined that it would be possible for him to fight against iniquity and, by daily perseverance, to make something of himself! Now he has fallen so often—he has proved his own weakness so thoroughly—that all he can do now is just to look up to God and ask for strength from on high! He cannot by any possibility rest in himself! His own weakness is now thoroughly proved. A man who knows what he used to be is conscious of what his former estate was and will, by no means, rely upon his own strength for a single hour! “Lead us not into temptation,” will be his constant prayer, and, “Deliver us from evil,” will follow close upon it. When I see a man going into sinful company, a Christian professor going on to the verge of sin and saying, “I shall not fall, I can take care of myself,” I feel pretty certain that that man’s experience is a very flimsy one, and that it is altogether a very grave question whether he ever was pardoned and has tasted of Divine Grace! If he had, he would have known what it was to loathe himself a great deal more—and to distrust himself.  
The next result in a man will be that he will not serve himself any longer. Before, he could have lived for his own honor, but now he has such a low estimate of himself that he must have a different objective. Spend my life for my own honor and glory? “No,” he says, “I am not worthy of it! I, who could blaspheme Heaven, or could live so long an enemy to God—I serve such a monster as myself? No! By God’s Grace, I will serve Him who has changed my nature, forgiven my sin, and made me to be a new creature in Christ Jesus!” Self-loathing is quite sure to make a man have a better objective than that of seeking to honor himself.  
And then a man who has once loathed himself will never loathe his fellow men. He will be free from that pride which is found in many which disqualifies them for Christian service because they do not know the hearts of sinners and do not enter into communion with them. I have known some who fancy there ought to be a great distance between themselves and what they call, “common people.” They talk of sin as though it were a strange thing in which they had no participation—they, themselves, having been highly elevated above ordinary folks! Oh, we know of some who would scorn the harlot and look down upon a man whose character has been once destroyed—and think they never ought to be spoken to again! The Christian loathes himself for not having had pity on others. He knows how readily his feet might have gone in the same way— how easily, too, he might have fallen, even, to the same extent, if circumstances had been the same with him as with them and, as far as he can, he seeks to uplift them! The man who is once as he should be, thrusts his arm to the elbow in every mire to bring up one of God’s precious jewels! He has put off the kid gloves of self-sufficiency, so he works like a true laborer! He knows what Christ has done for him—how Jesus poured out His very heart’s blood for his redemption—and he feels he cannot do too much, if by any means he can pluck a single firebrand from the flame! Brothers and Sisters, it is good to loathe ourselves, for it makes us have sympathy with others!  
Yet, once again, this self-loathing, in every case where it comes, makes Jesus Christ very precious, and makes sin very hateful. Whoever has loathed himself at all sees how Jesus Christ has been a great Savior and he admires and adores Him. You know you measure the height of the Savior’s love by the depth of your own fall. If you don’t know anything about your ruin, you won’t be likely to prize much the remedy! A man that has got a desperate disease and is dealt with by the physician, if he does not know what the disease is, is not able to feel the measure of gratitude, even if he is healed, that another man would who knew how fatal the disease was in itself! If I think I am not poor, if I am befriended, I shall not have that gratitude which a bankrupt would have had if he had nothing left, to whom someone had generously given a large estate. No, a sense of need helps us to glorify God! Among the saints, and when on earth, the sweetest voices are those that have been made sweet by repentance. Among those who sing in Heaven, and sing with the most sweet and lofty praise to God, are those who bless the Grace that lifted them up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their feet on a rock and established their goings! This blessed shamefacedness, which Christ gives us, is not to be avoided—may we have it more and more, and it shall be a fit preparation for the service of God on earth and the enjoyment of His Presence in Heaven!  
And now, dear Friends, it will be a very suitable season for every Christian just to look back and let his shame for many things mantle on his cheeks. Oh, how little progress have we made in the Divine Life through all the years! We call each year a, “year of Grace,” but we might call it a year of sorrow! “The year of our Lord,” we call it! Too often we make it the Year of Ourselves. God save us for not living to Him, working more for Him and growing more like He! Let us close every year with repentance, not because the sin abides, for, blessed be God, it is all forgiven—we are saved! Before the sin was perpetrated, Christ carried it into the sepulcher where He was buried. He cast it there—it cannot be laid against us to condemn us—yet do we hate it and yet do we loathe ourselves to think we have fallen into it. But would not this also be an admirable opportunity to show how we hate sin by seeking to bring others to Christ? Do watch for other souls! As you prize your own, seek the conversion of others, and God grant that you may bring many to Jesus!  
And you that are not saved, oh, suffer not this occasion to pass! Let not the days go by without your seeking for that mercy which God so fully gives through His Only-Begotten Son! Then when you receive it you will be ashamed, and you, too, will magnify the Grace that pardoned even you! God bless you, dear Friends, very richly, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ROMANS 8:15-31.**

Verse 15. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. You did receive it once. You needed it. You were in sin and it was well for you when sin became bondage to you. It was grievous, but it was salutary. But you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.

15. But you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Does your spirit cry in that way tonight? Even if you are in the dark, yet if you cry for your Father, you will soon be in the light! There is no need to be distressed with any form of doubt as long as the Spirit makes this continual breathing, “Abba, Father, show Yourself to me. Do what You will to me. Let me taste Your love. Let me at least bow under Your hand.”

16. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. We would not have that spirit otherwise. Our spirit feels the Spirit of adoption, and so there is a double witness, the witness of our spirit, and the witness of God’s Spirit, that we are the children of God! In the mouth of these two witnesses the whole shall be established.

17. And if children, then heirs. That does not follow in other cases, but it does in the case of the family of God. In a man’s family, only one son can be an heir, but in God’s family, of all it is declared, “if children, then heirs.”

17. Heirs of God. Not only heirs to God, but heirs of God. God Himself is the heritage of His people! He belongs to them, now, as an eternal endowment. “Heirs of God.”

17. And joint-heirs with Christ; if, indeed, we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. We are to take the rough and the smooth, the bitter and the sweet with Christ. And who will make any objection to that? If we are to be heirs with Christ, we do not wish to split the inheritance in pieces. No, we will take the Cross as well as the crown—the reproach as well as the honor!

18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. He had just mentioned the sufferings. They are too little. They are mere specks in the sun. They are too small to be weighed in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory which God has prepared for us!

19. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. So great is to be the glory of God’s children that all the world is waiting for it! Every creature stands on tiptoe, looking for the coming of Christ and the manifestation of the redeemed! What must be the greatness of this thing which the whole Creation has learned to expect?

20-21. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We were in bondage, and we have come out in a measure into the liberty of the children of God. Now the world in which we live is in sympathy with us, and it is in part under bondage because of sin, but it is only temporary bondage. There will come a day when the whole Creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God—a new Heaven and a new earth—wherein dwells righteousness!

22. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. Deep groans are in the world. Have you not heard of earthquakes? Do you not know how the whole world is in a tremor? There is something coming and all the world is groaning for that coming! God makes the universe to be like an instrument of music played upon by the fingers of mortal men—so that when they are sorrowful, the world is sorrowful—and when they go forth with joy and are led forth with peace, then the mountains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. “We know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.”

23. And not only they, but ourselves, also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we, ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. As yet the body is under bondage. The body is dead because of sin. Therefore those headaches— this palpitation of the heart—this heaviness of the clay which incases us! But by-and-by, as the material world is to be delivered from its bondage, so shall these bodies also pass away from all the encumbrance of weakness, disease and death, into a better state.

24. For we are saved by hope—As yet.  
24-25. But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we, with patience, wait for it. What a lesson that is, and how seldom do we learn it! Oh, in this present state our main duty is, “Then do we with patience wait for it.” You want to have your cake and keep it, too, but you cannot eat it and keep it, too! With patience wait for it. There see some fruits of the earth that are not yet ripe. You lay them by in store. And there are many good things that God has laid by in store for His people. And He says to us, “With patience wait for it.” Oh, but you world gladly have heavenly joy on earthly ground. It would be a sorry misfit if it were so. But God keeps time and season, and there is harmony in His music. You shall have earthly sorrow on earthly ground, and you shall have heavenly bliss on the heavenly shore—but not till then. We do with patience wait for it.  
26. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. Especially our infirmities in prayer. I think that if anywhere our infirmities come out, it is in prayer. Even the strongest are, on their knees, comparatively weak. How few there are among us that prevail with God, as Elijah did! We ought to do so. We need, none of us, stop short of the fullest stature of a man in Christ Jesus—and a man of full stature in Christ would surely carry the keys of Heaven’s treasury at his side! He would have but to ask, and to receive—to seek and to find. May the Spirit help our infirmities!  
26. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit, Himself, makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. See what little worlds we are! Microcosms—to use a harder word— for as there are groans and travailing in the whole Creation, so are there such in the little world of our own heart. Only Nature’s travail is but natural—our travail is supernatural! It is the Spirit, Himself, groaning within chosen hearts with groans that cannot be uttered!  
27. And He who searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. When we, ourselves, hardly know the mind of the Spirit, He that searches all hearts knows it. When we feel as if we could not pray, yet the Spirit of God makes intercession in us and the great Father reads the purport of the intercessions and blesses us—not according to our knowledge of our own prayer—but according to His knowledge of what the Spirit means by those prayers. Have you never noticed that holy men of old sometimes spoke much greater things than they thought they should, for the Spirit of God in them spoke by them more than they, themselves, understood? I believe that it is also so in prayer. Oh, oftentimes the groaning, wrestling Believer may have no inkling of the full purport of his own prayer, but He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God!  
28. And we know—Now we are getting upon a dear old passage which reads like music. There is no eloquence in the world that ever touches the eloquence of the Apostle here!  
28. That all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. I do not like to hear this text quoted, as I often do, only in part—only half of it—“All things work together for good,” people say. “Oh, yes, somehow or other, good will come of it.” It does not say so here! It says, “All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” A special purpose and objective of God for a special people! And if you do not belong to this people, things are not working together for your good! No, but you may find that they will work together for your banishment from life and from the Presence of God! Take heed to this! The stars in their courses fight against you if you fight against God—and the very earth groans and complains of bearing up your weight if you are a rebel against the Most High! You must, first of all, be reconciled so as to love God. And the eternal purpose must be worked in you by your effectual calling from out of the world, or else you must not dare to intrude into the holy sanctuary of my text! “We know that all things work together for good to them who love God.” Of course, they do, for God loves them! “To them who are the called according to His purpose.” Of course they do, for that purpose which called them is not consistent with anything, but a purpose of Infinite Love to them! The great eternal purpose encompasses all things that happen and bends all to the grand objective of the good of the called ones!  
29-30. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. He spoke of it as if it were done because it is so sure, so certain to be done! He puts it down as a fact.  
31. What shall we then say to these things? Ah, indeed, what shall we say? If we had the tongues of men and angels, what could we say? Well, we will say this much at any rate.  
31. If God is for us, who can be against us? Those afflictions that we read of just now—these reproaches which we share with Christ—what of them? They are not worth calling anything! “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #233 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

FREE GRACE  
NO. 233

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Not for your sakes do I this, said the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed  
and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.” Ezekiel 36:32.**

THERE are two sins of man that are bred in the bone and that continually come out in the flesh. One is self-dependence and the other is selfexaltation. It is very hard, even for the best of men, to keep themselves from the first error. The holiest of Christians and those who understand best the Gospel of Christ find in themselves a constant inclination to look to the power of the creature—instead of looking to the power of God and the power of God, alone. Over and over again, Holy Scripture has to remind us of that which we never ought to forget—that salvation is God’s work from first to last—and is not of man, neither by man. But so it is, this old error—that we are to save ourselves, or that we are to do something in the matter of salvation—always rises up and we find ourselves continually tempted by it to step aside from the simplicity of our faith in the power of the Lord our God.

Why, even Abraham himself was not free from the great error of relying upon his own strength. God had promised to him that He would give him a son—Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham believed it, but at last, weary with waiting, he adopted the carnal expedient of taking to himself Hagar, to wife and he fancied that Ishmael would most certainly be the fulfillment of God’s promise. But instead of Ishmael’s helping to fulfill the promise, he brought sorrow unto Abraham’s heart, for God would not have it that Ishmael should dwell with Isaac. “Cast out,” said the Scripture, “the bondwoman and her son. For the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.”

Now we, in the matter of salvation, are apt to think that God is tarrying long in the fulfillment of His promise and we set to work ourselves to do something and what do we do? Sink ourselves deeper in the mire and pile up for ourselves a store of future troubles and trials. Do we not read that it grieved Abraham’s heart to send Ishmael away? Ah, and many a Christian has been grieved by those works of nature which he accomplished with the design of helping the God of Grace. Oh, Beloved, we shall find ourselves very frequently attempting the foolish task of assisting Omnipotence and teaching the Omniscient One. Instead of looking to grace alone to sanctify us, we find ourselves adopting Philosophic rules and principles which we think will effect the Divine work. We shall but mar it. We shall

bring grief into our own spirits.

But if, instead thereof, we in every work look up to the God of our salvation for help and strength and grace and succor, then our work will proceed to our own joy and comfort and to God’s glory. That error, then, I say, is in our bones and will always dwell with us and hence it is that the words of the text are put as an antidote against that error. It is distinctly stated in our text that salvation is of God. “Not for your sakes do I this.” He says nothing about what we have done or can do. All the preceding and all the succeeding verses speak of what God does. “I will take you from among the heathen.” “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” “I will give you a new heart.” “I will put my Spirit within you.” It is all of God— therefore, again recall to our recollection this doctrine and give up all dependence upon our own strength and power.

The other error to which man is very prone is that of relying upon his own merit. Though there is no righteousness in any man, yet in every man there is a proneness to truth in some fancied merit. Strange that it should be so, but the most reprobate characters have yet some virtue as they imagine, upon which they rely. You will find the most abandoned drunkard prides himself that he is not a swearer. You will find the blaspheming drunkard pride himself that at least he is honest. You will find men with no other virtue in the world exalt what they imagine to be a virtue—the fact that they do not profess to have any. They think themselves to be extremely excellent, because they have honesty or rather impudence enough to confess that they are utterly vile.

Somehow the human mind clings to human merit. It always will hold to it and when you take away everything upon which you think it could rely, in less than a moment it fashions some other ground for confidence out of itself. Human nature with regard to its own merit, is like the spider—it bears its support in its own bowels and it seems as if it would keep spinning on to all eternity. You may brush down one web, but it soon forms another. You may take the thread from one place and you will find it clinging to your finger and when you seek to brush it down with one hand you find it clinging to the other. It is hard to get rid of. It is ever ready to spin its web and bind itself to some false ground of trust.

It is against all human merit that I am this morning going to speak and I feel that I shall offend a great many people here. I am about to preach a doctrine that is gall and vinegar to flesh and blood, one that will make righteous moralists gnash their teeth and make others go away and declare that I am an Antinomian and perhaps scarcely fit to live. However, that consequence is one which I shall not greatly deplore, if connected with it there should be in other hearts a yielding to this glorious Truth of God and a giving up to the power and Grace of God, who will never save us, unless we are prepared to let Him have all the glory.

First, I shall endeavor to expound at large the doctrine contained in this text. In the next place I shall endeavor to show its force and truthfulness. Then in the third place I shall seek God’s Holy Spirit to apply the useful, practical lessons which are to be drawn from it.

I. I shall endeavor to EXPOUND THIS TEXT. “Not for your sakes do I this, said the Lord God.” The motive for the salvation of the human race is to be found in the breast of God and not in the character or condition of man. Two races have revolted against God—the one angelic, the other human. When a part of this angelic race revolted against the Most High, justice speedily overtook them. They were swept from their starry seats in Heaven and henceforth they have been reserved in darkness unto the great day of the wrath of God. No mercy was ever presented to them, no sacrifice ever offered for them. They were without hope and mercy, forever consigned to the pit of eternal torment. The human race, far inferior in order of intelligence, sinned as atrociously—at any rate, if the sins of manhood that we have heard of were put together and rightly weighed, I can scarcely understand how even the sins of devils could be much blacker than the sin of mankind.

However, the God who in His infinite justice passed over angels and suffered them forever to expiate their offenses in the fires of Hell, was pleased to look down on man. Here was election on a grand scale. The election of manhood and the reprobation of fallen angelhood. What was the reason for it? The reason was in God’s mind, an inscrutable reason which we do not know and which if we knew probably we could not understand. Had you and I amen put upon the choice of which should have been spared, I do think it probable we should have chosen that fallen angels should have been saved. Are they not the brightest? Have they not the greatest mental strength? If they had been redeemed, would it not have glorified God more, as we judge, than the salvation of worms like ourselves?

Those bright beings—Lucifer, son of the morning and those stars that walked in his train—if they had been washed in His redeeming blood, if they had been saved by sovereign mercy, what a song would they have lifted up to the Most High and everlasting God! But God, who does as He wills with His own and gives no account of His matters, He who deals with His creatures as the potter deals with his clay—took not upon Him the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham and chose men to be the vessels of His mercy. This fact we know, but where is its reason? Certainly not in man. “Not for your sakes do I this. O house of Israel, be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways.”

Here, very few men object. We notice that if we talk about the election of men and the non-election of fallen angels, there is not a cavil for a moment. Every man approves of Calvinism till he feels that he is the loser by it. But when it begins to touch his own bone and his own flesh then he kicks against it. Come, then, we must go further. The only reason why one man is saved and not another, lies not, in any sense, in the man saved, but in God’s bosom. The reason why this day the Gospel is preached to you and not the heathen far away is not because, as a race, we are superior to the heathen. It is not because we deserve more at God’s hands. His choice of Britain, in the election of outward privilege, is not caused by the

excellency of the British nation, but entirely because of His own mercy and His own love.

There is not reason in us why we should have the Gospel preached to us more than any other nation. Today, some of us have received the Gospel and have been changed by it and have become the heirs of light and immorality. Whereas others are left still to be the heirs of wrath. But there is no reason in us why we should have been taken and others left—

*“There was nothing in us to merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight.  
‘Twas even so, Father! We ever must sing, Because it seemed good in Your sight.”*

And now, let us review this doctrine at length. We are taught in Holy Scripture that, long before this world was made, God foreknew and foresaw all the creatures He intended to fashion. And there and then, foreordaining that the human race would fall into sin and deserve His anger, determined, in His own sovereign mind, that an immense portion of the human race should be His children and should be brought to Heaven. As to the rest, He left them to their own deserts—to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind, to scatter crime and inherit punishment. Now, in the great decree of election, the only reason why God selected the vessels of mercy must have been because He would do it. There was nothing in any one of them which caused God to choose them. We all were alike, all lost, all ruined by the Fall. All without the slightest claim upon His mercy. All, in fact, deserving His utmost vengeance. His choice of anyone and His choice of all His people, are causeless, so far as anything in them was concerned. It was the effect of His sovereign will and of nothing which they did, could do, or even would do. For thus said the text—“Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel”!

As for the fruit of our election, in due time Christ came into this world and purchased with His blood all those whom the Father has chosen. Now come you to the Cross of Christ. Bring this doctrine with you and remember that the only reason why Christ gave up His life to be a ransom for His sheep was because He loved His people, but there was nothing in His people that made Him die for them. I was thinking as I came here this morning, if any man should imagine that the love of God to us was caused by anything in us, it would be as if a man should look into a well to find the springs of the ocean, or dig into an anthill to find an Alp. The love of God is so immense, so boundless and so infinite that you cannot conceive for a moment that it could have been caused by anything in us.

The little good that is in us—the no good that is in us—for there is none, could not have caused the boundless, bottomless, shoreless, summitless love which God manifests to His people. Stand at the foot of the Cross, you merit-mongers, you that delight in your own works—answer this question—Do you think that the Lord of life and glory could have been brought down from Heaven, could have been fashioned like a man and have been led to die through any merit of yours? Shall these sacred veins be opened with any lancet less sharp than His own infinite love? Do you conceive that your poor merits, such as they are, could be so efficacious as to nail the Redeemer to the tree and make Him bend His shoulders beneath the enormous load of the world’s guilt? You cannot imagine it.

The consequence is so great, compared with what you suppose to be the case, that your logic fails in a moment. You may conceive that a coral insect rears a rock by its multitude and by its many years of working. But you cannot conceive that all the accumulated merits of manhood, if there were such things, could have brought the Eternal from the throne of His majesty and bowed Him to the death of the Cross—that is a thing as clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind, as impossibility can be. No— from the Cross comes the cry—“Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel.” After Christ’s death, there comes, in the next place, the work of the Holy Spirit. Those whom the Father has chosen and whom the Son has redeemed, in due time the Holy Spirit calls “out of darkness into marvelous light.”

Now, the calling of the Holy Spirit is without any regard to any merit in us. If this day the Holy Spirit shall call out of this congregation a hundred men and bring them out of their estate of sin into a state of righteousness, you might bring these hundred men and let them march in review and if you could read their hearts, you would be compelled to say, “I see no reason why the Spirit of God should have operated upon these. I see nothing whatever that could have merited such grace as this—nothing that could have caused the operations and motions of the Spirit to work in these men.” For, look here—by nature, men are said to be dead in sin. If the Holy Spirit quickens, it cannot be because of any power in the dead men, or any merit in them, for they are dead, corrupt and rotten in the grave of their sin. If then, the Holy Spirit says, “Come forth and live,” it is not because of anything in the dry bones, it must be for some reason in His own mind, but not in us.

Therefore, know this, Brothers and Sisters, that we all stand upon level ground. We have none of us anything that can recommend us to God. And if the Spirit shall choose to operate in our hearts unto salvation, He must be moved to do it by His own supreme love, for He cannot be moved to do it by any good will, good desire, or good deed, that dwells in us by nature.

To go a little further—this Truth of God, which holds good so far, holds good all the way. God’s people, after they are called by grace, are preserved in Christ Jesus. They are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” They are not suffered to sin away their eternal inheritance, but as temptations arise they have strength given with which to encounter them and as sin blackens them they are washed afresh and again cleansed. But mark, the reason why God keeps His people is the same as that which made them His people—His own free Sovereign Grace. If, my Brothers and Sisters, you have been delivered in the hour of temptation, pause and remember that you were not delivered for your own sake. There was nothing in you that deserved the deliverance. If you have been fed and supplied in your hour of need, it is not because you have been a

faithful servant of God, nor because you have been a prayerful Christian. It is simply and only because of God’s mercy. He is not moved to anything He does for you by anything that you do for Him. His motive for blessing you lies wholly and entirely in the depths of His own bosom. Blessed be God, His people shall be kept—

*“Nor death, nor Hell shall ever remove  
His favorites from His breast;  
In the dear bosom of His love  
They must forever rest.”*

But why? Because they are holy? Because they are sanctified? Because they serve God with good works? No, but because He in His Sovereign Grace has loved them, does love them and will love them, even to the end. And to conclude my exposition of this text. This shall hold good in Heaven itself. The day is coming when every blood-bought, blood-washed child of God shall walk the golden streets arrayed in white. Our hands shall soon bear the palm. Our ears shall be delighted with celestial melodies and our eyes filled with the transporting visions of God’s glory. But mark, the only reason why God shall bring us to Heaven shall be His own love and not because we deserved it. We must fight the fight, but we do not win the victory because we fight it. We must labor, but the wage at the days’ end shall be a wage of grace and not a debt. We must honor God here, looking for the recompense of the reward. But that recompense will not be given on a legal ground, because we merited it, but given to us entirely because God loves us, for no reason that was in us.

When you and I and each of us shall enter Heaven, our song shall be, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the glory.” And that shall be true, it shall not be a mere exaggeration of gratitude. It shall be true. We shall be compelled to sing it, because we could not sing anything else. We shall feel that we did nothing and that we were nothing, but that God did it all—that we had nothing in us to be the motive of His doing it, but that His motive lay in Himself. Therefore unto Him shall be every particle of the honor forever and ever.

Now, this, I take it, is the meaning of the text. Distasteful it is to the great majority, even of professing Christians in this age. It is a doctrine that requires a great deal of salt, or else few people will receive it. It is very unsavory to them. However, there It stands. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” His Truth we must preach and this we must proclaim. Salvation is “not of men, neither by man. Not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood,” nor of birth, but of the sovereign will of God and God alone.

II. And now, in the second place, I have to ILLUSTRATE AND ENFORCE THIS TEXT.  
Consider a moment, man’s character. It will humble us and it will tend to confirm this Truth of God in our minds. Let me take an illustration. I will consider man as a criminal. He certainly is such in the sight of God and I shall not slander him. Suppose now that some great criminal is at last overtaken in his sin and shut up in Newgate. He has committed high treason, murder, rebellion and every possible iniquity. He has broken all the laws of the realm—every one of them. The public cry is everywhere— “This man must die. The laws cannot be maintained unless he shall be made an example of their rigor. He who bears not the sword in vain must this time let the sword taste blood. The man must die. He richly deserves it.”  
You look through his character—you cannot see one solitary redeeming trait. He is an old offender. He has so long persevered in his iniquity that you are compelled to say, “The case is hopeless with this man. His crimes have such aggravation we cannot make an apology for him, even should we try. Not Jesuitical cunning itself could devise any pretense of excuse, or any hope of a plea for this abandoned wretch. Let him die!” Now, if Her Majesty the Queen, having in her hands the sovereign power of life and death chooses that this man shall not die, but that he shall be spared, do you not see as plain as daylight that the only reason that can move her to spare that man must be her own love, her own compassion? For, as I have supposed already that there is nothing in that man’s character that can be a plea for mercy, but that, contrariwise, his whole character cries aloud for vengeance against his sin. Whether we like it or not, this is just the Truth of God concerning ourselves. This is just our character and position before God.  
Ah, my Hearer, you may turn upon your heel, disgusted and offended. But there are some here who feel it to be solemnly true in their own experience and they will therefore drink in the doctrine, for it is the only way whereby they can be saved. My Hearer, your conscience perhaps is telling you this morning that you have sinned so heinously that there is not an inlet for a solitary ray of hope in your character. You have added to your sins this great one, that you have rebelled against the Most High wantonly and wickedly. If you have not committed all the sins in the calendar of crime, it has been because Providence has stayed your hand, Your heart has been black enough for it all. You feel that the vileness of your imagination and desires has achieved the consummation of human guilt and further you could not go. Your sins have prevailed against you and have gone over your head. Now, Man, the only ground upon which God can save you is His own love. He cannot save you because you deserve it, for you do not deserve it—because there is no excuse that might be made for your sin. No, you are without any excuse and you feel it.  
Oh, bless His dear name, that He has devised this way, whereby He can save you upon the basis of His own sovereign love and unbounded grace, without anything in you. I want you to go back to Newgate again to this criminal. We suppose now that this criminal is visited by Her Majesty in person. She goes to him and she says to him, “Rebel, traitor, murderer, I have in my heart compassion for you. You deserve it not. But I am come this day to you, to tell you that if you repent you shall have mercy at my hands.” Suppose this man, springing up, should curse her—curse this angel of mercy to her face, spit upon her and utter blasphemies and imprecate curses upon her head? She retires. She is gone. But so great is her compassion, that the next day she sends a messenger and days and weeks and months and years, she continually sends messengers and these go to him and they say, “If you will repent of your transgressions you shall have mercy. Not because you deserve it, but because Her Majesty is compassionate and out of her gracious soul she desires your salvation. Will you repent?”  
Suppose this man should curse at the messenger, stop his ears against the message, spit upon him, tell him he does not care for him at all. Or to suppose a better case—suppose he turns upon his seat and says, “I don’t care whether I am hanged or not. I’ll take my chance along with other people. I shall take no notice of you.” And suppose more than that, rising from his seat, he indulges again in all the crimes for which he has already been condemned and plunges headlong afresh into the very sins which have brought his neck under the rope of the gallows? Now, if Her Majesty would spare such a man as that, on what terms can she do it? You say, “Why, she cannot, unless she does it out of love. She cannot because of any merit in him, because such a beast as that ought to die.”  
And now what are you and I by nature but like this? And my unconverted Hearer, what is this but a picture of you? Has not God Himself visited your conscience? Has He not said to you, “Sinner! Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool.” And what have you done? Stopped your ear against the voice of conscience—cursed and swore at God, blasphemed His holy name, despised His Word and railed against His ministers. And this day, again, with tears in his eyes, a servant of God is come to you and his message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. As I live, said the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” And what will you do? Why, if left to yourselves you will laugh at the message—despise it. It will glance off from you like an arrow from a man that is girt about with mail and you will go away to despise God again, as you have done before. Do you not see, then, that if God ever shall save you, it cannot be for your sakes? But it must be from His own infinite love. It cannot be from any other reason, since you have rejected Christ, despised His Gospel, trod under foot the blood of Jesus and have refused to be saved. If He saves you, it must be free grace and free grace alone.  
But now picture a little more about this criminal at Newgate. Not content with having added sin to sin and having rejected mercy for himself, this wretch industriously employs himself in going round to all the cells where others are confined and hardening their hearts also against the mercy of the Queen. He can scarce see a person but he begins to taint him with the blasphemy of his own heart. He utters injurious things against the majesty that spares him and endeavors to make others as vile as himself. Now,  
what does justice say? If this man ought not to die on his own account, yet he ought to die for the sake of others. And if he is spared, is it not as plain as a pike-staff that he cannot be spared because of any reason in him? It must be because of the unconquerable compassion of the Sovereign.  
And now look here—is not this the case of some here present? Not only do you sin yourselves, but you lead others into sin. I know this was one of my plagues and torments, when first God brought me to Himself, that I have led others into temptation. Are there not men here that have taught others to swear? Are there not fathers here that have helped to destroy their own children’s souls? Are there not some of you that are like the deadly Upas tree? You stretch out your branches and from every leaf there drops poison upon those who come beneath its deadly range. Are there not some here who have seduced the virtuous, that have misled those who were seemingly pious and that are perhaps so hardened that they even glory in it? Not content with being damned yourselves, you are seeking to lead others to the pit also. Thinking it not enough yourselves to be at enmity with God, you want to imitate Satan by dragging others with you.  
O my Hearer, is not this your case? Does not your heart confess it? And does not the tear flow down your cheek? Remember, then, this must be true—if God shall save you, it must be because He will do it. It cannot be because there is anything good in you, for you deserve now to die and if He spare you it must be sovereign love and Sovereign Grace. I will just use one other illustration and then I think I shall have made the text clear enough. There is not so much difference between black and a darker shade of black as there is between pure white and black. Every one can see that. Then there is not so much difference between man and the devil as there is between God and man. God is perfection. We are black with sin. The devil is only a darker shade of black. And great as may be the difference between our sin and the sin of Satan, yet it is not so great as the difference between the perfection of God and the imperfection of man.  
Now, imagine for a minute that somewhere in Africa there should be a tribe of devils living—that you and I had it in our power to save these devils from some threatened wrath which must overtake them. If you or I should go there and die to save those devils, what could be our motive? From what we know of the character of a devil, the only motive that could make us do that must be love. There could not be any other. It must be simply because we had such big hearts that we could even embrace fiends within them. Well, now, there is not so much difference between man and the devil as between God and man. If, then, the only motive that could make men save a devil must be man’s love, does it not follow with irresistible force, that the only motive that could lead God to save men must be God’s own love. At any rate, if that reason be not cogent the fact is indisputable—“Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel.” God sees us, abandoned, evil, wicked and deserving His wrath. If He saves us, it is His boundless, fathomless love that leads Him to do it—nothing whatever in us.  
III. And now, having thus preached this doctrine and enforced it, I come to a very solemn PRACTICAL APPLICATION. And here may God the Holy Spirit help me labor with your hearts!  
First, since this doctrine is true, how humble a Christian man ought to be! If you are saved, you have had nothing to do with it—God has done it. If you are saved, you have not deserved it. It is mercy undeserved which you have received. I have sometimes been delighted when I have seen the gratitude of abandoned characters to any who have assisted them. I remember visiting a house of refuge. There was a poor girl there who had fallen into sin long ago and when she found herself kindly addressed and recognized by society and saw a Christian minister longing after her soul’s good, it broke her heart. What should a man of God care about her? She was so vile. How could it be that a Christian should speak to her? Ah, but how much more should that feeling rise in our hearts? My God! I have rebelled against You and yet You have loved me, unworthy me! How can it be? I cannot lift myself up with pride, I must bow down before You in speechless gratitude.  
Remember, my dear Brethren, that not only is the mercy which you and I have received undeserved, but it was unasked. It is true you prayed, but not till free grace made you pray. You would have been, to this day, hardened in heart, without God and without Christ, had not free grace saved you. Can you be proud then? Proud of mercy which, if I may use the term, has been forced upon you?—proud of grace which has been given you against your will, until your will was changed by Sovereign Grace? And think again. All the mercy you have you once refused. Christ sups with you. Be not proud of His company. Remember, there was a day when He knocked and you refused—when He came to the door and said, “My head is wet with dew and my locks with the drops of the night. Open to me, My Beloved.” And you barred it in His face and would not let Him enter.  
Be not proud, then, of what you have, when you remember that you did once reject Him. Does God embrace You in His arms of love? Remember, once you lifted up your hand of rebellion against Him. Is your name written in His book? Ah, there was a time when if it had been in your power, you would have erased the sacred lines that contained your own salvation. Can we, dare we, lift up our wicked head with pride, when all these things should make us hang our heads down in the deepest humility? That is one lesson—let us learn another.  
This doctrine is true and therefore it should be a subject of the greatest gratitude. When meditating upon this text yesterday, the effect it had upon me was one of transport and joy. Oh, I thought, upon what other condition could I have been saved? And I looked back upon my past estate. I saw myself piously trained and educated, but revolting against all that. I saw a mother’s tears shed over me in vain and a father’s admonition lost upon me and yet I found myself saved by grace and I could only say, “Lord, I bless You that it is by grace, for if it had been by merit I had never been saved. If You had waited till there was something good in me, You would have waited till I sank into the hopeless perdition of Hell, for good in man there never would have been unless You had first put it there.” And then I thought immediately, “Oh, how I could go and preach that to the poor sinner!”  
Ah, let me try if I cannot. O Sinner! You say you dare not come to Christ because you have nothing to recommend you. He does not want anything to recommend you. He will not save you if you have anything to recommend you, for He says, “Not for your sake do I this.” Go to Christ with earrings in your ears and jewels upon you. Wash your face and array yourself with gold and silver and go before Him and say, “Lord, save me. I have washed myself and clothed myself—save me!” “Get you gone! Not for your sakes will I do this.” Go to Him again and say, “Lord, I have put a rope about my neck and sackcloth about my loins—see how repentant I am, see how I feel my need. Now save me!” “No,” says He, “I would not save you on account of your flaunting robes and now I will not save you because of your rags. I will save you for nothing about you. If I do save you, it will be from something in My heart, not from anything you feel. Get you gone!”  
But if today you go to Christ and say, “Lord Jesus, there is no reason in the world why I should be saved—there is one in Heaven. Lord, I cannot urge any plea, I deserve to be lost, I have no excuse to make for all my sins, no apology to offer. Lord, I deserve Hell and there is nothing in me why I should be saved, for if You would save me I should make but a poor Christian, after all. I fear that my future works will be no honor to You—I wish they could be, but Your grace must make them good, else they will still be bad. But, Lord, though I have nothing to bring and nothing to say for myself, I do say this—I have heard that You have come into the world to save sinners—O Lord, save me!—  
*‘I the chief of sinners am.’*  
I confess I do not feel this as I ought, I do not mourn it as I ought. I have no repentance to recommend me. No, Lord, I have no faith to recommend me either, for I do not believe Your promise as I ought. But oh, I cling to this text. Lord, You have said You will not do it for my sake. I thank You that You have said that. You could not do it for my sake, for I have no reason why you should. Lord, I claim your gracious promise. ‘Be merciful to me, a sinner.’ ”  
Ah, you good people, this doctrine does not suit some of you. It is too humbling, is it not? You that have kept your Churches regularly and been to meetings so piously, you that never broke the Sabbath, or never swore an oath, or did anything wrong—this does not suit you. You say it will do very well to preach to harlots and drunkards and swearers, but it will not suit such good people as we are. Ah, well, this is your text—“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” You are “whole”— you are. You “need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Go your way. Christ came not to save such as you are. You think you can save yourselves. Do it and perish in the doing of it. But I feel that the same Gospel that suits a harlot suits me and that free grace which saved Saul of Tarsus must save me, else I am never saved. Come, let us all go together. We are all guilty—some more, some less, but all hopelessly guilty. Let us go together to the footstool of His mercy and though we dare not look up, let us lie there in the dust and sigh out again, “Lord have mercy upon us for whom Jesus died.”—  
*“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to You,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”*  
Sinner, come now. Come now, I beseech you. I entreat you, come now. O Spirit of the living God, draw them now! Let these feeble weak words be the means of drawing souls to Christ. Will you reject my Master again? Will you go out of this house hardened once more? You may never again have such feelings as those which are aroused in your soul. Come, now, receive His mercy. Now bend your willing necks to His yoke. And then I know you shall go away to taste His faithful love and at last to sing in Heaven the song of the redeemed—“Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever. Amen.”— *“O you great eternal Jesus,  
High and mighty Prince of Peace,  
How Your wonders shine resplendent,  
In the wonders of Your grace—  
Your rich Gospel scorns conditions,  
Breathes salvation free as air;  
Only breathes triumphant mercy,  
Baffling guilt and all despair.  
“O the grandeur of the Gospel,  
How it sounds the cleansing blood;  
Shows the heart of a Savior,  
Shows the tender heart of God.  
Only treats of love eternal,  
Swells the all-abounding grace,  
Nothing knows but life and pardon,  
Full redemption, endless peace.”*

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PRAYER—THE FORERUNNER OF MERCY  
NO. 138

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 28, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Thus says the Lord God: I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.”  
Ezekiel 36:37.**

IN reading the Chapter we have seen the great and exceedingly precious promises which God had made to the favored nation of Israel. God in this verse declares that though the promise was made and though He would fulfill it, yet He would not fulfill it until His people asked Him to do so. He would give them a spirit of prayer by which they would cry earnestly for the blessing and then, when they have cried aloud unto the living God, He would be pleased to answer them from Heaven, His dwelling place. The word used here to express the idea of prayer is a suggestive one. “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.” Prayer, then, is an enquiry! No man can pray aright unless he views prayer in that light. First, I enquire what the promise is. I turn to my Bible and I seek to find the promise whereby the thing which I desire to seek is certified to me as being a thing which God is willing to give. Having enquired so far as that, I take that promise and on my bended knees I enquire of God whether He will fulfill His own promise. I take to Him His own Word of Covenant and I say to Him, “O Lord, will You not fulfill it and will You not fulfill it now?” So that there, again, prayer is enquiry. After prayer I look for the answer, I expect to be heard and if I am not answered I pray again and my repeated prayers are but fresh enquiries. I expect the blessing to arrive. I go and enquire whether there are any tidings of its coming. I ask and thus I say, “Will You answer me, O Lord? Will You keep Your promise? Or will You shut up Your ears because I misunderstand my own needs and mistake Your promise?” Brothers and Sisters, we must use enquiry in prayer and regard prayer as being, first, an enquiry for the promise, and then, on the strength of that promise, an enquiry for the fulfillment. We expect something to come as a present from a friend—we first have the note, whereby we are informed it is upon the road. We enquire as to what the present is by the reading of the note and then, if it arrives not, we call at the accustomed place where the parcel ought to have been left and we ask or enquire for such-and-such a thing. We have enquired about the promise and then we go and enquire, again, until we get an answer that the promised gift has arrived and is ours. So with prayer. We get the promise by enquiry and we get the fulfillment of it by again enquiring at God’s hands!

Now, this morning I shall try, as God shall help me, first to speak of prayer as the prelude of blessing. Next I shall try to show why prayer is thus constituted by God the forerunner of His mercies. And then I shall close by an exhortation, as earnest as I can make it, exhorting you to pray, if you would obtain blessings.

I. Prayer is the FORERUNNER OF MERCIES. Many despise prayer— they despise it because they do not understand it. He who knows how to use that sacred art of prayer will obtain so much thereby that from its very profitableness he will be led to speak of it with the highest reverence.

Prayer, we assert, is the prelude of all mercies. We bid you turn back to sacred history and you will find that never did a great mercy come to this world unheralded by prayer. The promise comes alone, with no preventing merit to precede it, but the blessing promised always follows its herald, prayer. You shall note that all the wonders that God did in the old times were first of all sought at His hands by the earnest prayers of His believing people. The other Sabbath we beheld Pharaoh cast into the depths of the Red Sea and all his hosts, “still as a stone,” in the depths of the waters. Was there a prayer that preceded that magnificent overthrow of the Lord’s enemies? Turn to the Book of Exodus and you will read, “The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage and they cried and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.” And mark you—just before the sea parted and made a highway for the Lord’s people through its bosom—Moses had prayed unto the Lord and cried earnestly unto Him, so that Jehovah said, “Why do you cry unto Me?” A few Sabbaths ago, when we preached on the subject of the rain which came down from Heaven in the days of Elijah, you will remember how we pictured the land of Judea as an arid wilderness, a mass of dust, destitute of all vegetation. Rain had not fallen for three years! The pastures were dried up. The brooks had ceased to flow. Poverty and distress stared the nation in the face. At an appointed season a sound was heard of abundance of rain and the torrents poured from the skies until the earth was deluged with the happy floods. Do you ask me whether prayer was the prelude to that? I point you to the top of Carmel. Behold a man kneeling before his God, crying, “O my God! Send the rain.” Lo, the majesty of his faith! He sends his servant, Gehazi, to look seven times for the clouds because he believes that they will come in answer to his prayer. And mark the fact—the torrents of rain were the offspring of Elijah’s faith and prayer. Wherever in Holy Writ you shall find the blessing, you shall find the prayer that went before it!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest blessing that men ever had. He was God’s best benefit to a sorrowing world. And did prayer precede Christ’s advent? Was there any prayer which went before the coming of the Lord, when He appeared in the Temple? Oh yes, the prayers of saints for many ages had followed each other. Abraham saw His day and when he died, Isaac took up the note and when Isaac slept with his fathers, Jacob and the Patriarchs still continued to pray. Yes, and in the very days of Christ, prayer was still made for Him continually—Anna the Prophetess and the venerable Simeon still looked for the coming of Christ. And day by day they prayed and interceded with God that He would suddenly come to His Temple.

Yes and mark—as it has been in Sacred Writ, so it shall be with regard to greater things that are yet to happen in the fulfillment of promises. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of Heaven. It is my firm belief in common with all who read the Sacred Scriptures aright that the day is approaching when the Lord Jesus shall stand a second time upon the earth—when He shall reign with illimitable sway over all the habitable parts of the globe—when kings shall bow before Him and queens shall be nursing mothers of His Church. But when shall that time come? We shall know its coming by its prelude when prayer shall become more loud and strong, when supplication shall become more universal and more incessant then even as when the tree puts forth her first green leaves. We expect that the spring approaches— even so when prayer shall become more hearty and earnest—we may open our eyes for the day of our redemption draws near! Great prayer is the preface of great mercy and in proportion to our prayer is the blessing that we may expect!

It has been so in the history of the modern Church. Whenever she has been awakened to pray, it is then that God has awakened to her help. Jerusalem, when you have shaken yourself from the dust, your Lord has taken His sword from the scabbard. When you have suffered your hands to hang down and your knees to become feeble, He has left you to become scattered by your enemies. You have become barren and your children have been cut off, but when you have learned to cry—when you have begun to pray—God has restored unto you the joy of His salvation and He has gladdened your heart and multiplied your children. The history of the Church up to this age has been a series of waves, a succession of ebbs and flows. A strong wave of religious prosperity has washed over the sands of sin. Again it has receded and immorality has reigned. You shall read in English history—it has been the same. Did the righteous prosper in the days of Edward VI? They shall again be tormented under a Bloody Mary! Did Puritanism become omnipotent over the land, did the glorious Cromwell reign and did the saints triumph? Charles the Second’s debaucheries and wickedness became the black receding wave. Again, Whitefield and Wesley poured throughout the nation a mighty wave of religion, which like a torrent drove everything before it. Again it receded and there came the days of Payne and of men full of infidelity and wickedness. Again there came a strong impulse and again God glorified Himself. And up to this date, again, there has been a decline. Religion, though more fashionable than it once was, has lost much of its vitality and power. Much of the zeal and earnestness of the ancient preachers has departed and the wave has receded again.

But, blessed be God, flood tide has again set in—once more God has awakened His Church! We have seen in these days what our fathers never hoped to see—we have seen the great men of a Church, not too noted for its activity, at last coming forth—and God is with them in their coming forth! They have come forth to preach unto the people the unsearchable riches of God! I hope we may have another great wave of religion rolling in upon us. Shall I tell you what I conceive to be the moon that influences these waves? My Brothers and Sisters, even as the moon influences the tides of the sea, even so does prayer, (which is the reflection of the sunlight of Heaven and is God’s moon in the sky), influence the tides of godliness! When our prayers become like the crescent moon and when we stand not in conjunction with the sun, then there is but a shallow tide of godliness. But when the full orb shines upon the earth and when God Almighty makes the prayers of His people full of joy and gladness, it is then that the sea of Grace returns to its strength! In proportion to the prayerfulness of the Church shall be its present success, though its ultimate success is beyond the reach of hazard.

And now again, to come nearer home—this Truth of God is true of each of you, my dearly Beloved in the Lord, in your own personal experience. God has given you many an unsolicited favor but still, great prayer has always been the great prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the Cross, you had been praying much beforehand and earnestly interceding with God that He would remove your doubts and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer! And when at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers. When you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, “I cried unto the Lord and He heard me and delivered me out of all my fears.” Prayer, we say, in your case, as well as in the case of the Church at large, is always the preface to blessing!

And now, some will say to me, “In what way do you regard prayer, then, as affecting the blessing? God, the Holy Spirit vouchsafes prayer before the blessing. But in what way is prayer connected with the blessing?” I reply, prayer goes before the blessing in several senses.

It goes before the blessing, as the blessing’s shadow. When the sunlight of God’s mercy rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain, or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, He, Himself, shines behind them and He casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain. If we are in prayer, our prayers are the shadows of mercy. Prayer is the rustling of the wings of the angels that are on their way bringing us the gifts of Heaven. Have you heard prayer in your heart? You shall see the angel in your house! When the chariots that bring us blessings rumble, their wheels sound with prayer. We hear the prayer in our own spirits and that prayer becomes the token of the coming blessings! Even as the cloud foreshadows rain, so prayer foreshadows the blessing. Even as the green blade is the beginning of the harvest, so is prayer the prophecy of the blessing that is about to come!

Again—prayer goes before mercy, as the representative of it. Often times the king, in his progress through his realms, sends one before him who blows a trumpet. And when the people see him, they know that the king comes because the trumpeter is there. But, perhaps, there is before him a more important personage, who says, “I am sent before the king to prepare for his reception and I am this day to receive anything that you have to send the king, for I am his representative.” So prayer is the representative of the blessing before the blessing comes. The prayer comes and when I see the prayer, I say, “Prayer, you are the vice regent of the blessing. If the blessing is the king, you are the regent. I know and look upon you as being the representative of the blessing I am about to receive.”

But I also think that sometimes and generally, prayer goes before the blessing even as the cause goes before the effect. Some people say, when they get anything, that they get it because they prayed for it. But if they are people who are not spiritually-minded and who have no faith, let them know that whatever they may get, it is not in answer to prayer—for we know that God hears not sinners and the “sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” “Well,” says one, “I asked God for suchand-such a thing the other day. I know I am no Christian but I got it. Don’t you consider that I had it through my prayers?” No, Sir, no more than I believe the reasoning of the old man who affirmed that the Goodwin Sands had been caused by the building of Tenterden Steeple! The sands had not been there, before, and the sea did not come up till it was built and, therefore, he said, the steeple must have caused the flood! Now, your prayers have no more connection with your blessing than the sea with the steeple. But in the Christian’s case it is far different! Oftentimes the blessing is actually brought down from Heaven by the prayer. An objector may reply, “I believe that prayer may have much influence on yourself, Sir, but I do not believe that it has any effect on the Divine Being.” Well, Sir, I shall not try to convince you because it is as useless for me to try to convince you of that, unless you believe the testimonies I bring, as it would be to convince you of any historical fact by simply reasoning about it. I could bring out of this congregation not one, nor twenty, but many hundreds who are rational, intelligent persons and who would, each of them, most positively declare that some hundreds of times in their lives they have been led to seek most earnestly, deliverance out of trouble, or help in adversity—and they have received the answers to their prayers in so marvelous a manner that they, themselves, did no more doubt their being answers to their cries than they could doubt the existence of a God! They felt sure that He heard them. They were certain of it.

Oh, the testimonies to the power of prayer are so numerous that the man who rejects them flies in the face of good testimonies! We are not all enthusiasts. Some of us are cool-blooded enough—we are not all fanatics. We are not all quite wild in our piety. Some of us in other things, we reckon, act in a tolerably common-sense way. But yet we all agree in this—that our prayers have been heard—and we could tell many stories of our prayers, still fresh upon our memories, where we have cried unto God and He has heard us! But the man who says he does not believe God hears prayer, knows He does. I have no respect for his skepticism, any more than I have any respect for a man’s doubt about the existence of a God. The man does not doubt it! He has to choke his own conscience before he dares to say he does. It is complimenting him too much to argue with him. Will you argue with a liar? He affirms a lie and knows it is so. Will you condescend to argue with him to prove that he is a liar? The man is incapable of reasoning! He is beyond the pale of those who ought to be treated as respectable persons. If a man rejects the existence of God, he does it desperately against his own conscience and if he is bad enough to stifle his own conscience so much as to believe that, or pretend that he believes it, we think we shall demean ourselves if we argue with so loose a character! He must be solemnly warned, for reason is thrown away upon deliberate liars. But you know, Sir, God hears prayer—because if you do not, either way you must be a fool! You are a fool for not believing so and a worse fool for praying, yourself, when you do not believe He hears you. “But I do not pray, Sir.” Do not pray? Did I not hear a whisper from your nurse when you were sick? She said you were a wonderful saint when you had the fever. You do not pray? No, but when things do not go quite well in business, you would to God that they would go better and you do, sometimes, cry out to Him a kind of prayer which He cannot accept but which is still enough to show that there is an instinct in man that teaches him to pray!

I believe that even as birds build their nests without any teaching, so men use prayer in the form of it (I do not mean spiritual prayer)—I say, men use prayer from the very instinct of nature! There is something in man which makes him a praying animal. He cannot help it. He is obliged to do it. He laughs at himself when he is on the dry land. But he prays when he is on the sea and in a storm! He may not pray when he is well, but when he is sick, he prays as fast as anybody. He would not pray when he is rich, but when he is poor, he then prays strongly enough! He knows God hears prayer and he knows that men should pray—but there is no disputing with him—if he dares to deny his own conscience, he is incapable of reasoning—he is beyond the pale of morality and, therefore, we dare not try to influence him by reasoning. We may and hope we can use other means with him, but not that which compliments him by allowing him to answer! O saints of God, whatever you can give up, you can never give up this Truth of God—that He hears prayer! If you did disbelieve it today, you would have to believe it again tomorrow, for you would have such another proof of it through some other trouble that would roll over your head that you would be obliged to feel, if you were not obliged to say, “Verily, God hears and answers prayer.”

Prayer, then, is the prelude of mercy, for very often it is the cause of the blessing. That is to say, it is a part cause. The mercy of God being the great first cause, prayer is often the secondary agency whereby the blessing is brought down.

II. And now I am going to try to show you, in the second place, WHY IT IS THAT GOD IS PLEASED TO MAKE PRAYER THE TRUMPETER OF MERCY, OR THE FORERUNNER OF IT.

1. I think it is, in the first place, because God loves that man should have some reason for having a connection with Him. Says God, “My creatures will shun Me, even My own people will too little seek Me—they will flee from Me instead of coming to Me. What shall I do? I intend to bless them—shall I lay the blessings at their doors so that when they open them in the morning they may find them there, unasked and unsought? Yes,” says God, “many mercies I will do so with. I will give them much that they need without their seeking for it. But in order that they may not wholly forget Me, there are some mercies that I will not put at their doors. I will make them come to My house after them. I love My children to visit Me,” says the Heavenly Father, “I love to see them in My courts, I delight to hear their voices and to see their faces. They will not come to see Me if I give them all they need. I will keep them sometimes, without, and then they will come to Me and ask—and I shall have the pleasure of seeing them and they will have the profit of entering into fellowship with Me.” It is as if some father should say to his son who is entirely dependent upon him, “I might give you a fortune at once, so that you might never have to come to me again. But, my Son, it delights me, it affords me pleasure to supply your needs. I like to know what it is you require so that I may oftentimes have to give you and so may frequently see your face. Now I shall give you only enough to serve you for such a time and if you need anything, you must come to my house for it. O, my Son, I do this because I desire to see you often! I desire to have many opportunities of showing how much I love you.” So does God say to His children, “I do not give you all at once. I give all to you in the promise, but if you want to have it in the detail, you must come to Me to ask Me for it—so shall you see My face and so shall you have a reason for often coming to My feet.”

2. But there is another reason. God would make prayer the preface to mercy because often prayer, itself, gives the mercy. You are full of fear and sorrow—you need comfort. God says, pray and you shall get it. And the reason is because prayer is of itself a comforting exercise. We are all aware that when we have any heavy news upon our minds, it often relieves us if we can tell a friend about it. Now there are some troubles we would not tell to others, for perhaps many minds could not sympathize with us—God has therefore provided prayer as a channel for the flow of grief! “Come,” He says, “your troubles may find vent here. Come, put them into My ear—pour out your heart before Me and so will you prevent its bursting. If you must weep, come and weep at My Mercy Seat. If you must cry, come and cry in the closet and I will hear you.” And how often have you and I tried that? We have been on our knees, overwhelmed with sorrow, and we have risen up and said, “Ah, I can meet it all now!”—

*“Now I can say my God is mine—  
Now I can all my joys resign,  
Can tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good or great.”*

Prayer, itself, sometimes gives the mercy.

Take another case. You are in difficulty, you don’t know which way to go, nor how to act. God has said that He will direct His people. You go forth in prayer and pray to God to direct you. Are you aware that your very prayer will frequently, of itself, furnish you with the answer? While the mind is absorbed in thinking over the matter and in praying concerning the matter, it is just in the likeliest state to suggest to itself the course which is proper. For while, in prayer, I am spreading all the circumstances before God, I am like a warrior surveying the battlefield— and when I rise, I know the state of affairs and know how to act. Often, thus, you see, prayer gives the very thing we ask for in itself! Often when I have had a passage of Scripture that I cannot understand, I am in the habit of spreading the Bible before me. And if I have looked at all the commentators and they do not seem to agree, I have spread the Bible on my chair, kneeled down, put my finger upon the passage and sought God’s instruction. I have thought that when I have risen from my knees, I understood it far better than before. I believe that the very exercise of prayer did, of itself, bring the answer, to a great degree, for the mind being occupied upon it and the heart being exercised with it, the whole man was in the most excellent position for truly understanding it! John Bunyan said, “The Truths of God that I know best, I have learned on my knees.” And he said again, “I never know a thing well till it is burned into my heart by prayer.” Now that is, in a great measure, through the agency of God’s Holy Spirit, but I think that it may also, in some measure, be accounted for by the fact that prayer exercises the mind upon the thing and then the mind is led by an insensible process to lay hold upon the right result! Prayer, then is a suitable prelude to the blessing because it often carries the blessing in itself.

3. But again, it seems but right and just and appropriate that prayer should go before the blessing because in prayer there is a sense of need. I cannot as a man distribute assistance to those who do not represent their case to me as being destitute and sick. I cannot suppose that the physician will trouble himself to leave his own house to go into the house of one that is ill unless the need has been specified to him and unless he has been informed that the case requires his assistance. Nor can we expect of God that He will wait upon His own people unless His own people should first state their need to Him—shall feel their need and come before Him crying for a blessing! A sense of need is a Divine gift—prayer fosters it and is, therefore, highly beneficial.

4. And yet again, prayer before the blessing serves to show us the value of it. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we would think them common things. But prayer makes the common pebbles of God’s temporal bounties more precious than diamonds! And in spiritual prayer, the cut diamond glistens more. The thing was precious, but I did not know its preciousness till I had sought for it and sought it long. After a long chase, the hunter prizes the animal because he has set his heart upon it and is determined to have it. And yet more truly, after a long hunger, he that eats finds more relish in his food. So prayer does sweeten the mercy. Prayer teaches us its preciousness. It is the reading over of the will, the schedule, the account—before the estate and the properties are themselves transferred. We know the value of the purchase by reading over the will of it in prayer and when we have groaned out our own expression of its peerless price, then it is that God bestows the benediction upon us! Prayer, therefore, goes before the blessing because it shows us the value of it.

But doubtless, even reason, itself, suggests that it is but natural that God, the All-Good, should give His favors to those who ask. It seems but right that He should expect of us that we should first ask at His hands and then He will bestow. It is goodness great enough that His hand is ready to open—surely it is but little that He should say to His people, “For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”

III. Let me close BY STIRRING YOU UP TO USE THE HOLY ART OF PRAYER AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING THE BLESSING. Do you demand of me, “and for what shall we pray?” The answer is upon my tongue. Pray for yourselves, pray for your families, pray for the Churches, pray for the one great Kingdom of our Lord on earth.

Pray for yourselves. Surely you will never lack some subject for intercession! So broad are your needs, so deep are your necessities that until you are in Heaven you will always find room for prayer! Do you need nothing? Then I fear you do not know yourself. Have you no mercy to ask of God? Then I fear you have never had mercies of Him and are yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” If you are a child of God, your needs will be as numerous as your moments and you will need to have as many prayers as there are hours! Pray that you may be holy, humble, zealous and patient. Pray that you may have communion with Christ and enter into the banqueting house of His love. Pray for yourself—that you may be an example unto others—that you may honor God, here, and inherit His Kingdom hereafter.

In the next place, pray for your families. For your children. If they are pious, you can still pray for them that their piety may be real, that they may be upheld in their profession. And if they are ungodly, you have a whole fountain of arguments for prayer. So long as you have a child unpardoned, pray for him! So long as you have a child alive that is saved, pray for him, that he may be kept. You have enough reason to pray for those who have proceeded from your own loins, but if you have no cause to do that, pray for your servants. Will you not stoop to that? Then surely you have not stooped to be saved, for he that is saved knows how to pray for all. Pray for your servants—that they may serve God—that their life in your house may be of use to them. That is an ill house where the servants are not prayed for. I should not like to be waited upon by one for whom I could not pray! Perhaps the day when this world shall perish will be the day unbrightened by a prayer. And perhaps the day when a great misdeed was done by some man was the day when his friends left off praying for him. Pray for your households!

And then pray for the Church. Let the minister have a place in your heart. Mention his name at your family altar and in your closet. You expect him to come before you, day after day, to teach you the things of the Kingdom. You expect him to exhort and stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. If he is a true minister, there will be work to be done in this matter. He cannot write his sermon and read it to you. He does not believe Christ said, “Go and read the Gospel to every creature.” Do you know the cares of a minister? Do you know the trouble he has with his own Church—how the erring ones grieve him, how even the right ones vex his spirit by their infirmities—how, when the Church is large, there will always be some great trouble in the hearts of some of his people? And he is the reservoir of all—they come to him with all their grief! He is to “weep with them who weep.” And in the pulpit what is his work? God is my witness, I scarcely ever prepare for my pulpit with pleasure—study for the pulpit is, to me, the most irksome work in the world! I have never come into this house, that I know of, with a smile upon my heart. I may have sometimes gone out with one, but never have I had one when I entered. Preach, preach, twice a day I can and will do. But still there is a travailing in preparation for it and even the utterance is not always accompanied with joy and gladness. God knows that if it were not for the good that we trust is to be accomplished by the preaching of the Word, it is no happiness to a man’s life to be well known. It robs him of all comfort to be from morning to night sought for labor, to have no rest for the sole of his feet or for his brain—to be a great religious hack—to bear every burden—to have people asking, as they do in the country, when they need to get into a cart, “Will it hold it?”—never thinking whether the horse can drag it. To have them asking, “Will you preach at such a place? You are preaching twice, couldn’t you manage to get to such a place and preach again?” Everyone else has a constitution—the minister has none—until he kills himself and is condemned as imprudent! If you are determined to do your duty in that place to which God has called you, you need the prayers of your people that you may be able to do the work and you will need their abundant prayers that you may be sustained in it! I bless God that I have a valiant corps of men and women who day without night besiege God’s Throne on my behalf! I would speak to you again, my Brothers and Sisters, and beseech you, by our loving days that are past, by all the hard fighting that we have had side by side with each other, not to cease to pray now! The time was when in hours of trouble you and I have bent our knees together in God’s House and we have prayed to God that He would give us a blessing. You remember how great and sore troubles did roll over our head—how men did ride over us. We went through fire and through water and now God has brought us into a large place and so multiplied us—let us not cease to pray! Let us still cry out unto the living God that He may give us a blessing! Oh, may God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day and I will cease to preach. Let me know when you intend to cease your prayers and I shall cry, “O my God, give me this day my tomb and let me slumber in the dust.”

And lastly, let me bid you pray for the Church at large. This is a happy time we live in. A certain race of croaking souls, who are never pleased with anything, are always crying out about the badness of the times. They cry, “Oh, for the good old times!” Why, these are the good old times! Time never was so old as it is now! These are the best times! I think that many an old Puritan would jump out of his grave if he knew what was going on now. If they could have been told of the great movement at Exeter Hall—there is many a man among them who once fought against the Church of England—who would lift his hand to Heaven and cry, “My God, I bless You that I see such a day as this!” In these times there is a breaking down of many of the barriers. The bigots are afraid. They are crying out most desperately because they think God’s people will soon love each other too well. They are afraid that the trade of persecution will soon be done with, if we begin to be more and more united. So they are making an outcry and saying, “These are not good times.” But true lovers of God will say they have not lived in better days than these! And they all hopefully look for still greater things. Unless you professors of religion are eminently in earnest prayer, you will disgrace yourselves by neglecting the finest opportunity that men ever had! I think that your fathers who lived in days when great men were upon earth, who preached with much power—I think if they had not prayed, they would have been as unfaithful as you will be—for now the good ship floats upon a flood tide— sleep now and you will not cross the bar at the harbor’s mouth! Never did the sun of prosperity seem to you much more fully on the Church during the last 100 years than now. Now is your time—neglect not to sow your seed in this good time of seed-sowing! Neglect not to reap your harvest in these good days when it is ripe! For darker days may come and those of peril, when God shall say, “Because they would not cry to Me, when I stretched out My hands to bless them, therefore will I put away My hands and will no more bless them, until again they shall seek Me.” And now to close. I have a young man here who has been lately converted. His parents cannot stand him. They entertain the strongest opposition to him and they threaten him that if he does not leave off praying, they will turn him out of doors. Young man, I have a little story to tell you! There was once a young man in your position—he had begun to pray and his father knew it. He said to him, “John, you know I am an enemy to religion and prayer is a thing that shall never be offered in my house.” Still the young man continued in earnest supplication. “Well,” said the father, one day, in a hot passion, “you must give up either God or me! I solemnly swear that you shall never darken the threshold of my door again unless you decide that you will give up praying. I give you till tomorrow morning to choose.” The night was spent in prayer by the young disciple. He rose in the morning, sad to be cast away by his father, but resolute in spirit, that come what might, he would serve his God. The father abruptly accosted him—“Well, what is the answer?” “Father,” he said, “I cannot violate my conscience, I cannot forsake my God.” “Leave immediately,” said his father. And the mother stood there. The father’s hard spirit had made hers hard, too, and though she might have wept, she concealed her tears. “Leave immediately” he said. Stepping outside the threshold, the young man said, “I wish you would grant me one request before I go. And if you grant me that, I will never trouble you again.” “Well,” said the father, “you shall have anything you like, but mark me, you go after you have had that. You shall never have anything again.” “It is,” said the son, “that you and my mother would kneel down and let me pray for you before I go.” Well, they could hardly object to it. The young man was on his knees in a moment and began to pray with such unction and power, with such evident love to their souls, with such true and Divine earnestness that they both fell flat on the ground and when the son rose there they were. And the father said, “You need not go, John. Come and stay. Come and stay.” And it was not long before not only he, but the whole of them began to pray and they were united to a Christian Church.

So, do not give up! Persevere kindly but firmly. It may be that God shall enable you not only to have your own souls saved but to be the means of bringing your persecuting parents to the foot of the Cross. That such may be the case is our earnest prayer. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1304 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ENQUIRE OF THE LORD  
NO. 1304

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

**“Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be  
filled with flocks of men: and they  
shall know that I am the Lord.”  
Ezekiel 36:37, 38.**

MULTIPLICATION is a very ancient form of blessing. The first benediction pronounced upon man was of this sort, for we read in the first chapter of Genesis, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” That same blessing was pronounced, again, when God accepted His servant Noah, and entered into covenant with him. We read in Genesis 9:1 that “God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” This also constituted a main part of the blessing promised to faithful Abraham. In Genesis 22:17, and many other places, we read to this effect, “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

This was the blessing of God’s chosen people, a blessing which all the malice of Pharaoh could not turn aside, for the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more they multiplied. David, in the 107th Psalm uses the expression, “He blesses them, also, so that they are multiplied greatly” (v. 38), so that, clearly, increase of numbers in families and nations was anciently regarded as a token of Divine favor. In a spiritual sense this is the blessing of the Church of God. When the Church is visited by the power of the Holy Spirit, she is increased on every side. When a Church, in the midst of a vast population, remains stationary in numbers, or even becomes smaller, no man can see in such a condition the marks of God’s blessing. Certainly it would be a novel sort of benediction, for the first blessing, the blessing of Pentecost, resulted in 3,000 being added to the Church in one day! And we find afterwards that, “The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the Churches, “walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied.” Ever since those early days, when the Lord has been with His people, they have increased in numbers. Their children have sprung up as among the grass and as willows by the water courses. When they have been “diminished and brought low,” it has been because they have departed from the Truth of God or lost their first love. The result is the clearness of Gospel testimony has been dimmed, spirituality has been at a low ebb, the Holy

Spirit has been despised and He has suspended His operations—and the Church has dwindled down till she has had little more than a name to live. But as soon as the Lord has returned to her, she has become a fruitful mother and her children have cried out, “the place is too strait for us, give place to us that we may dwell.”

When the Lord has sent forth His power with the preaching of the Gospel, converts have been as innumerable as the drops of the dew and as the sands upon the seashore! It is plain that one of the blessings which we, as a Church, should seek with all our hearts is that of continual increase. The entire Church of God should look for the daily multiplication of the spiritual seed. We have the promise of it in the text, but there is appended to it this condition, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.” Every true Christian desires to see the Church increase. At any rate, I should pity the man who thinks himself a Christian and yet has no such wish.

“Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory,” is the natural aspiration of every child of God! And if any man has persuaded himself that he is a child of God and yet does not desire to see the Glory of the Lord made manifest by the conversion of multitudes, I pity the condition of his heart and of his understanding. I trust we all feel the missionary spirit. I trust we all long to see the kingdom of the Lord come and to see the converts in Zion multiplied. But God has appended to the granting of our desire that we should pray for it—we must plead and enquire—or else the increase will be withheld. Why has the Lord thus made prayer the necessary prelude to blessing?

He has done so in great mercy to our souls. The Lord knows how beneficial it is to us to be much in prayer and, therefore, He makes it easy for us to draw near to Him. He affords us a multitude of reasons for approaching the Mercy Seat and gives us errands which may be used as arguments for frequent petitioning. When one knocks at a man’s door it is a good thing to have some business to do, for then one knocks boldly. If the porter opens and enquires, “Why did you come here?” we can reply, “Good Sir, I came on an important errand,” and so we are bold to remain at the door.

Now, as the Lord loves to commune with His people, He takes care to give them errands upon which they must come to Him. We need never be afraid that we shall be interrogated at the gate of Mercy and this stern question put, “What are you doing here?” for we have always some reason for praying! Indeed, every promise is turned into a reason for prayer, because the promise is not to be granted to us till we have pleaded it at the Mercy Seat! Moreover, if I may say so, God has, in mercy, compelled us to prayer by making the pleading necessary for the blessing. We must pray! We are unblessed unless we pray and, therefore, our necessities drive us to the Mercy Seat. Though we may be so low in Grace and so unspiritual that we may feel little positive enjoyment, for the moment, in prayer, yet pray we must. A sacred compulsion lies upon us arising from our vast necessities. We thank God, then, that He gives us reasons for coming, yes, lays a stress upon us so that we are compelled to draw near unto Him.

Now, let the desire that the Church should be increased, which, as I have already said, dwells in the bosom of every child of God, act as a mighty impulse to drive us to earnest, prevailing prayer! For if we are driven to this, the Church shall be multiplied exceedingly. This is the object of the discourse of this morning. O Spirit of Grace and supplications, be now upon us that we may be saturated with the spirit of prayer! I shall thus speak upon the text—Why should we awaken ourselves to the enquiry of which the text speaks? “For this will I be enquired of.” Next, how should such a duty as this be performed? The text will afford us a guide. And, thirdly, on what ground can any Christian be excused from the duty of uniting with his Brothers and Sisters in enquiring at the hand of the Lord for a blessing?

I. WHY SHOULD WE AWAKEN OURSELVES TO THIS ENQUIRY AT THE HANDS OF THE LORD? I do not put this question to you because I think that many of you need instruction as to the necessity for prayer, but because it is good to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance upon this point. The first reason I shall give is this, because it is a great privilege to be allowed to enquire at the hands of the Lord. You will see this very vividly if you turn to the 20th chapter of this prophecy and read the third verse, “Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God, Are you come to enquire of Me? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you.”

Look, again, at the 31st verse of the same chapter, “For when you offer your gifts, when you make your sons to pass through the fire, you pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you.” What a solemn curse, to be denied an audience with God! How terrible a punishment it is when God shuts the gates of prayer and declares, “I will not be enquired of by you: when you spread forth your hands I will hide My face from you; yes, when you make many prayers I will not hear.” A people may get into such a condition of sin, such a willful state of alienation from God and disobedience to His commands, that He may say, “I will not be enquired of by you.”

Now, suppose for a moment that it were my painful duty to stand here and say, “Brothers and Sisters, it is of no use our praying. The Mercy Seat has been abolished! God, in His anger, has bid the Mediator lay aside His office and supplication is no longer to be heard.” What wringing of hands, what weeping of hearts as well as eyes if it were, indeed, true that prayer was denied to the people of God! It was a fair token for good when Ezekiel was bid to say that God had now taken away the curse from His people. And though He had said earlier, “I will not be enquired of by you,” yet now, under the Covenant of Grace, having forgiven their sins, He mercifully proclaimed, “Thus says the Lord, For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”

As you would be struck with horror if you were forbidden to pray, so I beseech you use the privilege of prayer while you may. If only some half dozen men had permission to speak into the ear of God, how you would

venerate them! How you would wish to be one of their number! If a small chosen band were set apart who, alone, might ask in faith—and to whom, alone, the promise would be fulfilled, “Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you”—how would you envy them their high privilege! Since, then, at this time you are all, if you are the people of God, made to be a royal priesthood and the Mercy Seat is open to every Believer, take care that you do not despise your birthright. To each one of you the promise is given, “He that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” Is not this sufficient reason why we should awake ourselves to use the privilege which the Lord accords us?

Secondly, prayer is also to be looked upon as a precious gift of the Spirit of God as well as a great privilege. Wherever the spirit of prayer exists, it is worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit Himself. And when the text says, “For this will I be enquired of,” it is a promise that men shall enquire! It is by virtue of Covenant promises and Covenant Grace that men are made to pray, for the Lord has said, “I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of Grace and of supplications.”

Every child of God who understands anything knows that real prayer is “the breath of God in man returning from where it came.” It first comes from God, and then it goes back to God. The Spirit knows what the mind of God is and He writes the mind of God upon our mind. And thus the desire of the Believer is the transcript of the decree of God and, therefore, the success of prayer. Well, now, Brothers and Sisters, if united, earnest, hearty enquiry of the Lord is a Covenant gift and a work of the Spirit, we dare not despise it, but we should earnestly seek after it! When we obtain a measure of prayerfulness, we ought to cultivate it and seek to make it grow abundantly. Covenant gifts are always to be earnestly coveted, for they are “the best gifts.”

Remember what blood it was which sealed that Covenant and made it sure to all the elect! You cannot look upon one item of the inheritance which the Covenant entails upon the saints without feeling that it cost the Redeemer His heart’s blood. Forsake not, then, the assembling of yourselves together in prayer as the manner of some is! Neither neglect the Mercy Seat in private, nor fail to enquire at the Lord’s hand, for supplication is a Covenant gift and must not be despised by any heir of Heaven. These are two forcible arguments, but here is another.

In the third place we must pray because it is a necessary work in order to obtain the blessing. The Church of God is to be multiplied, but, “Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of.” Remember that this is virtually written at the bottom of every promise. God said, “I will do this or that,” but it is understood that for this He will be enquired of. Doubtless we receive many unasked for favors, but the rule of the kingdom is, “He that asks, receives.” This rule applies even to the King of the kingdom, Himself—“Ask of Me,” said God to His own Son, “and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” I must, then, Brothers and Sisters, exhort you to be much in enquiring at the Lord’s hands, because countless are suspended upon the exercise of prayer.

Imagine, for a moment, that these blessings should not come. Suppose that month after month the particular blessing of the text should be withheld. Into what a state of mind would every earnest Christian be brought! No increase—we come to the Communion Table but report no additions. No need to hold Church meetings, for there are no confessions of faith to be heard and no converts are coming forward to tell of the power of Divine Love! Suppose that such a state of stagnation should continue month after month with us!

And why shouldn’t it ? It has done so with many others. Then as one after another of the ripe children of God went to Heaven, there would be gaps in the Church roll and none to replace them. There would be none to be baptized for the dead—none to stand in those places in the ranks from which the pious dead have been removed. May these eyes never look on such a calamity! May this tongue be spending its strength among the choirs above long before such a night shall settle down! You may well write, “Ichabod,” across the forefront of this House of Prayer whenever that shall be, for the glory will have departed!

Up to this moment we have never had to sigh and cry because the Lord has left us without an increase. But only suppose that the benediction should be withdrawn. You can cause it to be withdrawn, if you will, by ceasing prayer. Only let the cry which goes up to God continually from thousands of earnest hearts cease for a while and it will be a token that the blessing has also ceased! Only as long as there shall be this enquiring at the hand of the Lord can we expect that He will do as He has done, namely, multiply us with men as with a flock. Enquire, therefore, eagerly, because the blessing is suspended on it.

Next, we ought to have much of this enquiry because it is a business which is, above all others, remunerative. Look at the text—“I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.” That is a beautiful idea of a multitude. You have, perhaps, seen an immense flock, a teeming concourse of congregated life. Such shall the increase of the Church be! But then it is added, to enhance the blessing, “As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.” This, to the Jewish mind, conveyed a great idea of numbers!

At the three great feasts of Pentecost, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites were accustomed to offer sacrifices in vast numbers and, therefore, lambs and sheep were brought into Jerusalem in such enormous numbers that without a book before me, I should not like to mention the figures which have been put down by Josephus and others. We read of Solomon’s offering, “an hundred and twenty thousand sheep.” And of 17,000 sheep offered in a single day in Hezekiah’s time! We may, therefore, imagine what the need was in our Savior’s day that there should be a sheep market by the Pool of Bethesda, for there would be need of immense pens for such numerous flocks.

Then might the city be described in the language of Isaiah when he said, “All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister onto you; they shall come up with acceptance upon My altar.” Now, said the Lord, I will not only multiply you as the sheep are multiplied upon Sharon and Carmel, but as the flocks in Jerusalem when they come together from every quarter on solemn feast days, by hundreds and by thousands! You shall ask, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” The Lord will multiply the people beyond all count!

There is this additional beauty about the promise, that the sheep which were brought to Jerusalem on the solemn feasts were not only numerous, but they were the best sheep in the land because no animal could be offered to God which had any blemish. The priests were peculiarly careful to select the lambs for the Passover and the sheep for the sacrifice. And they were always the pick of the flock, the choice sheep of all the flocks of Palestine. What a mercy when the Lord multiplies the Church with a holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast days! Then, not only were they the choice of the flock, but they were all consecrated to God, for they were brought to Jerusalem, on purpose, to be sacrificed. O happy Church which receives a host of self-sacrificing members who do not come to the Church in name, only, but to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God—to place body, soul and spirit at the feet of Jesus, and say, “Yours are we, Son of David, and all that we have.”

See, then, what can be had by enquiring for it! “For this will I be enquired of.” And what is the, “this,” which is spoken of? Why that God will give us a numerous people, a choice people, His own elect and they shall all be consecrated unto Himself! They shall give themselves, first, to the Lord, and afterwards to us by the Word of God. This is to be had by praying for it! Ah, my Lord, how foolish are we not to pray more! Your Church has her societies, her agencies and so on, and she has, perhaps, looked to these more than to You. But You are our battle-ax and weapons of war! You can multiply the people and increase the joy! You can fill the quiver of the Church with spiritual children and thus make her blessed! To You, only, can we look for this favor! My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. The Lord is a Man of war, the Lord is His name! His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. Therefore, O house of Israel, enquire at the hands of the Lord and a boundless blessing shall come!

I don’t think I need to say that it is necessary for us to pray, because the results of prayer, as I have already described them, are such as greatly glorify God. Kindly read the last sentence of the text. It is important—“And they shall know that I am the Lord.” When a Church is largely increased with choice persons thoroughly consecrated, then the Church knows, anew, that there is a God in Israel! The world, also, opens its eyes with wonder and admits that there is something in prayer, after all! When the kingdom of God is largely increased in answer to prayer, there is a wonderful power abroad to answer the arguments of skeptics and to silence the ribaldry of ungodly tongues. “This is the finger of God,” they say. How bitterly they ridiculed Whitefield and Wesley when first they begun to preach the blessed Gospel. They were fanatics and enthusiasts, disturbing the peace of the land! They were Jesuits, Jacobites and I do not know what they were not—but everything conceivable that is bad! But when the Lord put power into these men and multiplied their adherents by tens of thousands, then presently the world changed its tune and dreaded and feared those whom they had formerly despised. So it is now! If we do not pray, if we grow cold in heart and the blessing is withdrawn, then the worldly wise begin to say, “It is an old, effete doctrine, proclaimed by the last of the Puritans—it is dying out.”

But as soon as ever they see God blessing us, the multitudes coming together and the Church growing to be a power in the land, they like it none the better, but they are obliged to respect it! Oh, that the Lord would stir you up as a Church to pray and do the same with all the Churches of the land! This would smite His enemies upon the cheekbone and silence His adversaries! This would baffle both the scorner, infidel, the harlot, ritualism and make both skepticism and superstition acknowledge that in the grand old Gospel of Jesus there still resides the Omnipotence of the Lord God.

II. Secondly, let us answer the question—HOW SHOULD THIS DUTY BE PERFORMED? First, it should be by the entire body of the Church. Let us turn to our Bibles and read the text again—“For this will I be enquired of by”—By the ministers? By the elders? By the little number of good people who always come together to pray? Look! Look carefully! “By the house of Israel.” That is by the whole company of the Lord’s people! To obtain a great increase there must be unanimous prayer—prayer from the whole house of Israel! Everyone must join without exception.

Where two or three are met together there will be an answer of peace. The prayer of one prevails. But if ever the house of Israel, the whole company of the faithful, shall get together in prayer, ah, then we shall see the multiplication of saints as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feasts! But it will not be till then. When Israel was defeated at Ai, one of the reasons of their failure was that there was an abominable thing in the tent of Achan. But another cause of defeat was this, that they said, “Let not all the people labor there.” A part of the people were to go and take Ai and the rest were to lie at ease. The Church of God will always have ill times so long as a few people are left to do what should be done by all the redeemed. The whole house of Israel must besiege Ai, if Ai is to be taken! The whole army of the living God must bend the knees together and plead with God if any great victory is to be achieved.

Next, the successful way to enquire of the Lord is for the Church to take personal interest in the matter. “Thus said the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” When the people feel that the conversion of souls is their own personal affair. When the Sunday school teachers feel that the multiplication of the Church should be something done by them. And when each Christian laborer feels that he has a personal interest in the saving of souls, then will the Lord’s work be done on a great scale! Brothers and Sisters, when the case of poor sinners becomes our case and our heart cries, “I will break unless

those souls are saved,” then we are sure to succeed! If the sinner will not repent, let us break our hearts about him. Let us go and tell the Lord his sins and mourn over them as if they were our own!

If men will not believe, let us, by faith, bring them before God and plead His promise for them. If we cannot get them to pray, let us pray for them and intercede on their behalf—and in answer to our repentance they shall be made to repent! In answer to our faith they shall be led to believe! And in reply to our prayers they shall be moved to pray! The Lord says He will do it, but He will have us seek it as a personal favor, that thus our souls may be made earnest in His cause. The blessing will come, in the third place, to the prayer of a dependent Church. See how it is put—“I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” That is to say, they will not dream of being able to do it for themselves, but will apply to God for it.

Christian men should never speak of getting up a revival. Where are you going to get it up from? I do not know any place from which you can get it up except a place which it is better to have no connection with. We must bring a revival down if it is to be worth having! We must enquire of the Lord to do it for us. Too often the temptation is to enquire for an eminent revivalist, or ask whether a great preacher could not be induced to come. Now, I do not object to inviting soul-winning preachers, or to any other plans of usefulness. But our main business is to enquire of the Lord, for, after all, He, alone, can give the increase!

Suppose we collect a crowd of people, what of that? It is a fine thing to put in the papers, but what is the good of it, if it ends there? Suppose we have large services and fierce excitement—and the whole thing ends in a pack of moonshine—where is the glory to God? On the contrary, His name is dishonored and His Church is discouraged from making special attempts. But when the holy work begins in prayer, continues in prayer and everything is confessedly dependent upon the power of God, then the blessing is, indeed, worth having! Enquire of the Lord to multiply you and you will be multiplied! We must wait upon God, conscious that we can do nothing of ourselves—and we must look to the Holy Spirit as the only power for the conversion of souls. If we pray in this dependent way we shall obtain an overflowing answer.

Again, the way to obtain the promised blessing is that the prayer must be offered by an anxious, observant, enterprising Church. The expression used, “I will be enquired of,” implies that the people must think and ask questions, must argue and plead with God. It is well to ask Him why He has not given the blessing and to urge strong reasons why He should now do so. We should quote His promises to Him, tell Him of our great need— and then come back, again, to asking, enquiring and pleading our cause. Such a pleading Church will win a blessing beyond all doubt! It must be a Church which remembers the waste places. The text puts it in the promise and it must not be forgotten in the prayer—“The waste cities shall be filled with flocks of men.”

A Church which anxiously remembers the departments of service which are not succeeding. A Church which casts a friendly eye over other Churches which may be failing and takes careful notice of those places where the Spirit of God does not seem to be at work—and mentions all those in prayer—is the Church to which the promise is made. I pray the Lord to give you, dear Brothers and Sisters, heartbreak over sinners whose hearts do not break. I pray He will give you painful anxiety for those who are not anxious. In fact, may God make all the members of this Church into anxious enquirers. When the saved ones are anxious enquirers, themselves, there will be plenty of anxious enquirers brought from the world! The way to have enquiring sinners is for us to become enquiring saints! When the saints enquire of the Lord, the sinners will ask their way to Zion with their faces turned there! Every Prayer Meeting ought, as a matter of fact, to be an enquirers’ meeting, where true hearts behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in His temple.

If we are to obtain the blessing in answer to prayer, that prayer must be offered by a believing Church. Oh that we did believe God’s promise! The Lord says, “I will be enquired of, to do it for them.” But unbelieving enquiries are only a mockery of God! How few really believe in prayer! I was reading, the other day, that the Chinese converts of the Inland Mission have shown a feature of piety which is not very common. When they learned that God would hear prayer, they wanted to be always praying, because, they said, “If it is so, that the great God hears prayer, let us ask for a great deal.”

We do not wonder, therefore, that they have received answers so remarkable to their believing prayers that the missionary scarcely cares to narrate them, lest to unbelievers they should seem to be as idle tales! Indeed, his fears are not at all unreasonable, for in other cases the written lives of praying men have been wretchedly mistrusted. Huntingdon’s “Bank of Faith” has been called a bank of nonsense, yet I believe him to have been a thoroughly honest recorder of facts and quite incapable of a lie. When they read the story of Sammy Hick and his turning the wind by prayer, most persons are dubious, but why?

Bread was needed for a religious meeting and no flour could be found, for the mill could not go without wind. Hick took his bag of corn to the miller and bade him grind it. “But there is no wind, Sammy,” said the miller. “Never mind, there will be if you only put the corn into the hopper.” It was put in, the wind ground the wheat and then it ceased. “Ah,” people say, “that is a Methodist story.” Yes, it is, and there are many others of the same kind! And some of us have had them happen to ourselves. Answers to prayer do not, now, appear to us to be contrary to the laws of Nature—it seems to us to be the greatest of all the laws of Nature that the Lord must keep His promises and hear His people’s prayers! Gravitation and other laws may be suspended, but this cannot be!

“Oh,” says one, “I cannot believe that.” No, and so your prayers are not heard! You must have faith, for if faith is absent, you lack the very backbone and soul of prayer. Oh, for mighty faith! If we once behold a Church filled with real active faith, exercised in believing prayer to the living God, the God of Israel, we shall see the Churches multiplied with men as with

a flock!  
III. We are now to seek comfort for you who do not come to Prayer  
Meetings, or otherwise wrestle in prayer. ON WHAT GROUND CAN ANYBODY BE EXCUSED FROM THE DUTY OF PRAYER? Answer—On no  
ground whatever! You cannot be excused on the ground of common humanity for if it is so that God will save sinners in answer to prayer, and I  
do not pray, what am I? Souls dying, perishing, sinking to Hell while the  
ordained machinery for salvation is prayer and the preaching of the  
Word—and if I don’t pray, what am I? Surely the milk of human kindness  
has been drained from my breast and I have ceased to be human! And if  
so, it is idle to talk of communion with the Divine. He who has no pity on  
a wounded man and would not seek to relieve the hunger of one expiring  
of need is a monster! He who has no pity on souls who are sinking into  
everlasting fire, what is he? Let him answer for himself.  
Next, can any excuse be found in Christianity for neglect of prayer? I  
answer, there is none to be found in Christianity anymore than in humanity, for if Christ has saved us, He has given us His Spirit—“If any man has  
not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” And who has the Spirit of  
Christ? Is it he who looked upon Jerusalem and said, “I believe that the  
city is given up, predestinated to be destroyed,” and then coolly went on  
his way? No, not he! He believed in predestination, but that Truth of God  
never chilled his heart. He wept over Jerusalem, and said, “O Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a  
hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not.”— *“Did Christ over sinners weep,  
And shall our cheeks be dry?”*  
Shall there be no prayer in our hearts when God has appointed prayer  
to be the channel of blessing to sinners as well as to ourselves? Then how  
can we say that we are Christians? In God’s name, how can we make a  
profession of Christianity if our hearts do not ascend in mighty prayer to  
God for a blessing on the sons of men? But perhaps an excuse is found in  
the fact that the Christian does not feel that his prayer is of very much  
consequence, for his heart is in a barren state. Ah, well, this is no excuse,  
but an aggravation of the sin! My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you feel  
you cannot pray, you ought to pray twice as much as anybody else!  
Whenever your mind falls into a condition in which it is indisposed for  
prayer, that condition should serve as a danger signal—something is very  
much amiss!  
At such a time there should be a double calling upon God that the  
Spirit of prayer may be vouchsafed. I do charge you, professing Christians, not to restrain prayer to God for a blessing, for, if you do, you hurt  
all the rest of the Brethren! Get a bit of dead bone into your body and it  
harms, first, the member in which it is placed and subsequently the whole  
body. From head to foot the whole system is worse off because of the  
fragment of dead matter which is present in the body. So if there is a  
prayerless professor among us, he is an injury to the entire company!  
Some of you are the baggage of the army and hinder its marches and its fighting! We have a great army here and if you were all able-bodied men and would march on to the fight, we would see great victories! But we have to carry our diseased ones in ambulances and half the time of the pastor and Church officers has to be taken up in looking after the inefficient soldiers who are fit only for the hospital “Who do you mean?” asks one. You, my Friend—very likely you! Your own conscience shall decide to  
whom it refers!  
Now, surely we ought to be much in prayer, because, after all, we owe a  
great deal to prayer. Those who were in Christ before me, prayed for me.  
Should I not pray for others? By a mother’s prayers, some of you, when  
you were girls, were brought to Christ. Will you not pay back the debt to  
your mother by praying for your own children? By a father’s prayers,  
young man, you were brought to the Savior’s feet—now pray for those who  
are younger than yourself—that they may be brought to Jesus, too. The  
treasury of the Church’s prayers has been expended upon us in bringing  
us to Christ’s feet. Let us now contribute to the common stock, casting in  
our prayers for the conversion of others! Common gratitude demands that  
we attend to this.  
I am afraid I shall also have to plead that I must suspect your soundness in the faith, Brothers and Sisters, if you do not join in prayer. I know  
some, who, if they are anything at all, they are sound in the faith. This is  
their beginning and their ending. I used to know, years ago, a few people  
who were sound all over and never cared whether souls were saved or not  
because they were so sound! That kind of soundness is empty, from which  
may the Lord deliver us! Correct opinions are a poor apology for heartlessness towards our fellow men. If we are orthodox, we believe that regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God. Then, dear Friends, the natural inference is that those of us who are regenerated should pray the Holy  
Spirit to regenerate others! If it is entirely His work and we cannot depend  
upon the preacher at all, we must invoke the Divine power! If you do not  
thus call in Divine energy, where is your soundness?  
I am sure that you desire to see souls saved, but if it is the Spirit’s work  
and you do not pray the Spirit to do that work, surely you do not believe  
your own doctrine! By your soundness in the faith, therefore, I would  
plead with you that you increase your earnestness in prayer. You may  
say, “Well, I think I may be excused,” but I must reply you cannot! “I am  
very sick,” says one. Ah, then you can lie in bed and pray! None of us can  
fully estimate the blessings which have come down on this Tabernacle in  
answer to the pleas of our friends who are constant invalids. I believe the  
Lord sets apart a certain section of the Church to keep up prayer through  
the night watches—and when you and I who are healthy are sound asleep,  
the watchers do not slumber, or keep silent—but either in praise or prayer  
they make the hours holy with their devout exercises. I consider that I  
sustain great losses when dear Christian men and women, who have for  
years sustained me by their prayers are taken home to Glory. Who will fill  
the gaps?  
“I am so poor,” says one. Well, you are not called upon to pay a shilling  
every time you pray to God! It does not matter how poor you are—your prayers are just as acceptable! Only remember, if you are so poor, you ought to pray all the more, because you cannot give your offering in the shape of gold. I should like you to say with the Apostle, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give you. My Master, I will be much in prayer.” “Ah,” says another, “but I have no talent.” That is another reason why you should pray more and not why you should be prayerless, because if you cannot contribute to the Church’s public service from lack of talent, you should the more zealously contribute to her strength by the private exercise of prayer and intercession—and thus make those strong who are  
better fit to go to the front.  
“Ah,” says one, “but I am just converted. I have hardly obtained peace,  
myself, how can I pray?” If you need an answer to that question, read the  
51st Psalm. David begins, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the  
multitude of Your tender mercies,” and so on. And he does not continue  
long before he cries, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; build the  
walls of Jerusalem!” He has hardly been washed, himself, from sin, before  
he begins to pray to be useful—“Then will I teach transgressors Your  
ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You.” You new converts are the  
very people to pray with power!  
So from my inmost soul, as if I were pleading for my life (and it lies  
nearer my health and continued life than some may imagine) I beg you to  
enquire of the Lord! In thus doing I am pleading for this Church’s long  
prosperity! I am pleading for the good of London! I am pleading for the  
benefit of the whole world! If you love the Lord Jesus, Brothers and Sisters, do enquire at the hands of the Lord concerning this great promise of  
an increase in the Church! Prove Him, now, and see if He does not pour  
out a blessing for you, yes, if He does not increase you with men as with a  
flock, as the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast  
days! God grant His blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Ezekiel 36:1-14; 24-38.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—145 (PART I), 985, 968.

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THE RESTORATION AND CONVERSION OF THE JEWS  
NO. 582

**PREACHED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, In aid of the Funds of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews.

**“The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold,  
there were very many in the open valley.  
And, lo, they were very dry. And He  
said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, You know. Again  
He said unto me, Prophesy upon these Bones  
and say unto them, O you dry bones, hear  
the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God  
unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you and will bring up flesh upon you  
and cover you with skin and put breath  
in you and you shall live. And you shall know  
that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was  
commanded: and as I prophesied, there was  
a noise and behold a shaking and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them  
and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, Son of man and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me and the breath came into them and they lived and stood up  
upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”  
Ezekiel 37:1-10.**

THIS vision has been used, from the time of Jerome onwards, as a description of the resurrection and certainly it may be so accommodated with much effect. What a vision of the great day the words picture before the mind’s eye! The great army of the quick, who once were dead, seem to start up as we read. Here, too, we have a very fit and appropriate question to be asked in a tomb—“Son of man, can these bones live?” Looking down into the dark grave, or watching the sexton as he throws up the moldering relics, once infused with life, well may unbelief suggest the enquiry—“Can these bones live?”

Faith cannot at all times give a more satisfactory answer than this—“O Lord God, You know.” But while this interpretation of the vision may be very proper as an accommodation, it must be quite evident to any thinking person that this is not the meaning of the passage. There is no allusion made by Ezekiel to the resurrection and such a topic would have been quite apart from the design of the Prophet’s speech. I believe he was no more thinking of the resurrection of the dead than of the building of St. Peter’s at Rome, or the emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers! That topic is altogether foreign to the subject at hand and could not by any possibility have crept into the Prophet’s mind.

He was talking about the people of Israel and prophesying concerning them. And evidently the vision, according to God’s own interpretation of it, was concerning them and them alone, for, “these bones are the whole house of Israel.” It was not a vision concerning all men, nor, indeed, concerning any men as to the resurrection of the dead—it had a direct and special bearing upon the Jewish people. This passage, again, has been very frequently and I dare say very properly, used to describe the revival of a decayed Church. This vision may be looked upon as descriptive of a state of lukewarmness and spiritual lethargy in a Church when the question may be sorrowfully asked—“Can these bones live?”

Can that dull minister wake up to living power? Can these cold deacons glow with holy heat? Can those unspiritual members rise to something like holy, earnest self-sacrifice? Is it possible that the drowsy formal Church could start up to real earnestness? Such suggestions might well have occurred to many minds at the time of the Reformation. It did seem impossible, when Popery was in its power, that spiritual life should ever again return to the Church. Piety seemed to be dead and buried and the cloister, the clergy, superstition and deceit, like great graves, had swallowed up everything that was good.

But the Lord appeared for His people and brought up the buried Truth of God out of its grave, and once more in every part of the known world the name of Jesus Christ was lifted up and sound doctrine was preached! So was it in our own country. When both the Establishment and Dissent had fallen into spiritual death we might well have said—“Can these bones live?” But Whitfield and Wesley were raised up by God and they prophesied to the dry bones, and up they stood—filled with the Spirit of God— “an exceeding great army.” Let the crowds of Kingsdown and the multitudes on Kennington Common tell of the quickening power of Jesus’ name! Decayed Churches can most certainly be revived by the preaching of the Word accompanied by the coming of the heavenly “breath” from the four winds.

O Lord, send us such revivals now, for many of your Churches need them—they are almost as dead as the corpses which sleep around them in the graveyard. But while we admit this to be a very fitting accommodation of our text, yet we are quite convinced that it is not to this that the passage refers. It would be altogether alien to the Prophet’s strain of thought to be thinking about the restoration of fallen zeal and the rekindling of expiring love. He was not considering the Reformation either of Luther or of Whitfield, or about the revival of one Church or of another. No, he was talking of his own people, of his own race and of his own tribe. He surely ought to have known his own mind, and led by the Holy Spirit, he gives us as an explanation of the vision. Not—“Thus says the Lord, My dying Church shall be restored,” but—“I will bring My people out of their graves and bring them into the land of Israel.”

With very great propriety, too, this passage has been used for the comforting of Believers in their dark and cloudy days. When they have lost their comforts, when their spiritual joys have drooped like withering flowers, when they have been no longer able to—

*“Read their titles clear*

*To mansions in the skies,”*  
they have been reminded that God could return to them in Grace and mercy, that the dry bones could live and should live! Then they remember that the Spirit of God could again come upon His people—that even at the time when they were ready to give up all hope and lie down in despair, He could come and so quicken them, that the poor trembling cowards should be turned into soldiers of God and should stand upon their feet an exceeding great army!

No grave of grief can hold the immortal joy of a Believer—on the third day it shall rise again, for, like the Lord who gave it, it shall never see corruption! Bone to his bone shall your comforts come together and an army of joys shall live in your soul. The passage certainly may be so used without violent wresting and might thus yield much comfort to the people of God. But still we take the liberty of saying that this is not the drift of the Prophet and that we do not believe he was thinking of anything of the kind. We think that he was speaking only of his own people, his own “kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Once more. There is no doubt that we have in this passage a most striking picture of the restoration of dead souls to spiritual life. Men by nature are just like these dry bones exposed in the open valley. The whole spiritual frame is dislocated. The sap and marrow of spiritual life has been dried out of manhood. Human nature is not only dead, but, like the bleaching bones which have long whitened in the sun, it has lost all trace of the Divine life. Will and power have both departed. Spiritual death reigns undisturbed. Yet the dry bones can live! Under the preaching of the Word the vilest sinners can be reclaimed, the most stubborn wills can be subdued, the most unholy lives can be sanctified! When the holy “breath” comes from the four winds, when the Divine Spirit descends to own the Word, then multitudes of sinners as on Pentecost’s hallowed day, stand up upon their feet—an exceeding great army—to praise the Lord their God.

But, mark you, this is not the first and proper interpretation of the text. It is, indeed, nothing more than a very striking parallel case to the one before us. It is not the case itself. It is only a similar one for the way in which God restores a nation is, practically, the way in which He restores an individual. The way in which Israel shall be saved is the same by which any one individual sinner shall be saved. It is not, however, the one case which the Prophet is aiming at. He is looking at the vast mass of cases— the multitudes of instances to be found among the Jewish people of gracious quickening and holy resurrection.

His first and primary intention was to speak of them and though it is right and lawful to take a passage in its widest possible meaning since, “no Scripture is of private interpretation,” yet I hold it to be treason to God’s Word to neglect its primary meaning and constantly to say—“Suchand-such is the primary meaning, but it is of no consequence and I shall use the words for another subject.” The preacher of God’s Truth should not give up the Holy Spirit’s meaning! He should take care that he does not even put it in the background. The first meaning of a text, the Spirit’s meaning, is that which should be brought out first and though the rest may fairly spring out of it, yet the first sense should have the chief place.

Let it have the uppermost place in the synagogue. Let it be looked upon as at least not inferior, either in interest or importance, to any other meaning which may come out of the text. The meaning of our text as opened up by the context is most evidently, if words mean anything, first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality. And then, secondly, there is in the text and in the context a most plain declaration that there shall be a spiritual restoration— in fact a conversion—of the tribes of Israel.

I. First, THERE IS TO BE A POLITICAL RESTORATION OF THE JEWS. Israel is now blotted out from the map of nations. Her sons are scattered far and wide. Her daughters mourn beside all the rivers of the earth. Her sacred song is hushed—no king reigns in Jerusalem! She brings forth no governors among her tribes. But she is to be restored! She is to be restored “as from the dead.” When her own sons have given up all hope of her, then is God to appear for her. She is to be reorganized—her scattered bones are to be brought together. There will be a native government again. There will again be the form of a political body.

A State shall be incorporated and a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land. Her sons, though they can never forget the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so forever, for her sons shall again rejoice in her—her land shall be called Beulah—for as a young man marries a virgin so shall her sons marry her. “I will place you in your own land,” is God’s promise to them. They shall again walk upon her mountains, shall once more sit under her vines and rejoice under her fig trees!

And they are also to be reunited. There shall not be two, nor ten, nor twelve, but one—one Israel praising one God—serving one king and that one King the Son of David, the descended Messiah! They are to have a national prosperity which shall make them famous. No, so glorious shall they be that Egypt and Tyre and Greece and Rome shall all forget their glory in the greater splendor of the throne of David! The day shall yet come when all the high hills shall leap with envy because this is the hill which God has chosen! The time shall come when Zion’s shrine shall again be visited by the constant feet of the pilgrim—when her valleys shall echo with songs and her hilltops shall drop with wine and oil.

If there is meaning in words this must be the meaning of this chapter! I wish never to learn the art of tearing God’s meaning out of His own Words. If there is anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage—a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away—it must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land and that a king is to rule over them. “Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen where they are gone and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king to them all. And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.”

I am not now going into millennial theories, or into any speculation as to dates. I do not know anything at all about such things and I am not sure that I am called to spend my time in such research. I am called to minister the Gospel rather than to open prophecy. Those who are wise in such things doubtless prize their wisdom, but I have not the time to acquire it, nor any inclination to leave soul-winning pursuits for less arousing themes. I believe it is a great deal better to leave many of these promises and many of these gracious outlooks of Believers to exercise their full force upon our minds without depriving them of their simple glory by aiming to discover dates and figures.

Let this be settled, however, that if there is meaning in words, Israel is yet to be restored—

***“Yet not in vain—over Israel’s land  
The glory yet will shine.  
And He, your once rejected King,  
Messiah, shall be yours.***

***His chosen Bride, ordained with Him  
To reign over all the earth,  
Shall first be framed, and you shall know Your Savior’s matchless worth.  
Then you, beneath the peaceful reign  
Of Jesus and His Bride,  
Shall sound His Grace and Glory forth,  
To all the earth beside.  
The nations to your glorious light,  
O Zion, yet shall throng,  
And all the listening islands wait  
To catch the joyful song.”***

But there is a second meaning here. ISRAEL IS TO HAVE A SPIRITUAL RESTORATION OR A CONVERSION. Both the text and the context teach this. The promise is that they shall renounce their idols and, behold, they have already done so! “Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols.” Whatever faults the Jew may have, he certainly has not idolatry. “The Lord your God is one God,” is a Truth far better conceived by the Jew than by any other man on earth except the Christian. Weaned forever from the worship of all images of any sort, the Jewish nation has now become infatuated with traditions or duped by philosophy.

She is to have, however, instead of these delusions, a spiritual religion—she is to love her God. “They shall be My people and I will be their God.” The unseen but Omnipotent Jehovah is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth by His ancient people. They are to come before Him in His own appointed way, accepting the Mediator whom their sires rejected. They will come into Covenant relation with God, for so our text tells us—“I will make a Covenant of peace with them,” and Jesus is our peace— therefore we gather that Jehovah shall enter into the Covenant of Grace with them—that Covenant of which Christ is the federal Head, the Substance and the Surety.

They are to walk in God’s ordinances and statutes and so exhibit the practical effects of being united to Christ who has given them peace. All these promises certainly imply that the people of Israel are to be converted to God and that this conversion is to be permanent. The tabernacle of God is to be with them! The Most High is, in a special manner, to have His sanctuary in the midst of them forever more so that whatever nations may apostatize and turn from the Lord in these latter days, the nation of Israel never can, for she shall be effectually and permanently converted. The hearts of the fathers shall be turned with the hearts of the children unto the Lord their God and they shall be the people of God, world without end.

We look forward, then, for these two things. I am not going to theorize upon which of them will come first—whether they shall be restored first, and converted afterwards—or converted first and then restored. They are to be restored and they are to be converted, too. Let the Lord send these blessings in His own order and we shall be well content whichever way they shall come. We take this for our joy and our comfort that this thing shall be and that both in the spiritual and in the temporal throne, the King Messiah shall sit and reign among His people gloriously.

II. Now I come to the practical part of my sermon this evening—THE MEANS OF THAT RESTORATION. Looking at this matter we are very apt to say, “How can these things be? How can the Jews be converted to Christ? How can they be made into a nation? Truly the case is quite as hopeless as that of the bones in the valley! How shall they cease from worldliness or renounce their constant pursuit of riches? How shall they he weaned from their bigoted attachment to their Talmudic traditions? How shall they be lifted up out of that hardness of heart which makes them hate the Messiah of Nazareth, their Lord and King? How can these things be?”

The Prophet does not say it cannot be. His unbelief is not so great as that, but at the same time he scarcely ventures to think that it can ever be possible. He very wisely, however, puts back the question upon his God—“O Lord God, You know.” Now some of you are very expectant about this tonight and you are expecting to see the Jews converted very soon, perhaps in a month or two. I wish you may see it as soon as your desires would date it. Others of us are not as optimistic and take a more gloomy view of a long future of woes.

Well, let us both together come before God tonight and say, “O Lord God, You know. And if You know it, Lord, we will be content to leave the secret with You! Only tell us what You would have us do. We ask not food for speculation, but we do ask for work. We ask for something by which we may practically show that we really do love the Jew and that we would bring him to Christ.”

In answer to this, the Lord says to His servants, “Prophesy upon these bones,” so that our duty tonight, as Christians, is to prophesy upon these bones and we shall then see God’s purpose fulfilled—when we obey God’s precept. I want you to observe that there are two kinds of prophesying spoken of here. First, the Prophet prophesies to the bones—here is preaching. And next, he prophesies to the four winds—here is praying. The preaching has its share in the work, but it is the praying which achieves the result—for after he had prophesied to the four winds and not before—the bones began to live.

All that the preaching did was to make a stir and to bring the bones together, but it was the praying which did the work, for then God the Holy Spirit came to give them life! Preaching and praying, then, are the two heads of this part of my sermon tonight and we will speak upon each briefly.

1. It is the duty and the privilege of the Christian Church to preach the Gospel to the Jew and to every creature. And in so doing she may safely take the vision before us as her guide. She may take it as her guide, first, as to matter. What are we to preach? The text says we are to prophesy and assuredly every missionary to the Jews should especially keep God’s prophecies very prominently before the public eye. It seems to me that one way in which the Jewish mind might be laid hold of would be to remind the Jews right often of that splendid future which both the Old and the New Testaments predict for Israel.

Every man has a tender side and a warm heart towards his own nation and if you tell him that in your standard book there is a revelation made that that nation is to act a grand part in human history and is, indeed, to take the very highest place in the parliament of nations—then the man’s prejudice is on your side and he listens to you with the greater attention. I would not commend, as some do, the everlasting preaching of prophesy in every congregation. But a greater prominence should be given to prophecies in teaching the Jews than among any other people.

But still, the main thing which we have to preach about is Christ. Depend upon it dear Brethren, the best sermons which we ever preach are those which are fullest of Christ Jesus, the Son of David and the Son of God! Jesus the suffering Savior by whose stripes we are healed! Jesus able to save unto the uttermost—here is the most suitable subject for Gentiles. God has fashioned all hearts alike and therefore this is also the noblest theme for Jews. Paul loved his countrymen! He was no simpleton—he knew what was the best weapon with which to assail and overcome their prejudices and yet he could say, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Lift up the Messiah, then, both before Jew and Gentile. Tell of Mary’s Son, the eternal Son of God, the Man of Nazareth who is none other than the Incarnate Word, God made flesh and dwelling among us! Preach His hallowed life—the righteousness of His people. Declare His painful death— the putting away of all their sins. Vindicate His glorious Resurrection! The justification of His people. Tell of His ascent on high. His triumph over the world and sin! Declare His second advent, His glorious coming to make His people glorious in the Glory which He has won for them! And Christ Jesus, as He is thus preached, shall surely be the means of making these bones live!

Let this preaching resound with Sovereign mercy! Let it always have in it the clear and distinct ring of Free Grace. I was thinking as I read this chapter just now, that of all the sermons which were ever preached, this sermon to the dry bones is the most Calvinistic, the most full of Free

Grace of any which were ever delivered. If you will notice it you will find that there is not an “if,” or a “but,” or a condition in it!

And as for free will, there is not even a mention of it. It is all in this fashion—“Thus says the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you and will bring up flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live. And you shall know that I am the Lord.” You see it is all “shalls,” and “wills,” and Covenant purposes. It is all God’s decrees declared and declared, too, as if there were no possibility of man’s resisting them.

He does not say, “You dry bones, you shall live if you like. You shall if you are willing.” He does not say to them, “You shall stand upright and be an exceeding great army if it pleases you to consent to My power.” No, but it is, “I will,” and, “you shall.” As for will, it is altogether put out of the question, for how shall the dead have a will in the matter? And so, dear Friends, I would have the Gospel preached both to the Jew and the Gentile with a very clear and distinct note of free, Sovereign, almighty Grace.

Man has a will and God never ignores that will—but by His almighty Grace He blessedly leads it in silken fetters. He never stops to ask that will’s consent when He comes forth upon His errands of effectual Grace. He wins that consent by the sweet persuasions of His own Omnipotent love. He comes arrayed in the robes of His Omnipotent Grace and the most hardened of rebels see at once such an attractive force in the love of God in Christ that with full consent against their ancient wills they yield themselves captives to the Grace of God! I do not believe that the Jews, or anybody else, will ever be converted as a usual thing by keeping back any of the Doctrines of Grace.

We must have God’s Truth and the whole of it. And more distinct utterances concerning evangelical doctrines and the Grace of God are required both for Jews and for Gentiles. Preach, preach, preach, then—but let it be the preaching of Christ and the proclamation of Free Grace. The Church, I say, has a model here as to the matter of preaching. And I am certain that she has also a model here as to her manner of preaching. How shall we preach the Gospel? Was Ezekiel to do what some of my hyper-Calvinistic Brethren say preachers ought to do—to warn the sinner, but never to invite him?

Was Ezekiel to go and talk to these bones, but never say a word to them by way of command? Was he to explain the way of salvation but never bid them walk in it? No! After he had declared Covenant purposes, he was then to say, “Thus says the Lord, you dry bones live.” And so the message of the Gospel minister, when he has declared the purposes of Divine Grace, is to say to sinners, “Thus says the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust Christ and you are saved!” Whoever you may be, Jew or Gentile. Whether your speech is that of the land of Canaan or of a Gentile tongue. Whether you spring of Shem, Ham, or Japheth—trust Christ and you are saved! Trust Him, then, you dry bones, and live! Withered arm be outstretched! Lame men, leap! Blind eyes, see! You dead, dry bones, live!

The manner of our preaching is to be by way of command as well as by way of teaching. Repent and be converted, every one of you. Lay hold on eternal life. “Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!” We have a model here, moreover, as to our audience. We are not to select our congregation, but we are to go where God sends us. And if He should send us into the open valley where the bones are very dry, we are to preach there. I trust that my Brethren of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews will never confine their labors to the good Jew, the respectable Jew, the enlightened Jew—let them seek after him among the rest—but I hope they will also seek after the ignorant, the degraded, the poor and the fallen.

The Church’s best harvests have generally been reaped among the poor. For every grain of wheat which has fructified upon the hillsides of wealth, thousands have sprung up to bring forth much fruit in the valleys of poverty and obscurity. “The poor have the Gospel preached to them”— this is the Gospel’s pride! The poor receive the Gospel—this is its success! Preach to the dry bones, then. Do not say, “Such-and-such a man is too bigoted.” The case rests not with him, nor with his bigotry, but with God! These bones were very dry, but yet they lived.

There is very little to choose, after all, between one man and another when all are dead! A little difference in the dryness does not come to much account when all are dead in sin. That some men are drunk and some are sober, that some men are debauched and some are chaste makes a very great difference in the moral and civil world. But very little difference, indeed, in the spiritual world, for there the same things happen to them both. If they believe not they shall alike be lost. And if they trust Jesus Christ they shall alike be saved! Let not, therefore, the greater viciousness of a people, or their greater hardness of heart, ever stand in our way—but let us say to them, dry as they are—“You dry bones, live.”

And here, again, we have another lesson as to the preacher’s authority. If you will observe you will see the Prophet says, “Hear the Word of the Lord.” We are to go neither to Jew nor to Gentile upon our own errand, or bearing our own words. I have no right to command a man to believe this or that unless I am an ambassador of God. And then, with God’s authority to direct and empower me, I speak no longer as a man following his own wit but as the mouth of God.

So let every one of us go, when we are trying to save souls, feeling the hand of God upon us, with a soul big with anxious thoughts and heaving high with earnest desires. Let us speak—

*“As though we never might speak again,*

*As dying men to dying men,”*  
taking hold upon God’s arm and beseeching Him to work by us and through us for the good of men. Remember, Christian, however humble you may be—when you speak God’s Word—that Word has an authority about it which will leave a man without excuse if he rejects it. Always put to your fellow man the Truth of God which you hold dear—not as a thing which he may play with or may do what he likes with—or which is at his option to choose or to neglect as he sees fit. But put it to him as it is in truth—the Word of God. And be not satisfied unless you warn him that it is at his own peril that he rejects the invitation and that on his own head

must be his blood if he turns aside from the good Word of the command of God.

Thus, we have, I think, all the directions which are necessary for us to preach. And what this Society and every other Society which aims at the conversion of sinners has to do is to go and preach, preach, preach—not spending too much upon printing, nor upon schools, nor ecclesiastical buildings—but preaching the Word of God! For after all, this is the battering-ram which is to shake the gates of Hell and break its iron bars. God has chosen “the foolishness of preaching” that He might, by it, save those who believe! Preaching is the blast of the ram’s horn ordained to level Jericho and the sound of the silver trumpet appointed to usher in the jubilee. It is God’s chariot of fire for bearing souls to Heaven and His twoedged sword to strike the hosts of Hell. His ordained servants are at once warriors and builders, and the Word serves them both for spear and trowel. Preach, then, from morning till night—at every time and on all occasions, “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and Israel shall yet live!

I cannot leave this point without noticing how the Prophet describes the effect of his preaching—there was a voice and there was a noise. Was this the noise of God’s voice going with man’s voice? Or was this the noise of the bones themselves creeping over one another? Does this represent opposition on the part of those preached to? Truly opposition is always a good sign! When you can get a man to oppose you, you may have some hope of him. If he has enough religious thought to try and refute what you bring before him, you may be thankful. Is this stir, then, the stir of opposition, or is it the stir of enquiry?

Does not the creeping of the bones together represent the people coming together to hear, to talk with one another, to reason about Divine things? When the various muscles and the flesh come upon the bones, does this represent the appearance of certain converts, destined to be the leaders of others? Are these sinews and muscles the representatives of men who are to move the rest of the corporate body by-and-by? It may be so and we may expect to see, as Christ is preached among Jews or Gentiles, more and more stir and excitement—the people coming together in greater numbers and the whole mass fermenting by the force of the leaven. Anything is better than stagnation—of a persecutor I have quite as much hope as of a quiet despiser.

2. But now we come to speak of that in which you can all take a part. Perhaps you cannot take a part in preaching the Word, though I wish that you all could. And I covet for you all the best gifts. But in the second form of prophesying you can all take your share. After the Prophet had prophesied to the bones, he was to prophesy to the winds. He was to say to the blessed Spirit, the Life-Giver, the God of all Grace, “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

Preaching alone does little. It may make a stir. It may bring the people together. There is an attractiveness about the Gospel which will draw the people to hear it. And there is, moreover, a force about it which will excite them, for it is “quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.” But there is no life-giving power in the Gospel of itself apart from the Holy Spirit! The “Breath” must first blow and then these bones shall live! Let us betake ourselves much to this form of prophesying.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you who care for Israel, go before the Lord now and from now on in earnest, importunate prayer! Strive to be more than ever conscious of the utter indispensability of this matter. Feel that without Christ you can do nothing! In vain your society, your machinery, your committees, your secretaries, your collectors, your contributors, your missionaries without the Holy Spirit! Blow your trumpet and proclaim loudly what you have done—you have sown much—but you shall reap little unless you are trusting in the Spirit of God! There is always this danger to which we are exposed, though some, I know, think that it is a danger which does not exist—I mean the peril of looking to the strength or the weakness of the instrumentality and being either puffed up by the one or dejected by the other.

You are enough for your work if God is with you! And if you are but a handful you are too many for your work if God is not with you. God never objects to human weakness—when He comes to work He prefers it—for it makes a platform for Divine power. What did He say to Gideon—“The people are too many for Me.” He did not say that they were too few. You never find a case in Scripture of God’s saying that the people were too few—it was, “The people are too many for Me.” Man’s strength is more in God’s way than man’s weakness. No, human weakness, inasmuch as it makes elbow room for God’s strength, is God’s chosen instrument! “Therefore will I glory in infirmities,” said the Apostle, “that the power of God may rest upon me.” Rest then, upon the Holy Spirit as indispensable and go to God with this for your cry, “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

Observe, Beloved, that this second prophesying of Ezekiel is just as bold and as full of faith as the first. He seems to have no doubt, but speaks as though he could command the wind. “Come,” says he and the wind comes. We need more faith in God. When we are engaged in any spiritual work we shall always find our success proportioned to our faith. Little faith, slender harvests! Much faith, plenteous sheaves! Little fishes come in slender numbers to Little-Faith’s net. But Strong-Confidence can hardly hold all the great fishes which load her boat. I will not ask for your society, or for you any further gift than greater faith, for, getting greater faith you have Divine strength and sure success.

The Spirit always works with faithful men. My dear Friends, the Spirit of God is poured out! He abides in His Church as the ever-present Comforter. We are not to look upon His influences as a gift which we cannot reach for He is here waiting to give us all we need. He dwells in the midst of His people and we have but to cry unto Him and He will manifest His mighty power and we shall have souls saved, both Jews and Gentiles! Let your prayer, then, be with a sense of how much you need it, but yet with a firm conviction that the Holy Spirit will most surely come in answer to your petitions.

And then let it be earnest prayer. That, “Come from the four winds, O breath,” reads to me like the cry, not of one in despair, but of one who is full of a vehement desire gratified with what he sees, since the bones have come together and have been mysteriously clothed with flesh! And he is

now crying passionately for the immediate completion of the miracle— “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” There is continual vehemence and force here—here is just that which makes a prayer prevalent. O, let us cry mightily unto God! We cannot expect to see great things unless we cry to Him—but we are only limited by our prayers. We are not straitened in Him! We are only straitened in ourselves.

We might see greater things if we could but believe. All things are possible to him that believes, but as of old, the Lord Jesus cannot do many mighty things nowadays because of our unbelief. We hamper the arm of Grace! We do, as it were, restrain the Almighty energy. O for greater faith to believe that nations may be born in a day! That multitudes may be turned unto God at once—and we shall yet see it—see what our fathers never saw and what our imaginations have never dreamed! We shall leap from victory to victory, marching on from one triumph to another until we meet the all-glorious Savior! Charging enemy after enemy and routing army after army, we shall go on, conquering and to conquer until we salute Him who comes upon the white horse of triumph followed by all the armies of Heaven! Brethren, be of good courage in your work of faith and labor of love for it is not and shall not be in vain in the Lord.

I address some tonight, I know, who have no interest in what I have been saying for they are not subjects of Messiah, themselves. Remember, faith is a sign of your allegiance to Him. Trust Christ and you are saved! Trust Jesus Christ and you are delivered from Divine wrath and from the power of your natural passions. The Lord grant you a resurrection tonight, O you who are dead in sin, and His name shall have all the praise!

Our friends here have for some little time been in a small way assisting this Society by their contributions. They, therefore, are well acquainted with it. I have not time this evening to enter into details about it, but I may just say that this Society has for a long time done a good work among the Jewish people. And I ask you to contribute to this among other good works as you feel moved to do whenever opportunity occurs.

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COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH!  
NO. 2246

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**“He said to me, Prophesy unto the wind, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” Ezekiel 37:9.**

ACCORDING to some commentators, this vision in the valley of dry bones may refer to three forms of resurrection. Holy Scripture is so marvelously full of meaning that one interpretation seldom exhausts its message to us. The chapter before us is an excellent example of this fact and supplies an illustration of several Scriptural Truths of God.

Some think they see, here, a parable of the resurrection of the dead. Assuredly, Ezekiel’s vision pictures what will happen in the day when “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” No matter how dry the bones may be, the bodies of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall rise again. That which was sown shall spring up from the grave and, in the case of the children of God, it shall wear a new glory. At the Word of Christ it shall come to pass—“For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Others see here the resurrection of the almost destroyed host of Israel which had been divided into two companies and carried away captive into Babylon. Plague and pestilence and the sword of the Chaldean had gone far to cut off the chosen nation, but God promised to restore His people, thus mingling mercy with judgment, and again setting in the cloud the bow of His Everlasting Covenant. A partial fulfillment of this promise was given when, for a while, the Lord set up, again, the tribes of Israel at Jerusalem and they had a happy rest before the coming of Christ. But Israel’s full restoration is yet to be accomplished. The people shall be gathered out of the graves in which, as a nation, they have so long lain buried, and shall be placed in their own land—and then will come to pass the Word of Jehovah—“Then shall you know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, says the Lord.”

There are others, who, looking beyond the literal for the spiritual teaching, see, and I think, rightly see, that here is a picture of the recovery of ungodly men from their spiritual death and corruption—a parable of the way in which sinners are brought up from their hopeless, spiritually dead condition and made to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. I shall, at any rate, use the text in this sense, for I am not now aiming at the interpretation of prophesy, nor concerned greatly with what is to happen in the future. Neither do I wish to conduct you into the deep things of God, but I am just now thinking of practical uses to which I can put this incident in order to stir up God’s people to deal with the Holy Spirit as He should be dealt with, and to urge the unconverted to seek the Lord in the hope that some of them, as dead and dry as the bones in the Valley of Vision, may be made to live by His Divine Power.

Nothing gave me greater comfort, this week, than when I received a note from one saying that, last Thursday night, while I was preaching from the text, “Let your soul delight itself in fatness,” she was enabled to lay hold on Christ. I had rather have such tidings than to hear the most glad news of a worldly kind that could be brought to me! Oh, that now, also, some poor heart may find rest in Christ while we are talking of that Divine Spirit who becomes a Comforter to all those to whom He has been first a Quickener! May He come and cause men to live and then, afterwards, make them full of gladness! It is His blessed office first, to bestow life, and then to give light. Living unto God is the earliest experience of the redeemed—afterwards comes joy in God by the Holy Spirit.

I. Now, first, in using this text, as I have said, for practical purposes, I am going to make this remark upon it—WE ARE NOTHING WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT. I now speak, my Brothers, to you who love the souls of men. I know that there are some among you who preach and teach with all earnestness, with broken-hearted love and, for the glory of Christ, you try to bring men to believe in Jesus. In thus endeavoring to save the souls of the lost and ruined men, you are engaged in a noble work. But I dare say that you have often felt what I, also, fully realize, that you have not gone far in your holy service before you are brought face to face with the fact that, in itself, the work you propose to do is an utter impossibility!

We begin our labor according to the Word of the Lord and we prophesy. God helping us, we can do that and, though the burden of the Lord is heavy, yet if we are told to prophesy again, we can, by His Grace, do that, also. We can prophesy to dry bones, or prophesy to the wind according to God’s commandment. We are not afraid of seeming to be foolish since we know that when “the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” But when we preach the Word and, as the result of our preaching expect men to be saved—and so saved that we may know it—we come, all of a sudden, upon an iron-bound coast and can get no further. We find that men are dead—what is needed is that they should be quickened—and we cannot quicken them! There are a great many things we can do—and God forbid that we should leave one of them undone! But when we come to the creation of life, we have reached a mysterious region into which we cannot penetrate—we have entered the realm of miracles where Jehovah reigns supreme!

The prerogative to give life or to take it away must remain with the Most High. The wit and wisdom of man are altogether powerless to bestow life upon even the tiniest insect! We know for sure,, doctrinally, and we know it with equal certainty by experience, that we can do nothing towards the quickening of men apart from the Spirit of God. If He does not come and give life, we may preach till we have not another breath left, but we shall not raise from the tomb of sin even the soul of a little child, or bring a single sinner to the feet of Christ!

How, then, should this fact affect us? Because of our powerlessness, shall we sit still, doing nothing and caring nothing? Shall we say, “The Spirit of God must do the work, therefore I may fold my arms and take things easy”? Beloved, we cannot do that! Our heart’s desire and prayer for our fellow men is that they might be saved and we have sometimes felt that for their sakes, we could almost be willing to be accursed, if we might bring eternal life to them! We cannot sit still! We do not believe that it was God’s intent that any Truth of God should ever lead us into sloth—at any rate, it has not so led us, by His Grace—it has carried us in quite the opposite direction!

Let us try to be as practical in this matter as we are in material things. We cannot rule the winds, nor create them. A whole parliament of philosophers could not cause a capful of wind to blow. The sailor knows that he can neither stop the tempest nor raise it. What then? Does he sit still? By no means! He has all kinds of sails of different cuts and forms to enable him to use every ounce of wind that comes—and he knows how to reef or furl them in case the tempest becomes too strong for his boat. Though he cannot control the movement of the wind, he can use what it pleases God to send. The miller cannot divert that great stream of water out of its channel, but he knows how to utilize it—he makes it turn his mill-wheel. Though he cannot resist the law of gravitation, for there seems to be an almost omnipotent force in it, yet he uses that law and yokes it to his chariot! Thus, though we cannot command that mighty influence which streams from the Omnipotent Spirit of God; though we cannot turn it which way we will, for, “the wind blows where it wishes,” yet we can make use of it and, in our inability to save men, we turn to God and lay hold of His power.

What, then, are we to do? Face to face with spiritual death. Conscious of the fact that we cannot remove it. And fully aware that only the Holy Spirit can quicken dead souls, what shall we do? There are certain ways and means by which we can act properly towards this Divine Person— certain attitudes of heart which it would be well for us to take up—and certain results which will follow from a clear apprehension of the true state of the case.

First, by this fact, we must feel deeply humbled, emptied and cut adrift from self. Look, Sir, you may study your sermon. You may examine the original of your text. You may critically follow it out in all its bearings. You may go and preach it with great correctness of expression, but you cannot quicken a soul by that sermon! You may go up into your pulpit. You may illustrate, explain and enforce the Truth of God with mighty rhetoric. You may charm your hearers—you may hold them spellbound—but no eloquence of yours can raise the dead! Demosthenes might stand for a century between the jaws of death, but the monster would not be moved by anything he or all human orators might say!

Another voice than ours must be heard! Another power than that of thought or persuasion must be brought into the work or it will not be done! You may organize your societies; you may have excellent methods; you may diligently pursue this course and that, but when you have done it all, nothing comes of it if the effort stands by itself! Only as the Spirit of God shall bless men by you, shall they receive a blessing through you! Whatever your ability or experience, it is the Spirit of God who must bless your labor. Therefore, never go to a service with a boast upon your lips of what you can do, or with the slightest trace of self-confidence—or else you will go in a spirit which will prevent the Holy Spirit from working with or through you.

O Brothers and Sisters, think nothing of us who preach to you! If ever you do, our power will be gone. If you begin to suppose that such and such a minister, having been blessed of God to so many thousands will necessarily be the means of the conversion of your friend, you are imputing to a son of man what belongs only to the Son of God! And you will assuredly do that pastor or that minister a serious mischief by tolerating in your heart so idolatrous a thought! We are nothing! You are nothing. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts,” is a message that should make us lie in the dust and utterly despair of doing anything in and of ourselves, seeing that all the power is of God, alone! It will do us good to be very empty, to be very weak, to be very distrustful of self—and so to go about out Master’s work.

Next, because of our absolute need of the Holy Spirit, we must give ourselves to prayer before our work and after our work. A man who believes that, do what he may, no soul will be quickened apart from the work of the Spirit of God—a man who has a longing desire that he may save souls will not venture to his pulpit without prayer! He will not deliver his message without a thousand groans and cries to God for help in every sentence that he utters. And when the sermon is done, his work will not be done—it will have scarcely begun—his sermons will be but a text for longcontinued prayer! He will be crying to God continually to anoint him with the heavenly oil. His prayer will be, “Let the Spirit of God be upon me, that I may preach deliverance to the captives; otherwise men will still remain in the prison house in spite of all my toil.”

And you, Beloved, as you believe that doctrine, will not allow the preacher to go to his work without your prayers! You will bear him up in your supplications, feeling that your attendances at the House of God will all be vanity, and the coming together of the people will be as nothing unless God, the Holy Spirit, is pleased to bless the Word! This thought will drive you to besiege the Throne of Grace with strong crying and tears that God would quicken the dead sons of men. If any of you are working without prayer, I will not advise you to cease your work, but I will urge you to begin to pray, not merely as a matter of form, but as the very life of your labors! Let the habit of prayer be constant with you, so that you neither begin any service for God, nor carry it on, nor conclude it without crying to the Lord for His Holy Spirit to make the work effectual by His almighty power!

We have already gathered much instruction from this Truth of God if we have learned to lie low before the Lord and before the Mercy Seat. But we must go a little further. Since everything depends upon the Spirit of God, we must be very careful to be such men as the Spirit of God can use. We may not judge others, but have you not met with men whom you could not think the Spirit of God would be likely to bless? If a man is selfsufficient, can the Spirit of God, to any large degree, bless him? If a man is inconsistent in his daily life; if there is no earnestness about him; if you cannot tell when he is in character or creed; if he contradicts one day what he said the day before; if he is vain-glorious and boastful, is it likely that the Spirit of God will bless him?

If any of us should become lazy, indolent, or self-indulgent, we cannot expect the Spirit, whose one aim is to glorify Christ, to work with us! If we should become proud, domineering, hectoring, how could the gentle Dove abide with us? If we should become despondent, having little or no faith in what we preach and not expecting the power of the Holy Spirit to be with us, is it likely that God will bless us? Believe me, dear Friends, that a vessel fit for the Master’s use must be very clean. It need not be of silver or of gold—it may be but a common earthen vessel, but it must be very clean— for our God is a jealous God. He can spy a fingerprint where our eyes could not see it, even with a microscope—and He will not drink out of a vessel which a moment before was at the lips of Satan! He will not use us if we have been used by self, or if we have allowed ourselves to be used by the world. Oh, how clean should we be in our private life as well as in our ordinary walk and conversation! This is no small thing. See to it, my Brothers and Sisters, for much of the promised blessing may depend upon your carefulness.

Next, since we depend wholly upon the Spirit, we must be most anxious to use the Word of God and to keep close to the Truth of God in all our work for Christ among men. The Word of God is the Holy Spirit’s sword—he will not wield our wooden weapons. He will only use this true Jerusalem blade of God’s own fashioning. Let us, then, set high value on the Inspired Word. We shall defeat our adversaries by that sword-thrust, “It is written.” So spoke the Christ; and so He conquered Satan. So also the Holy Spirit speaks. Be wise, therefore, and let your reliance be not on your own wisdom, but on the Word to which you can add, “Thus says the Lord.” If our preaching is of that kind, the Holy Spirit will always set His seal to it. But if you have thought it out and it is your own production, go, good Sir, to Her Majesty’s offices, and get patent letters for your invention—the Holy Spirit will have nothing to do with it! He cares nothing about your “original mind.” Our Lord Jesus laid aside all originality and spoke only the Words of His Father—the Words which the Holy Spirit brought to Him!

He said to His disciples, in that memorable discourse, before He went out to Gethsemane, “The Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me.” Let us try to imitate Him, being willing not to think our own thoughts, or to speak our own words, but those which God shall give us! I would rather speak five words out of this Book than 50,000 words of the philosophers! I had rather be a fool with God than be a wise man with the most sage scientist, for, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” You cannot work for Christ except by the Spirit of Christ, and you cannot teach for Christ except you teach Christ! Your work will have no blessing upon it, unless it is God’s Word spoken through your lips to the sons of men! If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God’s Word into our sermons— even if we paraphrase it into our own words, it must still be His Word upon which we place our reliance—for the only power which will bless men lies in that. It is God’s Word that saves souls, not our comment upon it, however correct that comment may be! Let us, then, be scrupulously careful to honor the Holy Spirit by taking the weapon which He has prepared for us, believing in the full Inspiration of the sacred Scriptures and expecting that God will prove their Inspiration by their effect upon the minds and hearts of men.

Again, since we are nothing without the Holy Spirit, we must avoid in our work anything that us not of Him. We want these dead people raised, but we cannot raise them—only the Spirit of God can do that. Now, in our part of the work, for which God condescendingly uses us, let us take care that there is nothing which would grieve the Spirit, or cause Him to go away from us. I believe that in places where the work of conversion goes on in great numbers, God is much more jealous than He is anywhere else. He watches His Church and if He sees, in the officers of the Church, or in the workers, something unholy. If He beholds practices tolerated that are not according to His pure mind and if, when they are noticed, these evils are winked at and still further indulged, He will withdraw His blessing until we cease to have a controversy with Him! Possibly He might give His blessing to a Church which was worse than this in many respects, while He might withdraw it from this Church, which has already been so highly favored, if it countenanced anything contrary to His Word.

An ordinary subject of Her Majesty might say certain things about her for which he would never be brought to book. But a favorite at court must mind how he behaves. So must we be very sensitive in this Divine employment in which we come nearest to Christ—we must be careful to cooperate with Him in our work of seeking to pluck brands from the burning. We must mind how we do it, for we may, perhaps, be led to adopt ways and methods which may grieve Him. And if we persevere in those ways and methods, after we have learned that they are not according to His will, the Spirit of God will leave us, lest He should seem to be setting His seal upon that of which He does not approve! A headlong zeal, even for Christ, may leap into a ditch! What we think to be very wise may be very unwise—and where we deem that even a little “policy” may come in, that little policy may taint the whole and make a nauseous stench which God will not endure! You must have the Spirit of God! You can do nothing without Him! Therefore do nothing that would cause Him to depart from you.

Moreover, we must be always ready to obey the Holy Spirit’s gentlest monitions by which I mean the monitions which are in God’s Word and, also—but putting this in the second place—such inward whispers as He accords to those who dwell near to Him. I believe that the Holy Spirit does still speak to His chosen in a very remarkable way. Men of the world might ridicule this Truth of God and, therefore, we speak little of it, but the child of God knows that there are, at times, distinct movements of the Holy Spirit upon his mind leading him in such and such ways. Be very tender of these touches of God! Some people do not feel these movements, but perhaps if they, with a more perfect heart, feared the Lord, His secret might be revealed to them. That great ship at sea will not be moved by a ripple—even an ordinary wave will not stir it—it is big and heavy. But that cork, out yonder, goes up and down with every ripple of the water! Should a great wave come, it will be raised to the crest of it and carried wherever the current compels. Let your spirit be little before God and easily moved—so that you may recognize every impulse of the Spirit—and obey it at once, whatever it may be.

When the Holy Spirit moves you to give up such and such a thing, yield to it instantly, lest you lose His Presence! When He impels you to fulfill such and such a duty, be not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Or if He suggests to you to praise God for such and such a favor, give yourself to thanksgiving. Yield yourself wholly to His guidance. You who are workers, ask for the wisdom of the Spirit carefully and believingly. I do not understand a man going into the pulpit and praying the Spirit of God to guide him in what he shall say—and then pulling it out of his pocket in manuscript. It looks to me as if he shut the Spirit of God out of any special operation! At least all the help he can expect to have from the Spirit at that particular time must be in the manner of his reading, though, of course, he may have been guided in what he has written. Still, there is but scant room for the Spirit to manifest His power!

In the same way, if you make up your mind how you will deal with people and what you will say, it may often happen that, in the process, if you forget all you meant to say, it would be the best thing that could happen to you! And if you said exactly what you did not think it would be prudent to say, the unaccustomed method might be the thing the Spirit of God would bless. Keep yourself, therefore, before that valley of dry bones, free to do just what the Spirit of God would have you do, that He, through you, may raise the dead!

Once more—since, apart from the Spirit, we are powerless, we must value greatly every movement of His Power. Notice, in this account of the vision in the valley, how the Prophet draws attention to the fact of the shaking and the noises, and the coming of the sinews and the flesh even before there was any sign of life! I think that, if we want the Spirit of God to bless us, we must be on the watch to notice everything He does. Look out for the first desire, the first fear! Be glad of anything happening to your people that looks as if it were the work of the Holy Spirit and, if you value Him in His earlier works, He is likely to go on and to do more and more, till, at last, He will give the breath—and the slain host shall arise and become an army for God! You cannot expect the Spirit of God to come and work by you if you are half asleep. You cannot expect the Spirit of God to put forth His power if you are in such a condition that if He saved half your congregation, you would not know it—and if He saved nobody, you would not fret about it! God will not bless you when you are not awake! The Spirit of God does not work by sleepy men! He loves to have us alive, ourselves, and then He will make others alive by us. See to this, dear Brothers. If we had more time at our disposal, I would speak longer on this part of the subject, but I have said enough, now, if God the Holy Spirit blesses it, upon this first great Truth that we are nothing without the Holy Spirit.

II. Now, secondly, we may learn, from the action of Ezekiel on this occasion, that WE MAY SO ACT AS TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. When he first saw the dry bones, there was no wind nor Breath, yet, obeying the voice of the Lord in the vision, the Breath came and life followed. How, then, shall we act? I will only give you in brief a few of the conditions to be observed by us.

If we want the Holy Spirit to be surely with us, to give us a blessing, we must, in the power of the Spirit, realize the scene in which we are to labor. In this case, the Holy Spirit took the Prophet, carried him out and set him down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. This is just a type of what will happen to every man whom the Spirit means to use! Do you want to save people in the slums? Then, you must go to the slums! Do you want to save sinners broken down under a sense of sin? You must be broken down! At least you must get near to them in their brokenness of heart and be able to sympathize with them. I believe that no man will command power over a people whom he does not understand. If you have never been to a certain place, you do not know the road—but if you have been there, yourself, and you come upon a person who has lost his way— you are the man to direct him.

When you have been through the same perplexities that trouble others, you can say to them, “I have been there myself. I know all about it. By God’s blessing, I can conduct you out of this maze.” Dear Friend, we must have greater sympathy with sinners! You cannot pluck the brand out of the burning if you are afraid of being singed! You must be willing to dirty your fingers on the bars of the grate if you would do it. If there is a diamond dropped into a ditch, you must thrust your arm up to your elbow in the mud, or else you cannot expect to pick the jewel out of the mire. The Holy Spirit, when He blesses a man, sets him down in the midst of the valley full of bones and causes him to pass by them round about until he fully comprehends the greatness and the difficulty of the work to be accomplished, even as the Prophet said, “Behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.”

Next, if the Holy Spirit is to be with us, we must speak in the power of faith. If Ezekiel had not had faith, he certainly would not have preached to dry bones—they make a wretched congregation! And he certainly would not have preached to the wind, for it must have been a fickle listener! Who but a fool would behave in this manner unless faith entered into action? If preaching is not a supernatural exercise, it is a useless procedure! God the Holy Spirit must be with us, or else we might as well go and stand on the tops of the hills of Scotland and shout to the east wind! There is nothing in all our eloquence unless we believe in the Holy Spirit making use of the Truth of God which we preach for the quickening of the souls of men. Our preaching must be an act of faith! We must preach by faith as much as Noah built the ark by faith and, just as the walls of Jericho were brought down by faith—men’s hearts are to be broken by faithful preaching, that is, preaching full of faith!

In addition to this, if we desire to have the Spirit of God with us, we must prophesy according to God’s command. By prophesying, I do not mean foretelling future events, but simply uttering the message which we have received from the Lord, proclaiming it aloud so that all may hear. You will notice how it is twice said, in almost the same words, “So I prophesied as He commanded me.” God will bless the prophesying that He commands, but not any other. So we must keep clear of that which is contrary to His Word and speak the Truth that He gives us to declare. As Jonah, the second time he was told to go to Nineveh, was told by the Lord to “preach unto it the preaching that I bid you,” so must we do if we would have our word believed even as his was. Our message is received when it is the Word of God through us! When the Lord describes the blessing that comes upon the earth by the rain and snow from Heaven, he says, “So shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth.” Let us see to it that before a word goes forth out of our mouth, we have received it from the mouth of God. Then we may hope and expect that the people will also receive it from us. The Spirit of God, that is, the Breath of God, goes with the Word of God, and with that alone.

Notice, next, that if we would have the Spirit of God with us, we must break out in vehemence of desire. The Prophet is to prophesy to the bones, but he does not begin in a formal manner by saying, “Only the winds coming can bring Breath to these slain persons.” No, he breaks out with an interjection and with his whole soul heaving with a ground-swell of great desire, he cries, “Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!” He has the people before him in his eyes and in his heart—and he appeals, with mighty desire, to the Spirit of God, that He would come and make them live! You will generally find, in our service today, that the men who yearn over the souls of their fellow men are those whom the Spirit of God uses. A man of no desire gets what he longs for—and that is nothing at all.

Then, if we would have more of the power of the Spirit of God with us, we must see only the Divine purpose, the Divine Power and the Divine working. God will have His Spirit go forth with those who see His hand. “When I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall you know that I, the Lord, have spoken it, and performed it, says the Lord.” It is not my plan that God is going to work out—it is His own! It is not my purpose that the Holy Spirit is going to carry out—it is the purpose of the eternal Jehovah! It is not my power, or my experience, or my mode of thought which will bring men from death to life—it is the Holy Spirit who will do it—and He only! We must apprehend this fact and get to work in this attitude—and then God the Holy Spirit will be with us.

III. Bear with me, if I fill up all my time, or if I should even stray beyond it. I now want to address unconverted persons or those who are afraid that they are still unsaved—and with the text before us WE WOULD SPEAK DIFFERENTLY TO OUR HEARERS.

You who are not yet quickened by the Divine Life, or are afraid you are not, we would exhort you to hear the Word of the Lord. Though you feel that you are as dead as these dry bones, yet if you want to be saved, be frequent in hearing the Word of God. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” If you wish to find the Divine Life, thank God that you have that wish—and frequent those houses where Christ is much spoken of—and where the way of eternal life is very plainly set forth. When you mingle with the worshippers, listen with both your ears—try to remember what you hear and pray all the while that God will bless it to you. “O you dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!”

Next, we could remind you of your absolute need of life from the Spirit of God. Put it in what shape you like, you cannot be saved unless you are born again! And the new birth is not a matter within your own power. “You must be born again”—“from above,” as the margin reads, in the third chapter of John’s Gospel. All the religion of which you are capable will not save you, do what you will! Strive as you may with outward ceremonies, or religious observances, there is no hope for you but in the Holy Spirit! There is something to be done for you which you cannot do for yourself. We will not water down that Truth of God, but give it to you just as it stands in the Scriptures—we want you to feel its power.

But we would have you note what the Holy Spirit has done for others. There are some of your friends who have been born again. They were as hopeless as you are, but they are now saved! You know they are, for you have seen their lives. Take note of them, for what the Holy Spirit can work in one, He can work in another! Let the Grace of God in others comfort you concerning yourself, especially when you hear of great drunks, or great swearers, or very vicious persons who have been transformed into saints. Say to yourself, “If the Holy Spirit could make a saint out of such a sinner as that, surely He can make a saint out of me.” As you see the flesh and sinews on others who were once as dry as bare bones, be encouraged to hope that it may be even so with you before long!

May I go a little further and say that we would have you observe carefully what is done in yourself? I think I am speaking to some here who have already undergone a remarkable change. You cannot say that you have spiritual life—you are afraid that you have not. Still, you are not what you used to be. You have put away many things from you that were once a pleasure to you—and now you take delight in many things which you once despised. There is some hope in that, though it may be nothing more than the sinews coming on the bones and the flesh upon the sinews. Yet I notice that, where the Holy Spirit begins, He does not leave off till He has finished His work. God takes such a delight in His work, that, having begun it, He completes it! Well did Job say, “You will have a desire to the work of Your hands.” Now, what He has already done for you, encourages me—and should encourage you to hope that He will yet do much more, continuing His gracious work until life eternal is bestowed upon you!

Furthermore, we would remind you that faith in Jesus is a sign of life. If in your heart you can trust yourself to Christ and believe in Him that He can save you, you already have eternal life! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you can now, though it is for the first time, trust yourself on Christ, alone—faith is the surest evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit! You “have passed from death unto life” already! You cannot see the Spirit any more than you can see the wind, but, if you have faith, that is a blessed vane that turns in the way the Spirit of God blows. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” If you believe, this is true of you—and if you cast yourself wholly upon Christ— remember that it is written, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Therefore be of good cheer!

We beg you not to be led aside to the discussion of difficulties . There are a great many difficulties. To tell dry bones to live is a very unreasonable sort of thing when tried by rules of logic. And for me to tell you, a dead sinner, to believe in Christ, may seem perfectly unjustifiable by the same rule. But I do not need to justify it. If I find it in God’s Word, that is quite enough for me! And if the preacher does not feel any difficulty in the matter, why should you? There is a difficulty, but you have nothing to do with it! There are difficulties everywhere. There is a difficulty in explaining how it is that bread sustains your body—and how that bread, sustaining your body, can be the means of prolonging your life! We cannot understand how the material can impinge upon the spiritual. And there are difficulties in almost everything connected with life. If a man will not do anything till he has solved every difficulty, we had better dig his grave. And you will be in Hell if you will not go to Heaven without having every difficulty solved for you! Forget the difficulties—there will be time enough to settle them when we get to Heaven. Meanwhile, if life comes through Jesus Christ, let us have it and have done with nursing our doubts!

Further, we would have you long for the visitation of God, the Holy Spirit. Join with us in the prayer, “Come Holy Spirit, come with all Your Power! Come from the four winds, O Breath!” One wind will not do it—it must come from all quarters. Your heart, filled with all sorts of evil, needs breaking—it needs throwing down like the house of Job’s son when Job’s children were in it—and “there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell.” Oh, for a wind from the four quarters of Heaven to smite the four corners of the house of your sin and lay it low! “Come from the four winds, O Breath!” As the poet sings—

*“Lifeless in the valley,  
Come, O Breath, and breathe! New-create and rally!  
Come, O Breath, and breathe! Blowing where you wish, You the word assist,  
You death’s power resist,  
Come, O Breath, and breathe!*

Be willing to have the Holy Spirit as He wills to come. Let Him come as a north wind, cold and cutting, or as a south wind, sweet and melting. Say, “Come, from any of the four winds, O Breath! Only come!” He can come unexpectedly upon you in the pew during these five minutes that remain. You are, perhaps, thinking about whether you can catch an early train and get home. May the Holy Spirit lay hold of you before you leave the building and get you home in real earnest to your God and to your Father! He can come very mightily. There is a great deal about you that would shut Him out—but it is hard to keep the wind out when it blows in the fullness of its strength—you may fill up the crevices of the door as you please, but still the wind gets in. Thus, too, is it with the Spirit of God—He comes in might, but He can also come very sweetly. Be not afraid of the Holy Spirit! He can charm you to Christ, as well as drive you to Christ. May He enter your heart even now!

We yearn to see all of you thus made to live . I am praying in my very soul that He would come to every one of you. I do not read that Ezekiel saw part of the valley of dry bones live and the rest remain dry bones, but that they all lived and stood upon their feet—an exceedingly great army! I long to see you all blessed at this service. Why should it not be so? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come and touch every one of us! Many of you are alive, already, blessed be His name! Well, you can have more life, for Christ has come not only that you might have life, but that you “might have it more abundantly.” I beseech you, let the blessed Spirit enter into greater fullness. But pray mightily that every soul here that is dead may now feel the sacred Breath and begin to live! Then I shall not only hear of one, as last Thursday, but news shall be brought of many upon whom the Divine Spirit has sweetly come and led them to Jesus, to be saved now, and to be saved forever! God grant it! Amen.

**Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Ezekiel 37.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—464, 461, 451.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1676 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DESPAIR DENOUNCED AND GRACE GLORIFIED  
NO. 1676

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are  
cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy  
and say unto them, Thus says the Lord  
God, Behold, O My people, I will open  
your graves, and cause you to come  
up out of your graves, and bring  
you into the land of Israel. And  
you shall know that I am the  
Lord, when I have opened  
your graves, O My people,  
and brought you up  
out of your graves.”  
Ezekiel 37:11, 12, 13.**

I HAVE read to you the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones. Keep it in your minds, that you may understand the text. The figure is a very apt, instructive and impressive one. It is not, however, a mere figure—it is a parable based upon a remarkable representation of the resurrection of the dead. Although the children of Israel, at that time, knew little enough concerning the resurrection, yet the Lord, the Holy Spirit, knew all about it and He used it as a striking picture of the salvation of Israel from that national death which had come upon them. We may, with equal accuracy, see in it, a vivid representation of the work of Grace upon the hearts of all those who are quickened into spiritual life by the power of Divine Grace. Men, by nature, are dead in sin till they hear the voice of God and feel the quickening breath of the Spirit—and are made to live according to that Word of God—“He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

Such a metaphor as this before us, drops with teaching as a honeycomb with honey, and it will be our own fault if we are not taught by it! The salvation of men by the Grace and power of God is as great a wonder as the general resurrection. The putting of spiritual life into a natural man is a marvel of marvels and should excite as much wonder as the raising of Lazarus, or of Jairus’ daughter, or of the young man at the gates of Nain. Even the rising up of the dead at the last trumpet is not a greater prodigy than the bringing of dead hearts unto the life of God! I shall not, however, detain you by fuller observations upon spiritual resurrection, for I have work to do of another kind upon which we will spend the bulk of our time and the whole of our energies.

If you thoughtfully consider the text, you will see that it divides itself thus—first, there is a true word—“Behold, they say, our bones are dried.” Secondly, there is, in it, an evil word which goes beyond the Truth of God—“Our hope is lost.” God is the sinner’s hope and He is not lost, so that the word of despair is not warranted. Thirdly, there is a gracious word, a word of mighty love—“Thus says the Lord God, Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.”

I. Let us begin with that solemn confession which I have styled A TRUE WORD—“They say, our bones are dried.” It matters not how badly men speak of themselves, for what they say of themselves is never worse than the truth. I have never heard of any sinner who, too much, depreciated his own righteousness! It is not possible to repent too much, nor to have too lowly an estimate of one’s deserving or of one’s spiritual power. It is a grievous fault when mourners depreciate the power and fullness of God’s Grace and when despondency casts a doubt upon the possibility of their salvation. But while the depreciation is confined to themselves, it is not possible to push it too far, or to exaggerate the evils of an unregenerate condition.

The sinner’s natural estate is as deplorable as words can describe. He is, in fact, much worse than he thinks he is, even when he is most bowed down under a sense of his guilt and danger. I believe that Luther was quite right when he said that if a man could see his own sin as it really is, he would lose his reason. The condition into which we have fallen by our transgressions is terrible to the last degree. Observe, first, that they describe themselves as dead, as dried and as divided. They speak of themselves as dead—a man does not imagine his bones to be scattered about on the plain while he thinks himself to be alive! These people spoke of their bones and, therefore, were conceived they were dead. And so the sinner may, without exaggeration, conceive of himself as devoid of spiritual life. He knows not the life of God, for he is dead in trespasses and sins.

The Apostle speaks of the unregenerate as “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” And again we read, “They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that does good.” When men are corrupt, they have gone a stage beyond death and are receiving the full harvest of sin. As it is written, “He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Alas, Sinner, you are as one that is dead, only your condition is far worse, for your responsibility and your guilt remain and your death to righteousness is blameworthy and will bring punishment upon you!

They were divided, too. These Israelites were scattered abroad in every place and, perhaps you, dear Friend, feel that, as Hosea says, your heart is divided and you are found wanting. You cannot get your thoughts together; you cannot concentrate your affections; you are “as when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth”—a broken, shivered thing! You cannot rally your mind to confidence in God. Your mind is dead to that which is good and your heart is divided by a thousand delusive devices.

Perhaps you go further with the figure and seem to be dried, sapless, useless, hopeless. A bone is dried when every particle of marrow is gone out of it; when it looks as if it never could have been covered with flesh, or have been part of a living body. Are you lamenting because you seem to be devoid of spiritual hunger, desire, or regret? Do you mourn that you cannot feel, cannot will, cannot repent, cannot love, cannot even fear? Do you groan because you cannot find in yourself anything which is good or looks that way? Do you ever groan out that mournful song—

*“Your saints are comforted, I know,  
And love Your house of prayer!  
I sometimes go where others go,  
But find no comfort there.  
I hear, but seem to hear in vain,  
Insensible as steel!  
If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.  
My best desires are faint and few,  
I gladly would strive for more!  
But, when I cry, ‘My strength renew,’  
Seem weaker than before.”*

Truly, you are as a dried bone that has long been bleaching in the sun— out of which all trace of life and feeling and power has departed!

This is a very sad description of a man’s soul and yet, how many of us have had to subscribe to it for ourselves? It is just what we felt ourselves to be while we were without God and without hope! And yet, the Spirit of God was convicting us of our guilt. Further, these bones could, by no means, raise themselves. We never heard of such a thing as a dead man restoring himself to life, though he is but newly buried, if he is, indeed, dead—he cannot lift a hand towards his own reviving. These bones were without trace of life. The flesh was gone, devoured by kites and jackals, or rotted and scattered in impalpable powder to the four winds of Heaven. How could these carcasses raise themselves? There was no trace of moisture left upon them! They could not give themselves life or motion—it were a fool’s hope to look for such a thing!

Is that the dreary fact which forces itself upon you? Do not try to forget it. You are discovering the truth! You are already in a lost condition if you have not believed in Jesus Christ. You are not, as some vainly say, in a state of probation—your probation is over and you are already condemned because you have not believed on the Son of God! In you there is no spiritual power to stir towards God until His Spirit moves towards you. You will remain cast out in the open valley unless God’s Grace shall come to you and unless His Spirit shall put breath into you. For you to be saved will be as much out of the common course of Nature as any other miracle—and in it you will have no finger so as to be able to boast—for the Lord, alone, must save you, or you are lost forever! It is a terrible word for a man to say, but it is the truth, and nothing more than the truth, that he is ruined by sin and “without strength” to repair the damage.

There seemed to be, before these bones, no prospect but the fire. When they that cleansed the valley came along and found these bones, they would gather them up as offensive objects and cast them into the fire of Tophet to be consumed. This is the only lot that remains unto dry bones and the same awaits those who are spiritually like they are. Has the Holy Spirit been dealing with any of you till you feel as if there were nothing for you but a certain judgment and fiery indignation? Do you begin to feel, in your own conscience, the first burning of the fire which never shall be quenched? Ah, whatever may be your gloomy apprehensions, they are none too gloomy!

It is a fearful thing to have sinned! It is an awful thing to be called to judgment! And it is a more terrible thing, still, to be under that judgment, now, and only to be waiting until that sentence shall be carried out, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire.” Oh, if you cannot sleep at night and if all enjoyment of earthly comforts seems to be taken away from you. If you begin to sting yourself and make your own life wretched, I shall not wonder at it! It is amazing that a man can live and be quiet, and yet be under the wrath of God! It is a strange thing that he can walk this earth with a smile upon his face while yet his sin is unforgiven and the sword of the Lord is furbished to work his destruction! Oh, that the sinner knew the jeopardy under which he lives and the frail barrier that divides him from eternal misery! Does he not know that if his breathing should cease, he is gone to the place where hope is a stranger? I say, if a man mourns and sighs over his terrible future so that a dreadful sound is in his ears, he only frets reasonably and his fears are based on solemn truth!

Moreover, these people felt that they were cut off from healing agencies. They say, “We are cut off for our parts.” That is, each bone is cut off from its fellow and the whole thing is cut off as to its parts from every hope and comfort. These banished Israelites were cut off from the land of Canaan; cut off from the Temple; cut off from the priesthood; cut off from the sacrifices—cut off from all hope of approaching God. Many poor souls have been made to feel as if they, too, were cut off. Their Sabbaths are no rest to them; the House of Prayer brings no delight; the preaching of the Gospel yields no consolation. They turn to their Bibles and every page seems to flash a threat, while no gentle shower of mercy drops from above! They fall on their knees, but even prayer seems to be a hollow mockery! They cannot pray as they would. They associate with godly friends, but they gain nothing by their fellowship. Go where they may, they think themselves like a dry bone which meets its fellow dry bone and is none the nearer to eternal life for such dreary communion. The man is a nuisance to himself and his very existence is a weariness.

Ah, you think, perhaps, I am describing an extreme case, but I know that I am picturing some whose eyes are looking upon me at this moment! Happy they who have been delivered from this wretched state! I had almost said, happy they who are experiencing it, for those who feel their sinfulness are on the road to better things! Brothers and Sisters, I hope your extremity will be God’s opportunity. When your bones are dried, then will God come in as the Resurrection and the Life and make these dry bones live! When you appear to be beyond the possibility of mercy, then God, with whom all things are possible, will deal with you in a way of extraordinary Grace and cause you to rejoice in His salvation!

It seemed to these poor people as if they were quite given over, for when bones are cast out in the field and left to be bleached by the wind and the sun; when nobody gives them burial, but there they lie, the refuse of the charnel house, then they are, according to all likelihood, left for destruction. I have heard of persons who have felt in their spirit as if they were forever banished from the Light of God. They have cried, “Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Is the Throne of Grace closed against the mourner? Will nothing avail? Will not cries and tears bring an answer?”

By such downcast ones a whisper has been heard inwardly saying, “There is no mercy for you—you are cast out as reprobate silver.” It is the whisper of Satan in the spirit and it comes with piercing power! The devil often uses the conscience to be the hack on which he rides in his errands of torment. Yet there is a measure of truth in the insinuation. Apart from Christ, we are cast off! Apart from Christ, God cannot look upon us except in anger! Apart from the atoning blood, our sins protest against the entrance of mercy and there we lie—self-condemned and helpless— abandoned in our own judgment to swift and sure condemnation! Here, then, is language full of misery and yet sadly true. We are sold under sin by nature and led captive by the devil—driven by our iniquities to endless misery from which ignorance and wickedness will not permit us to escape.

II. I now turn to that point upon which I desire to struggle with some of you this morning, that you may be fetched up by the Spirit’s power from the depths of despondency. Here is AN EVIL WORD in the text—“Our hope is lost.” It is a good thing if our false hopes are lost, but true hope is still to be had. Hope is not denied to any man—if he will believe in Jesus, he may yet be saved. They said of old in the Latin, Dum spiro spero, while I breathe, I hope. And I turn the proverb over and say, Dum spero spiro— while I hope, I breathe! To render the sentences rather freely will suit me well—“While I live, I hope, and while I hope, I live.”

Sinner, your life lies in hope and while you have hope, you have life! To despair is an unwarrantable thing—a thing full of sin and fraught with mischief—besides being false and unreasonable. Despair, which is the mind’s declaration that there is no hope, is not so much a sickness of the understanding as a sin of the soul. It is a crime against the Truth of God; a high offense against the Lord of Love. God is, “the God of Hope,” and those who are without hope are also without God! No mortal has a just pretense to perish in despair and if he does so, despair is a form of suicide, a form of willful self-destruction. No man has a right to despair! No man can be right while he is despairing.

Let me just speak about this and keep to the point. Despair is a high insult to God. It casts dishonor upon His chief attributes. In the first place, it is most derogatory to the Truth of God. If a man says, “I cannot be saved,” he contradicts the Divine command, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” God has sent the Gospel to men and it is no other than good news to them, but despair virtually says it is no Gospel, it is no good news! God has set up a Throne of Grace and promises to meet there with the sinner, but this man claims that there is no Throne of Grace, for he denies that there can be any Grace for him. He refuses to come to the loving Father because he feels sure that He will show no mercy, though He has declared that He will do so!

God has given a thousand precious promises, such as this—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The despairing sinner says he does not believe this—his sin is too scarlet to be made white—the crimson of his guilt is too ingrained ever to be washed away. Thus he calls God’s promises, lies, and this is a daring thing to do. “He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.” It would be an exceedingly heinous offense for me to stand up and say to the Great Physician, “You say, ‘I can heal you,’ but it is an empty boast—my wound is incurable! Great God, you say, ‘I can forgive you,’ but it is lie—my sins are such as You can never pass by.”

Mark, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord our God is very jealous of His truthfulness. His name is, “God That Cannot Lie,” and he that dares to say that He will break His promise has done Him sore despite. I need not, surely, show the infamy of this crime! Let your own hearts condemn the treasonable thought! He that despairs, insults God’s power. He does, in effect, tell the Lord that He pretends to a power which He does not possess. God says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—the man says he will not trust in Christ, for he does not believe that God can save him! He declares that he has gone beyond the bounds of mercy and so he tells the ever Gracious One that He has no power to save him. The Lord loves not that His Omnipotence should be thus denied. He is grieved with those who thus limit the Holy One of Israel. They that would restrain His power shut out one of the brightest beams of His Glory.

And despair abundantly casts dishonor upon God’s mercy. Know you not that His mercy endures forever? “The Lord God merciful and gracious” is one of the ways of His manifestation. Has He not told us that He “delights in mercy”? Yet, if you say, “He will not have mercy upon me, I have out-sinned His Grace. I have gone beyond all possibility of forgiveness,” you do, as much as lies in your power, spit in the face of the God of Love! Have you ever thought of this? Grieve to think that you have ever grieved Him in this fashion! This is the cruelest of sins—it aims its dagger at the heart of the Lord—it pierces the Redeemer’s hands and feet! The Lord glories in His power to save and He has plainly declared that He will save all those who confess their sins and put their trust in Him—and do we doubt Him? Dare we so derogate from the Glory of the Most High as to say that there remains no hope of Grace for us? Shame on such insulting falsehood!

Mark you, while it does this, which is bad enough, despair brings out the devil and crowns him in Christ’s stead! Despair says to Satan, “You are victorious over the mercy of God! You have conquered Christ Himself.” Christ says that He is revealed that He may destroy the works of the devil and you stand up and say, “Here are certain of the devil’s works which Jesus cannot destroy, namely, my sin and my sinful inclinations.” You wave the flag of the devil in the face of an insulted Savior and, whereas He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, you, in fact, tell Him that He has not half the power to save that Satan has to destroy—that Satan can be more successful in destruction than Christ can be effectual in saving!

What? Have you, again, chosen Barabbas and given up Jesus? And is Barabbas, in this case, the fiend of Hell? Will you believe him and not believe God? Can you assert that he, the father of lies, is more worthy of belief than the Christ who died that men might live? Yet despair says as much as this and says it in the most offensive manner! It prefers Beelzebub to Jesus, for it believes the lie of Hell and rejects the Word of God from Heaven! I go a little further and I say, with a deep feeling of solemnity, that this heinous sin of despair tramples on the blood of Christ. Christ has died and shed His blood—and we know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. We have God’s Word for it, yet here is a man who says, “It cannot cleanse me from my sin.”

If we look deep into the essence of actions, we shall see that despair despises the Atonement and denies its efficacy. We tell the man that there is forgiveness, but he mutters, “It is not for me.” We tell him that Jesus Christ has emptied His veins to fill a sin-cleansing fountain and he answers, “It may be true. He may be able to save all others, but not me.” Now, what you have a right to say, other people may also say. And if all united with you, it would be tantamount to declaring that the Crucifixion is an empty show; that the Redeemer’s Atonement is a mere pretense and that Christ is powerless to save! You reduce the Savior to an impotent pretender—and can this be done with impunity? We preach in vain if this is so! We preach a Savior who cannot save, an Atonement which cannot cleanse! Will not God deal with you for this, if you persist in this provocation?

Perhaps you think it is very humble of you to talk so, but it is not—it is the height of arrogant impudence! Despair is highly insulting to the dear Redeemer, the Glory of whose Person is involved in His power to forgive. Remember, Judas who despaired was damned, while the men who crucified Christ were led by Peter’s sermon to believe and live. Great sinners who believe shall find mercy, but far less offenders who despair shall find misery. God save you, then, from the Judas sin of despairing and enable you to believe in Jesus Christ at once! I must go a step further. Despair has something in it of sinning against the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit brings you rich cordials in the promises of God which will raise your spirits and will restore you from death.

And what do you do with them? You take them and dash them against the wall, as if this almighty medicine, devised by Infinite Wisdom, were the deceitful nostrum of a quack and you could not receive it! It seems to me a great and horrible offense to deny the testimony of the Spirit of God, even of Him who gives to the Holy Scriptures inspiration and certainty— and this you do when you refuse to believe for eternal life! Jesus has put it before you, Himself, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” How can you think that He will cast you out? The Prophet cries, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.” But Despair answers, “There is no wine and no milk for me,” and it denies that Grace is to be had without price.

In the teeth of Scripture, it declares that there is no pardon, no mercy, no salvation—thus it denies the witness of the Spirit of God! Oh, take heed, despairing one, lest it be said to you, “You have not given the lie unto men, but unto God.” It is a master sin, this sin of despair! God save you from it if you are in danger of falling into it, or if you are already its prisoner! When a man gives way to despair, there comes upon him, usually, a habit of wrangling against God and His Truth. Oh, see him at it! He is very low and he comes to see the minister. And the minister’s compassionate soul would comfort him in a moment if it were possible and, therefore, he begins to talk to him about the Gospel.

“But,” says the other, and he introduces a tough question which throws the Gospel out of sight. “Oh,” says the minister, “but God hears prayer.” “No, no,” says the man, and he begins quarrelling about prayer and its disagreement with Divine decrees and so forth. The man snarls like a dog, not to keep his bone, but as if he begged to have good food taken away from him. He does not want it. His soul abhors all manner of meat. The minister sets before him a precious promise which he thinks will certainly meet his case, but the perverse mind strives against it and fights with the promise as if it were his worst enemy! It is not a promise that suits his case at all—there is a word in it which he does not understand—and off he goes on a tangent, beclouding the Word of God and eclipsing its light— so that he may, if possible, keep himself from being comforted!

If God’s people come and try to cheer him with their experience, he fights against their experience tooth and nail! It may be theirs, but it never can be his—there is something particular and peculiar about them—why they should have mercy. And there is something equally particular and special about him as to why he should not have mercy. He has the key of the door of hope, locks it on the inside and then murmurs, “I am shut up and cannot come forth.” Whereas he fastens the door, himself! Sometimes the despairing one gets into such a nasty, ugly temper against everything that comes to him from the Bible and from the ministers of God, that you begin to think that he must be half mad. So, perhaps, he is, but it is not a madness that saves him from responsibility—it is a madness which will be laid to his charge in the great day of account because it is self-inflicted and willfully persisted in! Oh, what a wrangling, contentious spirit will despair breed, so contrary to receiving the kingdom of Heaven as a little child!

Worse than this, despair makes a man ready for any sin, for there are many that say, “I can never go to Heaven, therefore I will take a good swing, here, and get what pleasure I can while it is within reach.” Have I not heard them say, if not in words, yet in their actions—“There is no mercy for me and I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. I will go the whole hog, now I am at it! I will, at least, know the heights and depths of sin, as there is no chance of mercy for me”? Ah, and when Satan takes a man in another temper, he tells him that God will never forgive him—and the poor creature sits down in sullen rebellion, murmurs, thinks hard things of God, wishes he had never been born—and curses the day in which it was said that a man child had seen the light! Then he will be filled with blasphemous thoughts and it may even come to pass that he rushes into self-destruction and takes a leap into sure perdition! How many have been driven by despair to the knife and to the halter, or to a watery grave, I cannot tell! But this I know, that if Satan can once fill a man’s mind with that, and make him say that God is not true, that the Gospel is not true, or at least not true to him, then the enemy glories and cries, “I have him, body and soul! I can do anything with him, now.”

It was said of the Russian soldiers that they would not go to battle till they were drunk with raki and, certainly, some men are champions for the devil when they are drugged by despair of pardon. Captain Past-Hope is a fierce leader of bandits and will do and dare the blackest crimes. With all my might I cry to you—above all things shun despair, never say your hope is lost! There is salvation for you yet! God has not cast you away! Oh, do not cast away yourself! What are you doing? The Lord has not given you over to the tormentors, but you are writing your own sentence! You sit down and seem to think that you cannot be happy till you are thoroughly unhappy and cannot be at rest till you are driven from all peace!

I must still plead with you over this matter. Let me say, further, despair degrades a man, degrades him below the brute beast, for brutes do not despair. See how an insect will struggle, even when it is cut in halve! Look at a poor bird—what hope it has, even in its worst state, of yet escaping the fowler’s net—still it flutters and does its best to get away. Will you despair where ants and wasps and birds still hope? Have you never seen a dog that had done something wrong and has been beaten by its master? He tries to lick the hand that has beaten him and he cannot be happy till he is forgiven! Poor creature, how it looks up for a smile! You have been chastened, you are smarting under it now, but you do not turn to God, nor seek His favor! You think worse of God than your dog thinks of you! Instead of crouching to His feet, as your poor dog does to you, to try and get a gracious word, you growl at the great Lord—“It is of no use for me to be humble: there is no hope.” You slander the Almighty! You malign the name of Jesus Christ! You deny the power of the Spirit of God and so you degrade yourself below the beast that perishes!

Oh this despair—avoid it, I pray you, as you would avoid death, itself, for it will render all means of Grace useless to you! If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. If you fall into despair, the songs of Zion will be dolorous ditties in your ears and the preaching of the Gospel might as well be the preaching of the Law. See how a despairing man shuts his ears, like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm you ever so wisely! It matters not what the theme may be—if it is infinite mercy, free forgiveness, or everlasting love—yet as long as the soul is despairing, you do but make it the more wretched. The hopeless hearer rejects all consolation, his soul refuses to be comforted and his despair embitters every morsel he eats and every drop he drinks.

Despair, too, is certainly vain and wicked because it has no Scripture, whatever, to support it. “Oh,” you say, “but there are many dark Scriptures.” I know there are, but I have not time, this morning, to take them up, one by one, and show that they need not lead any man to despair. But there is one text in the Bible which covers all texts, be they black as they may. I do not mind what the passages of Scripture are, nor what they testify—I am sure they speak the Truth of God and, therefore, I know they cannot speak contrary to other parts of Divine Revelation. Here is the famous text—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” If you come to Christ, you cannot be cast out! “Oh, but there is a text!” I do not care about your text—you misunderstand your text! But there is no misunderstanding this one—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise east out.”

“Oh, but He will cast me out because\_\_.” Stop now! Are you going to contradict my Lord Jesus Christ? I cannot have patience with you. You will greatly provoke the Father. “I will in no wise cast out”—that means for no sort of reason, under no circumstances, under no possible conditions will Christ ever cast out a man that comes to Him! “Oh, but do listen to me.” No, I shall not listen to you and I wish you would not listen to yourself! You must listen to me as I repeat the Lord’s words—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” You are not to be listened to when you want to make out God to be false. Oh intolerable sin! Jesus says He will not cast you out. Again He cries—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does Christ mean that, or not? Look the Crucified One in the face—look at His wounds—and after having looked at them, say, “I do not believe Him. Christ lies to me!”

Will you dare say it? Can you thus defame Him? I tell you, there is nothing within the covers of this Book that ought to lead a man to have any doubt about the infinite mercy of God to him, provided he will just come and trust himself with Christ. There is no God at all if a soul that trusts in Jesus can be cast away, for the essential of Godhead is Truth. I am an atheist if the God in whom I have believed casts away those that trust in His Son, Jesus! He must be true, if every man is proven a liar! What do you say, then, to that blessed Word of God, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out”? Now, listen, you desponding one on the border of desperation! Have you never heard of the freeness of God’s mercy? Do you not know that everything that He bestows on sinners is given freely and graciously? The ground of God’s love is God’s love and nothing in us.

When He made His eternal choice, there was a remnant according to the election of Grace. It is Free Grace that chooses for its love and then loves for its choice. When Christ redeemed us, He did it freely—He freely delivered Himself up for us all. When He pardons sins, He is “exalted on high to give repentance,” and there is nothing freer than a gift— “to give repentance and remission of sins.” I tell you, the very spirit of the Gospel is this, that there is no worthiness nor desert needed in you in order to your immediate forgiveness and acceptance with God! All you have to do is to admit to the truth that you have sinned and deprived yourself of all claim upon God—and then believe what God declares to you—that He is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Do but accept this word of reconciliation and you are a saved man as sure as you live! The moment you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the moment you trust your soul wholly and entirely in those dear hands that were pierced for you, you are a saved man!

What right have you to doubt that God can save you when everything is prepared and given of free Grace? I tell you the Lord Jesus has saved many others like you. Are you a harlot? Did He not save the harlot, Rahab? Are you exceedingly wicked? You are not worse than Manasseh, who is said to have cut Isaiah in halves with a saw and filled the streets of Jerusalem with blood—and yet the Lord saved him! I know that even though you are the worst that has ever lived, still, you cannot outrun my Master’s wing-footed Grace! Paul said he was the chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy to be a pattern to you. Why talk, then, of sullenly lying down in despair? You sigh—ah, if you mind not what you are doing, what you say in your despair will come true through your own making it so! If a man says, “I shall die, I shall die of starvation,” and there is a dish before him, but he will not eat, I am afraid that the probabilities are that he will die of starvation—and it will serve him right.

If another person cries, “I shall die of thirst,” and there is a cup of drink before him and he will not put it to his mouth, I fear that he will die of thirst—and, (I come to where I was before)—he will die a suicide. He that refuses to eat and, therefore, dies, is as much a suicide as if he stabbed himself in the heart. And he that will not believe God’s mercy and will not accept it in Christ, is a soul-suicide as surely as if he plunged into debauchery and gave himself up to every lust. Oh that God the Holy Spirit would overcome some of you, this morning, who have yielded to this great and grievous sin!

III. We shall now close by meditating upon the Lord’s promise which we have styled A GRACIOUS WORD. I want you to notice this, poor troubled hearts—I want you to suck in this part of the text even if you forget all the rest. “Thus says the Lord God, Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves.” Notice, God meets us upon our own ground and takes us up where we are. They said, “We are as dried bones.” “Yes,” says God, “and I will quicken you.” But the Lord even goes beyond anything which they have felt or said, for they did not say they were buried. No, they were as bones scattered in the open valley, unburied—but the Lord knows they are worse than they think they are—and so He goes further in mercy than they thought they had gone in misery!

He says, “I will open your graves,” and that looks as if they were finally laid in the sepulcher. But the Lord adds, “and cause you to come up out of your graves.” Listen, Sinner, you have described yourself in a very distressing manner, but God accepts it as true and deals with you as being such as you describe, or even worse! He regards men not only as dead, but as entombed—in as hopeless a case as corpses pent up in the sepulcher and forgotten as dead men out of mind! O the mercy of the Lord! There is no boundary to it!

Now, observe how the Word brings comfort by introducing another actor upon the scene. You are like a dried bone, good for nothing, and able for nothing. But the Lord comes in, Himself, and He says, “I will, I will.” Oh, that grand, “I will!” “I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves.” “I will.” Now, listen. If God will save you, cannot you be saved? If it is all of Grace from top to bottom, cannot you be saved? If there is no merit needed of you; no previous goodness to qualify you—cannot salvation come to you? If Christ died for the ungodly, cannot you have a share in His death? If He came into the world to save sinners, then why not you? If the Gospel is not another shape of Law requiring something of us, but if it is all free, free, free Sovereign Grace—why should not you have it as well as I?

What should shut you out? If anything could have shut you out it could have shut me out, for I am just the same as you are by nature, yet I have obtained mercy, and why should not you? Come along and have it! It is freely given to all who seek it, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. But remember that God comforts us here by depicting the completeness of His working. He does not merely say, “I will open your graves.” That is something, but if they are dead, what is the good of opening the graves?

I have known careless ones drop into this place on a Sabbath as dead in sin as dead could be and buried, too—you never would have thought that they would listen to the Gospel! But there has crept into their ears some such sweet Word of God as this—“He that believes in Him is not condemned,” and they have said, “Dear me, how sweet it is! How precious that is.” Glory be to God, the grave has begun to open! But they felt they could not get hold of the Savior for themselves—and then the Lord has opened their hand and closed it on the promise—and when they get it, they will never give it up, but they have cried, “He loves me! He loves me! I will risk my salvation on it—I will trust Him! I will trust no one else.” Thus the Holy Spirit has fetched them out of the grave though they were dry bones before! He will do the same with you. Oh that you may have Grace to believe what God says here!

Lastly, notice the feeling which is produced by it. “And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves.” Ah, what a feeling a man has that there is a God when God has saved him! When he begins to dance for very joy of heart because he is fully forgiven, then he knows Jehovah is God! When his heart feels restful and full of peace; when he can say, “God is mine, Christ is mine, Heaven is mine,” he does not need evidences of the existence of God, or arguments to prove the power of God! He carries a demonstration of the Truth of God within his own heart and tells of it to others with tearful eyes. “Oh,” he says, “there is no mistake about it! There is a merciful God, for I have obtained mercy! There is a refuge for sinners, for I have fled to it! There is pardon, for I have obtained it! There is rest, for I enjoy it! There is a Heaven, for I begin to hear its bells ringing in my heart.”

Then shall you know that God Jehovah is God, indeed, when He has opened your graves and brought you out! O God, bless this poor word to the troubled ones, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1578 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

TAUGHT THAT WE MAY TEACH  
NO. 1578

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

**“And the Man said to me, Son of man, behold with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you; for to the intent that I  
might show them unto you are you  
brought here: declare all  
that you see to the house of Israel.”  
Ezekiel 40:4.**

WE learn from this text something concerning Ezekiel himself. He was certainly one of the greatest of the Prophets. His visions remind us of those of John, both for their brightness, splendor and number—and yet this eminent Prophet was, nevertheless, styled, “son of man.” He is continually called by that name. The title is used over and over again throughout the book of his prophecies—“son of man” to remind him that even the Seer, the Prophet, the Inspired, the man who was indulged with vision upon vision—was still only a man. The best of men are men at the best! Those eyes that are strengthened to behold the cherubim and to gaze upon the stupendous wheels of Providence are still only the eyes of a son of man!

The title was used to teach him humility and also to remind him of the condescension of God towards him and to fill him with awe and wonder that he should be chosen from the rest of mankind, though no more than they, to see such wondrous sights withheld from other eyes. To us this wears a very promising aspect, for if God can reveal Himself to one “son of man,” why not to another? And if God can speak, as He did speak, so wonderfully through Ezekiel, one son of man, why not through you? Why not through me? For we, too, are sons of men! We have no worthiness or fitness and neither does Ezekiel claim any. He is reminded of his descent—he is still one of the sons of men. Oh, be of good comfort, you who think that God can never use you—you who are poor in spirit and wish to serve Him—but deeply feel your own insignificance!

Remember that God is able to do for you exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think! He can yet reveal His Son in you and Himself to you and by you, after such methods as you have never dreamed of! And, possibly, the painful experience through which you are passing, even now, may be preparing you to stand upon yet loftier mounts and to behold visions of God which in happier days you shall tell to the house of Israel and by which multitudes shall be blessed through you!

This is our present subject—we will speak upon the manifestations with which God favors certain of His servants. Then, secondly, we will dwell upon their responsibility while they are enjoying such manifestations—they are bound to behold with their eyes and hear with their ears and set their heart upon all that God shall show them. And then, thirdly, we will speak upon the objective which God has in giving these manifestations to His more favored people. It is that they may declare all that they see, that the whole house of Israel may, as it were, see by these favored eyes and hear by these chosen ears and may set their hearts upon the Word of the Lord because another has first done so.

I. First, I shall have a little to say upon THE MANIFESTATIONS WITH WHICH CERTAIN OF GOD’S SERVANTS ARE FAVORED. The Lord Jesus Christ draws near in a very special manner to some of His people. He did to Ezekiel, for I take it that the Man mentioned in the chapter, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, is none other than our Divine Lord, who, though a Man, yet exceeds all men in the brightness of His wondrous Person. It was He, doubtless, who appeared to Ezekiel. Long before Christ came on earth to die, He appeared to His servants in different ways. He sojourned with Abraham as a Wayfarer, for such He found the Patriarch to be.

He wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok, for Jacob was wrestling with a sore trial. It was He that revealed Himself to Moses when the bush was burning and it was He that stood by Joshua’s side as the Man having a drawn sword in His hand. In different ways and forms He proved that His delights were with the sons of men. Before the Word appeared in actual flesh and blood, He communed here and there with His chosen servants. He will show Himself to any of you who seek Him. He will unveil the beauties of His face to every eye that is ready to behold them. There is never a heart that loves Him but He will manifest His love to that heart.

But, at the same time, He does favor some of His servants who live near to Him and who are called by Him to special service, with very remarkable manifestations of His Light and Glory. These revelations are not incessant. I suppose that no man is always alike. John was in Patmos I know not how long, but he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” on one occasion and he specially notes it. I do not suppose that Daniel or Ezekiel saw visions every night, or beheld the glories of God every day. Humanity is scarcely capable of the incessant strain of a perpetual manifestation of God! These things are, as we shall see, “like angels’ visits, few and far between.” There is a fellowship that can always be kept up, but the flood tide of manifestation—a noonday revelation—will not last on continually.

Ezekiel enjoyed a special manifestation and he tells us when it was, for men do not see God’s face without remembering it. He knew the date and recorded it. “In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that they city was smitten.” Days of heavenly fellowship are red letter days to be remembered so long as memory holds her seat. Yes, and it is noteworthy that the occasion of these manifestations was one of great distress. Five-and-twenty years of captivity must have been enough to wear down the spirits of God’s servants. Hence, He whose feet are as fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, comes and manifests Himself to His people, burning like brass in a furnace, giving them their times of comfort after 25 years of captivity!

He says, too, that it was 14 years after the city had been smitten, after it had been laid as a ruinous heap. Then God appeared. Oh, Beloved, when you have been long sorrowing, you may expect bright days! The coal-black darkness will brighten, after all! Nights do not last forever. Whenever you have much joy, be cautious—there is a sorrow on the road. But when you have much sadness, be hopeful—there is a joy on the way to you—you can be sure of that. Our blessed Lord reveals Himself to His people more in the valleys, in the shades, in the deeps than He does anywhere else. He has a way and an art of showing Himself to His children at midnight, making the darkness light by His Presence. Saints have seen Jesus more often on the bed of pain than in robust health.

There were more manifestations of Christ in Scotland among the heather and the hills in the days of bloody Claverhouse than there are now. There was more seen of Christ in France, I do believe, in the days of the Huguenots than ever is seen now. I fear that our Master has come to be almost a stranger in the land in these days, compared with what He was once, when His people wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—for then He was meeting them at every turn and corner. Let us hope that if days are gloomy, now, and we, ourselves, are in trouble, our Beloved will come and manifest Himself to us as He does not to the world!

It appears, in this case, that the manifestation to Ezekiel was made when he was put into an elevated condition. He says, “In the vision of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me up upon a very high mountain.” God has ways of lifting His people right up, away, away, away from mortal joy or sorrow, care or wish, into the spiritual realm. And then, when the mind has been lifted above its ordinary level and the faculties are brought up by some Divine process into a receptive state, He reveals Himself to us. These times come not always, but blessed are they to whom they come at all! When on the mountain alone with God, their spiritual nature asserts supremacy over the body till they scarcely know whether they are in the flesh or not—then the Lord reveals Himself to them.

When He had elevated Ezekiel thus, it appears that He conducted him to certain places, for He says, “For to the intent that I might show them unto you are you brought here.” God’s children are brought in experience to unusual places, on purpose, that they may get clearer sights of the love and Grace and mercy of God in Christ than they could obtain elsewhere. I have sometimes been puzzled to know why I underwent certain states of mind. I have found out the reason, occasionally—perhaps as often I have not. I remember preaching to you one Sabbath from the text, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” and if ever a minister preached from that text fearing that it was true of himself I did! I was under an awful darkness all the while and I could not tell why.

But on the Monday evening there came to me one who, by his very appearance, I could see was not far from madness. His eyes were starting from his head. His face was full of terror—and when he was alone in the room with me, he said, “You have delivered me from self-destruction. I am a man that God has forsaken and no one has ever spoken to my soul or my experience till last Sunday night.” By God’s great Grace and infinite bounty we were able to pilot that Brother into smoother waters and I hope that he now lives to rejoice in God. I felt thankful to the last degree that I had been dragged through all my depression because I was able to help him. Sometimes our experience is for the good of others and sometimes it is for our own good. You cannot see the beauty of certain gems unless you place them on black velvet. When you have something black behind, then you see their luster.

So there are promises of God in which you never will discover their very brightest meaning unless they are set against some dark soul-trouble. Much of faith’s education may be called black-letter learning. Very black the letters are, too, and very ugly looking, and they must be peered over. You cannot see the stars in the daytime—you must wait till the sun has gone down. Many promises of God you cannot see till you are in the dark and when the soul is in gloom. It may be that the Lord allows it to get there that it may gaze upon the starry promises and value every ray of light that streams from them. So you see, dear Friends, God leads His people from one place to another of Christian experience, along hills and dales, ravines and precipices—all in order that their minds, being elevated, they may be prepared to see bright visions of Himself and know Him better, love Him better and serve Him better.

However, it is not outward circumstances that can affect the Divine purpose—there must always be a movement of the Divine Spirit. In the third verse you read, “He brought me there.” When you get home, look through the chapter and see how this is repeated. “And He brought me to the inner court and He brought me to the north gate and He brought me” to this and to that. We never learn a Truth of God inwardly until God brings us to it. We may hear a Truth; we ought to be careful that we do not hear anything but the Truth of God, but God must bring that Truth home. No Truth is known well until it is burnt into us as with a hot iron. Some doctrines we can never doubt. “Oh,” said one to me, failing to convince me of some new theories, “no one could get a new idea into your head except with a surgical operation.” That witness is true if the new idea is contrary to the old-fashioned Gospel!

The things I preach are part and parcel of myself. I am sure that they are true. “Are you infallible?” you ask. Yes, when I declare what is in God’s Word. When I declare God’s Truth, I claim infallibility—not for myself, but for God’s Word. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” It will not do to be saying, “These are our views and opinions.” Why, if the Doctrines of Grace are not true, I am a lost man! If they are not the very Truth of God, I have nothing to live for! I have no joy in life and I have no hope in death if they are not the Truth of God! May God bring you, dear Friends, into a Truth of God and I will defy the devil to bring you out of it! If God brings you to it. If He writes it as with His own finger upon your soul, you will know it with solemn certainty.

People may say, “Where is your logic? And how does this consist with the progressive development of human thought?” and all that. I reply, “You can go and fiddle to what tune you please. As for me, these things are part and parcel of myself and I have made them my own.” I have gripped them and they hold me fast. I have no choice about them. I do not choose to believe in Free Grace—I believe it because I cannot help it! When one was asked whether he held Calvinistic doctrine, he answered, “No.” “Oh,” said the other, “I am glad to hear that.” “Yes,” he said, “but Calvinistic doctrine holds me.” There is a great difference between holding the Truth of God and the Truth of God holding you.

You will not hold the Truth of God aright unless you can say of it, with all your heart, “The Lord brought me into it.” “He brought me towards the south. He brought me into the inner court. He brought me forth into the outer court. He brought me to the Temple.” He did it all. “All your children shall be taught of the Lord” and there is no teaching like it, for He that is taught of God is taught Infallibly!

Thus I have spoken upon the manifestations with which God favors certain of His people.  
II. Now, secondly, let us notice THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THESE CHOSEN MEN WHILE THEY ARE THUS FAVORED. “The Man said to me, Son of man, behold with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you.” Did He not mean this—“Use all your senses, all your faculties, all your wits to understand Divine Truth”? When the Spirit of God favors you with Light, mind that you see and, when there is a sound of Grace, mind that you hear. Be not one of those forgetful hearers who behold their likenesses in a glass and then go their way and forget what manner of men they are.  
Oh, how much more we would understand of God’s Word if we gave our mind to it! We tell our children to learn their lessons “by heart.” If we put the full meaning into that expression, that is the way to learn the things of God! Learn them all over—take them into yourself by every faculty you possess! Strive, as God shall help you by His Spirit, to get at their innermost meaning by every power that is given you. First, He says, “See with your eyes.” What are the eyes for but to see with? He means this—look, pry, search with your eyes. Do not let the Truth of God flit before you and then say, “Yes, I have seen it.” No! Stop it! Hold it by meditation before the mind’s eyes and see with your eyes. Look, look, look into it! Remember what is said of the angels—“Which things the angels desire to look into”— not, “to look at,” but, “to look into.”  
Looking to Christ will save you, but it is looking into Christ that gives joy, peace, holiness, Heaven! Look into the Gospel—let your eyes be intent and steadfastly fixed upon every Truth of God—especially at choice times when God favors you with the noontide Light of His face! Then be doubly intent upon His Word. And then He puts it, “Hear with your ears.” Well, a man cannot use his ears for anything else, can he? Yes, but hear with your ears. Listen with all your might! You are to spy out the meaning with the mind’s eyes but, besides that, try to catch the very tone in which the promise or precept has been uttered. Treasure up the exact words, for though cavilers call it folly to speak of verbal Inspiration, I believe that we must have verbal Inspiration or no Inspiration.  
If any man shall say to you, “The sense of what your father said is true, never mind his words—you would reply, “Yes, but I would like to know precisely what he said, word for word.” I know that it is so in legal documents. It is not merely the sense that you look to, but every word must be correct. God’s Word, as it came from Him, came in such perfection that even to the syllables in which the sense was clothed, there was Infallibility about it. When I get God’s Word I would desire to hear it with my ears as well as see it with my eyes—to see its sense and then to love the expressions in which that sense is conveyed to me! He cares little for the sense of the words who is not jealous over the words which convey the sense!  
Oh, Brothers and Sisters, whenever God does, by His Word, open His heart to you, do not lose anything! Do not lose a sound—a syllable! The Lord demands something more. “Set your heart upon all that I shall show you.” Oh, but that is the way to learn from God—by loving all that He says—feeling that whatever God says, it is the thing you need to know. It is well “when your whole heart comes to know” the Truth of God and, when it knows it, encompasses it about with warm affections so that it may be like a fly in amber, the Word in the midst of your heart—encased there, enshrined there—never to be taken away from you! Set your whole heart on the Word of God! Some people like to read so many chapters every day. I would not dissuade them from the practice, but I would rather lay my soul soaking in half a dozen verses all day than I would, as it were, rinse my hands in several chapters.  
Oh, to bathe in a text of Scripture and to let it be sucked up into your very soul till it saturates your heart! The man who has read many books is not always a learned man, but he is a strong man who has read three or four books over and over till he has mastered them. He knows something! He has a grasp of thoughts and expressions and these will build up his life. Set your heart upon God’s Word! It is the only way to know it thoroughly—let your whole nature be plunged into it as cloth into dye. The Lord bids us do this towards all that He shall show us—“set your heart upon all that I shall show you!” We are to be impartial in our study of the Word of God and to be universal in its reception. Brothers and Sisters, do you pick over God’s Bible? I pray you, give up the habit!  
I have known professors who would not read certain chapters. Never read another till you have read that passage which now displeases you! Learn to love it for if there is a quarrel between you and a Scripture, it is you that is wrong, not the Scripture! And if there is any part of the Word of God of which you can say, “I differ from that,” the Word of God will never change—the party to change is yourself! Try to follow the Lord fully, even though it should cause the revision of cherished sentiments and even the alteration of your denominational connections. “Are we to be so particular in little things?” asks one. Yes, it is in little things that loyalty comes. A loving and obedient child obeys his father without saying, “This is a great thing and this is a little thing.”  
“Whatever He says to you, do it.” The habit of trifling with little duties grows, very soon, into a seared conscience about larger matters. “Oh, but we need not be so particular,” says one. Indeed, we must be! “Why are you so precise?” said one to a Puritan. “Sir,” he said, “I serve a very precise God.” “The Lord your God is a jealous God”—mind that—and He would have us to be a jealous people as to all His Word, whether of doctrine, or of precept, or of promise. Oh, for Grace to be willing and ready to see all that He would have us see and to hear all that He would have us hear— and to receive into our heart all that He would have us receive!  
Thus I have spoken upon the manifestations which God gives to some of His servants and the responsibility under which they are placed by them.  
III. But now, thirdly, what is the practical design of all this? WHAT IS GOD’S REASON FOR MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS SERVANTS? The objective is this—“Declare all that you see to the house of Israel.” First, see it yourself, hear it yourself, give your heart to it yourself and then declare it to the house of Israel. I have lately heard of a minister who said in the pulpit, “The doctrine of Atonement—I have heard a great deal about it, but I do not understand it.” He is going to take a holiday that he may solve some of his doubts. If he does not solve his doubts, soon, I would recommend he extend that holiday for the term of his natural life!  
He who does not understand the doctrine of the Atonement should read “The Shorter Catechism” and pray God to enlighten him. That is a book written for the young and ignorant—and it might be useful to many ministers. God grant us Grace that we may know what we do know and not attempt to declare to others anything but that which we have seen and heard and taken into our own hearts. But that being done, we are to tell the Truth of God to others, especially to those whom it concerns. Ezekiel had seen the form and vision of a temple and a city—he was to speak of this to the house of Israel.  
Dear Brothers and Sisters, you cannot tell who it may be to whom you are to speak, but this may be your guide—speak about what you have seen and heard to those whom it concerns. Have you been in gloom of mind and have you been comforted? The first time you meet with a person in that condition, speak about the comfort. Have you felt a great struggle of soul and have you found rest? Speak of your conflict to a neighbor who is passing through the same struggle. Has God delivered you in the hour of sorrow? Tell that to the next sorrowing person you meet. There is such a thing as casting pearls before swine—that can easily be done by an imprudent talkativeness—but when you find people who are hungry, give them bread! When you find people that are thirsty, offer them water. When you find that they need a blessing from God, tell them of that which has been precious to your own soul.  
Yes, but still this is not your only duty. God has shown us His precious Word that we may tell it to the house of Israel. Now, the house of Israel were a stiff-necked people and when Ezekiel went to them, they cast him aside—they would not listen. Yet he was to go and teach the Word of God to them. We must not say, “I will not speak of Christ to such a one because he would reject it.” Do it as a testimony against him, even if you know he will reject it. Go, my Brother, and sow your Seed and remember that in the parable the sower did not only cast a handful on that fair spot of ground that was all ready for it, but he sowed among thorns and thistles—he even cast seeds on the highway—from which the birds of the air soon removed it.  
“Give a portion to seven and also to eight.” “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand, for you know not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether it shall be alike good.” Go and tell what God tells you. Remember what we read just now. “What I shall show you in secret, that reveal you in the light. What I have spoken to you in closets, that reveal you upon the housetops.” “Are we all to be preachers, then?” Yes, all that have been taught of God are to teach. “Are we all to stand up in public?” asks one. I did not say that, but somewhere or other—perhaps in the pew where you now sit, or on the steps as you go out, or by the roadside, or in the shop tomorrow morning—you can all put in a word edgeways for Jesus Christ. Drop a sentence or two for the honor of His name!  
“I do not know what to say,” says someone. Do not say it, then, Brother, Sister. I would recommend you not say anything if you do not know what to say. But if you have seen with your eyes and heard with your ears and received into your heart—then you know what to say! And the first thing that comes to hand will be the best thing to say, for God, who knows the condition of people’s minds, knows how to fit you to their condition and make your experience as a Christian to tally with the experience of the man or woman who needs the aid of your light. Go, and the Lord be with you!  
If there are any here who have never seen the Lord, if they have any desire after Him, if they have any sense of sin, if they have any wish for the eternal Light, let them remember those gracious Words—“Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out,” and that precious invitation, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” May the Holy Spirit bring you to trust in Jesus at once and to the name of the Lord be the praise forever and ever. Amen. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1618 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HOLINESS, THE LAW OF GOD’S HOUSE  
NO. 1618

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.”  
Ezekiel 43:12.**

I SHALL not enter into the immediate meaning of Ezekiel’s vision. I believe that the house of which Ezekiel speaks is typical of the Church of the Living God. In it I see not so much the visible Church as that spiritual, mystical Church of Jesus Christ which is the one place of His abode. It is found in a state of Grace on earth and in full Glory in Heaven. Below it is the holy Church militant—above it is the holy Church triumphant. The Church is the only thing upon earth which can properly be called the House of God, for He dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. The finest architecture could never constitute a proper shrine for Deity. Look to yon blue heavens, gaze upon the spangled vault of night and view the ever-flashing, wide and open sea and tell me if any handiwork of man can rival the temple of Nature!

Peer into boundless space and see what a temple is already built— within what walls would you hope to house the infinite Jehovah? He has deigned, however, to choose Zion and to desire it for His habitation. The saints are built together as a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit. He resides among His people according to His promise, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” Hence the Church is the home of the Great Father, where He dwells in the midst of His family and takes His rest. Has He not said, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it”? As a man in his own house takes his case and finds delight, so does God take pleasure in them that fear Him—“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” The Church is God’s house, for there He makes Himself known and manifests Himself as He does not unto the outside world. “In Judah is God known, His name is great in Israel.” His people know Him, for they are all taught of the Lord. None of them has need to say to his neighbor, “know the Lord,” for they all know Him as their Father, from the least even to the greatest.

What sweet familiarities are enjoyed in the Church! What holy intimacies between the great Father and His children! How tenderly does He reveal Himself so that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him! His saints are a people near unto Him—they have access to Him at all times, for they dwell in His house and are His own dearly beloved children. What more glorious thing can be said of the Church than this—“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved”? Of what but the Church, the true house of the Lord, could we read such words as these—“The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing”?

The Church is God’s house and, therefore, He provides for it even as a man cares for his own house spends his strength for it, exercises his wisdom on its behalf and is always thoughtful over it. God lays Himself out for His people. For this His Son has both died and risen again. For this the Lord arranges the purposes of Heaven. For this He works among the children of men. The Lord’s portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance—to His chosen He has special regard! He will see to it that His spiritual house is not allowed to decay, or to be short of anything which makes for its comfort, security and honor. The Lord links His own name with the Church as a man does with his house. It is the house of the Lord and He is the Lord of the house. Beloved, it is the greatest honor that can happen to any man to be a member of the household of God! There are great houses in the world of long descent and of imperial rank, but what are they compared with the household of God? The one family in Heaven and earth named by the name of Jesus has far more true glory about it than all the families of princes! I had rather be the lowest saint than the greatest emperor! Such honor have all the saints!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, if you and I have had the privilege to be admitted into God’s house and to be made a part of His family, it is exceedingly necessary that we should know the law of the house. This is desirable at our entrance and equally necessary as long as we remain in the house of the Lord. Paul wrote to Timothy with this design, “that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the Living God.” To this end Ezekiel was sent of God to those who desired the favor of God. He was to show them the form of the house and the goings out and the comings in, and all the ordinances and all the forms and laws thereof. And he was to write it in their sight, that they might keep the whole form, all the ordinances—and do them.

God’s house is not lawless. It is the abode of liberty, but not of license. They that dwell in God’s house are in His immediate Presence and our God is a consuming fire! He had better be holy who dwells with the thrice holy God! The Lord will be sanctified in them that come near Him and if any enter the house to misbehave themselves, they will find that judgment begins at the House of God. How terrible are those words—“If any man defiles the Temple of God, him will God destroy.” Come we, then, with great attention to look at our text which will inform us as to the law of the house! O that the Spirit may cause us to understand and then lead us to obey!

Let us first try to expound the law of the house. Secondly, let us examine ourselves as to whether we have observed this law of the house. Thirdly, let us see the bearings of this law and, fourthly, let us take orders for having this law of the house obeyed.

I. First, LET US EXPOUND THE LAW OF THE HOUSE. Note the text carefully. It begins and ends with the same words—“This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.” These words make a frame for the statute, or a sort of hand on each side pointing to it. “This is the law of the house.” Why are the words mentioned twice? Is it because we are such wayward scholars that we need to be told everything twice, at the least? Is it because we are so blind and dull that unless we have a thing repeated we are not likely to notice it, or noticing it, are sure to forget it? Or was this posted up because of the peculiar law as to going in and out of the Temple?

We read in the 46th chapter, at the 9th verse, “But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that enters in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that enters by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it.” When the worshipper entered, he saw over the portal, “This is the law of the house”— and when he went out, if he looked back at the gate of his departure, he would see there, too, “This is the law of the house.”

Or is it because this is the law of the house at the beginning of life and this is the law of the house at the end of it? Is it because this is the law of the house for the young convert and this is the law of the house for the most venerable saint? At any rate, the alpha and omega of Christian conduct is contained in the law of the house. You can go no higher than obedience to that Light of God! Indeed, you may say of it, “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” Go as far as you may, this still remains, to the most advanced among us the law of the house, for the Lord’s Commandments are exceedingly broad. And what is this law of the house? Why, that everything about it is holy! All things in the Church must be pure, clean, right, gracious, commendable, God-like.

Everything that has to do with the Church of God must be holy! Here are the words, “Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit round about shall be most holy.” Observe that all must be holy. No, observe again, it must be most holy. In the old Temple there was only one little chamber in the center that was most holy—this was called the Holy of Holies, or the Holiness of Holiness. But now, in the Church of God, every chamber, hall and court is to be most holy. As was the veiled shrine into which none entered except the High Priest and he but once a year and then not without blood—as was that august apartment in which God shone forth from between the cherubim! Such for holiness is the entire Church to be in every member and every service.

Observe that this law of the house is not only intense, reaching to the superlative degree of holiness, but it is most sweeping and encompassing, for we read, “Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy.” The outer courts, the courts of the Gentiles, the walls, the promenades outside the walls, the slopes of the hill—every part that had to do with the mountain upon which the Temple stood—was to be most holy! From which I gather that in the Church of God it is not merely her ministers that are to be most holy, but her common members—not her sacraments, only, but her ordinary meals. Not her Sabbaths only, but her workdays. Not her worship only, but her daily labor. All that which surrounds our consecrated life is to be consecrated!

The secular matters which touch our religion are to be made religious— whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Not only are the bells on the high priest’s garments to be “holiness unto the Lord,” but the bells of the horses are to be the same. The pots and bowls of our kitchens are to be as truly sacred as the golden vessels with which the priests served the altar of the Most High! Holiness should be far reaching and cover the whole ground of a Christian’s life. He should be sanctified, “spirit, soul and body,” and in all things he should bear evidence of having been set apart unto the Lord. Paul prayed that the very God of Peace would sanctify us wholly. Amen! So let it be!

We notice, once again, that this holiness was to be conspicuous. The Church is not, as a house, sequestered in a valley, or hidden away in a woods—it is as the Temple which was set upon the top of a mountain where it could be seen from afar. The whole of that mountain was holy. Conspicuous holiness ought to be the mark of the Church of God. We should be a peculiar people, distinguished as a race dwelling alone that cannot be numbered among the nations. We ought to be noted, not for talent, not for wealth, not for loud professions, but for holiness. Somehow or other true holiness is sure to be spied out and remarked upon. Like the violet, it tries to hide itself, but it is betrayed by its perfume. Like the star, it twinkles with modesty, but it is discovered by its light.

Grace cannot be put under a bushel. It would gladly be sheltered from its enemies by its obscurity, but the Holy City always stands on a hill and it cannot be hidden! Would God that whenever people speak of the Church to which we belong they may acknowledge its holiness! Would God that whenever they speak of you or me, they may have no evil thing to say of us unless they lie. The world does not know how to name the thing which it both admires and hates, but it soon perceives its existence and acknowledges its power—the thing I mean is holiness, which is at once the glory and the strength of the people of God!

What is holiness? I know what it is and yet I cannot define it in a few words. I will bring out its meaning by degrees, but I shall not do better than the poor Irish lad who had been converted to the faith. When he was asked by the missionary, “Patrick, what is holiness?” “Sir,” said he, “it is having a clean inside.” Just so! Morality is a clean outside, but holiness is being clean within! Morality is a dead body washed and laid in clean white linen—holiness is the living form in perfect purity. To be just to man is morality, to be hallowed unto God is holiness! The Church of God must not be reputedly good, but really pure. She must not have a name for virtue, but her heart must be right before God—she must have a clean inside!

Our lives must be such that observers may peep within doors and may see nothing for which to blame us. Our moral cleanliness must not be like that of a bad housewife who sweeps the dirt under the mats and puts away rags and rottenness in the corner cupboards. We must be so clear of the accursed thing that even if they dig in the earth they will not find an Achan’s treasure hidden there! God desires truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part He would make us to know wisdom. We might instructively divide holiness into four things and the first would be its negative side—separation from the world. There may be morality, but there can be no holiness in a worldling! The man who is as other men are, having experienced no change of nature and knowing no change of life, is not yet acquainted with Scriptural holiness.

The word to every true saint is, “Come you out from among them. Be you separate: touch not the unclean thing.” If we are conformed to the world, we cannot be holy! Jesus said of all His saints, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” We are redeemed from among men that we may be like our Redeemer—“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” We are not to be separate as to place, avoiding men with monkish fanaticism, for nobody mixed more with sinners than did our Lord! “This Man receives sinners and eats with them” is the old reproach, but yet our Lord was not one of them, as everybody could see! Nothing could be more clear than the difference between the lost sheep and the Shepherd who came among them seeking out His own. Every action, every word, every movement betokened that He was another man from the sinners whom He sought to bless. So must it be with us. As the lily among thorns, so must we be among the mass of men.

My fellow professors, are you different from those among whom you dwell? Are you as different from them as a Jew is from a Gentile? Now, a Jew may do what he likes—he may live in the same style as an Englishman, a Pole, or a German, and he may in garb, in business, in speech be like the people among whom he dwells, but the image of father Jacob is upon him and he cannot disguise the fact that he is an Israelite. If he is converted to Christianity, he still does not lose his nationality—you can still perceive that he is of the seed of Abraham. So ought it to be with the real Christian! Wherever he is and whatever he does, men ought to spy out that he is of the sect which is everywhere spoken against—and not an ordinary man. The title, “the Peculiar People,” belongs to all the followers of Jesus. They are strangers and sojourners, aliens and foreigners in this world, for they have come out at the Divine call to be separated unto the Lord forever.

There is no holiness without separateness from the world. Holiness, next, consists very largely in consecration. The holy things of the sanctuary were holy because they were dedicated to God. No one drank out of the sacred vessels except God’s servants, the priests. No victims were killed by the sacrificial knife, or laid upon the altar except such as were consecrated to Jehovah, for the altar was holy and the fire thereon was holy. So must it be with us if we are to be holy—we must belong to Jehovah—we must be consecrated to Him and be used for His own purposes. Not nominally, only, but really and as a matter of fact we must live for God and labor for God. That is our reason for existence and if we answer not to this end, we have no excuse for living—we are blots upon the face of Nature, waste places and barren trees which cumber the ground. Only so far as we are bringing glory to God are we answering the end and design of our creation!

We are the Lord’s priests and if we do not serve Him, we are base pretenders! As Christians, we are not our own, but bought with a price and if we live as if we were our own, we defraud our Redeemer. Will a man rob God? Will he rob Jesus of the purchase of His blood? Can we consent that the world, the flesh, the devil should use the vessels which are dedicated to God? Shall such sacrilege be tolerated? No! Let us feel that we are the Lord’s and that His vows are upon us, binding us to lay ourselves out for Him, alone! This is an essential ingredient of holiness—the cleanest bowl in the sanctuary was not holy because it was clean—it became holy when, in addition to being cleansed, it was also hallowed unto the Lord! This is more than morality, decency, honesty, virtue!

You tell me of your generosity, your goodness and your pious intentions—what of these? Are you consecrated? If you are not consecrated to God, you know nothing of holiness! This is the law of the house, that the Church is consecrated to Christ and that every man that comes into her midst must be the same. We must live for God and for His glorious kingdom or we are not holy! Oh to make a dedication of ourselves to God without reserve and then to stand to it forever—that is the way of holiness!

But this does not complete the idea of holiness unless you add to it conformity to the will and Character of God. If we are God’s servants, we must follow God’s commands—we must be ready to do as our Master bids us because He is the Lord and must be obeyed. We must make the Lord Jesus our example and, as Ezekiel says, “we must measure the pattern.” It must be our meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent us! Our rule is not our judgment, much less our fancy, but the Word of God is our statute book. We are to obey God that we may grow like God. The question to be asked is, “What would the Lord have me do?” Or, “What would Christ, Himself, have done under the circumstances?” Not, “What is my wish,” but, “What is God’s Law about this!” Not, “What will please me,” but, “What will please Him?” Having been begotten again by God into the image of Christ and so having become His true children, we are to grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, being imitators of God as dear children, for so, and so only, shall we be holy!

Understand, then, that with regard to the whole range of the Church, however wide her action, conformity to the Character of God is the law of the house. Likeness to Christ must be seen in every single member and in every act of every member in the whole body and in all its corporate acts. This is the law of the house. I must add, however, to make up the idea of holiness, that there must be a close communion between the soul and God, for if a man could be—which is not possible—conformed to the likeness of God and consecrated to God, yet if he never had any communication with God, the idea of holiness would not be complete. The Temple becomes holy because God dwells in it. He came into the Most Holy Place in a most especial manner and this accounted for its being the Holy of Holies. Even so, special communion with the Lord creates special holiness. God’s Presence demands and creates holiness.

And so , Brothers and Sisters, if we would be holy we must dwell in God and God must dwell in us. We cannot be holy at a distance from God. How is it with you? How is it with this Church? Is God with us in all our services? Is He recognized in all our efforts? Does He reign in all our hearts? Does Jesus abide with us, for this is according to the law of the house that God should be everywhere recognized—that we should, in all things, conform to His will—in all things be consecrated to His purposes and, for His sake, in all things be separated from the rest of mankind. This is the law of the house.

II. Now, secondly, I need your help while I say, LET US EXAMINE OURSELVES BY THIS LAW. Let each man question himself as to whether he has carefully observed the law of the house. Brothers and Sisters, the Church of God is holy. It is founded by a holy God upon holy principles and for holy purposes. She has been redeemed by a holy Savior, with a holy Sacrifice and dedicated to holy service. Her great glory is the Holy Spirit, whose influences and operations are, all, holy. Her Law-Book is the holy Bible, her armory is the holy Covenant, her comfort is holy prayer. Her convocations are holy assemblies—her citizens are holy men and holy women—she exists for holy ends and follows after holy examples.

Dear Hearer, are you, then, as part of her “holiness to the Lord”? Ask yourself questions founded on what I have already said. Do I so live as to be separated? Is there in my business a difference between me and those with whom I trade? Are my thoughts different? Does the current of my desire run in a different direction? Am I at home with the ungodly, or does their sin vex me? Am I one of them, or am I as a speckled bird among them? Search, Brothers and Sisters, search and see whether you are holy in that sense or not!

Next, let each one ask “Am I consecrated? Am I living to God with my body, with my soul, with my spirit? Am I using my substance, my talents, my time, my voice, my thoughts for God’s Glory? What am I living for? Am I making a pretense to live to God and am I, after all, really living to self? Am I like Ananias and Sapphira, pretending to give all and yet keeping back a part of the price?” The preacher would search his own heart and he begs you all to search yours. Next, ask the question, “Am I living in conformity to the mind of the holy God? Am I living as Christ would have lived in my place? Do I, as a master, as a servant, as a husband, as a wife, or as a child, act as God, Himself, would have me act so that He could say to me, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’?”

He is a jealous God—am, I obeying Him with care? If I am not walking in obedience to God, I am behaving disorderly. I am breaking the law of the house and that house, the House of the living God. Ought we not to take heed lest we insult the King in His own palace and perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little? Then, again, do I live in communion with God? I cannot be holy and yet have a wall of division between me and God. Is there a great gulf of separation between me and the Lord? Then I am a stranger to holiness! I must have fellowship with Him or else I am living in a manner which is sinful, dangerous, grievous, injurious. Brother, Sister, let me ask you these pressing questions—Do you walk with God? Do you abide in fellowship with Jesus?

I know there are some who would rather not give an answer to those questions. I have met with Believers who have said, “If you asked me whether I was a drunk or dishonest, I should say, ‘No,’ at once. If you asked me whether I have been upright and moral, I could say, ‘Yes,’ most certainly. But when you ask, ‘Are you walking in communion with the Lord? Are you enjoying habitual fellowship with God?’ I am not prepared to give you an answer, for I am weak upon this point.” Are there not some professors among you who do not see the face of God by the month, together, and seldom enjoy the Presence of God at all? Their nearness to God is a thing of rare occasions and not of everyday consciousness. At a meeting, when religious excitement stirs them, they are a little warmed up, but their general temperature suits the North Pole rather than the Equator.

But, oh, dear Friends, this will not do! We want you to always dwell near God—to wake up in the morning with His light saluting the eyes of your soul and to be with Him while you are engaged in domestic concerns or out in the busy world! We want you, often, to have a secret word with the Well-Beloved during the day and to go to bed at night feeling how sweet it is to fall asleep upon the Savior’s bosom! Brothers and Sisters, how sweet to say, “When I awake I am still with You.” Jealous hearts count it a sorrow when even their dreams disorder their minds and prevent their thinking of the Lord in their first conscious moment! I would to God we were so encompassed with Divine love, so completely sanctified, so thoroughly holy, that we never lost, for an instant, a sense of the immediate Presence of the Most High!

I leave that work of self-examination with yourselves in the quiet hours of this afternoon. Do, not neglect it, for, as servants of the Lord, it is incumbent upon you to remember that holiness becomes His house and it will be ill for us to be walking contrary to His mind. “Measure the pattern”—and measure yourselves by the law of the house.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE BEARINGS OF THIS LAW OF THE HOUSE? Those bearings of the Law to which I now refer are these—If the Church of God shall be most holy, it will have, as the result of it, the greatest possible degree of the smile and favor of God. A holy Church has God in the midst of her! The consequence of God’s Presence is a holy liveliness in all her members, for where God comes near to man, lethargy and death soon fly away. Where the sacred Presence abides, sickness of soul disappears! Jehovah-Rophi heals His people among whom He dwells and the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.”

This, again, causes joy—and the bones which were broken rejoice! Where there is holiness God comes and there is sure to be love, for love is of the very essence of holiness. The fruit of the Spirit is love both to God and man. That love begets union of heart, brotherly kindness, sympathy and affection—and these bring peace and happiness. Among the truly holy there are no divisions, no heresies, no separation into parties, but all are one in Christ. From where do wars and fights come? Not from holiness, but from unconquered lusts! When we shall be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, we shall love as He loves.

This, of course, leads to success in all the Church’s efforts and a consequent increase. Her prayers are intense and they bring down a blessing, for they are holy and acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ. Her labors are abundant and they secure an abundant harvest, for God will not forget her labor of love. The holy Church, with God in the midst of her, is the place of brotherly unity and, consequently, wet with the dew of Hermon— and there God commands the blessing, even life forevermore! Saints in such a state keep high holiday all the year round, having foretastes of Heaven. Their trials are sanctified and their mercies are multiplied and thus faith grows exceedingly and hope is confirmed. To their assemblies angels come trooping down and up from them, by the way of the ladder which Jacob saw, they ascend to God.

O happy people! Thrice happy in their Holy God! A holy Church, my Brothers and Sisters—may we see it! A Church most holy in all her solemn services shall be “fair as the sun, clear as the moon and terrible as an army with banners.” The nations among whom she dwells shall hear of her fame—they shall come from afar and ask to see her Prince—and they shall be astonished at His Glory! The sons of the aliens shall come bending to her feet. Her converts shall be like flocks of doves—she shall, herself, wonder from where they came! There shall be no lethargy, no defeat, no disappointment, no doubt of eternal Truths of God and no suspicious of infinite love. In the power of the Holy Spirit she shall be bravely confident, gloriously self-sacrificing and so shall she go from victory to victory. Mount but this white horse of holiness, O you armies of the Lord, and Christ shall lead the way and all of you—clothed in fine white linen shall follow Him and go forth conquering and to conquer!

On the other hand, imagine a Church without holiness. What will come of it? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord and if the Church cannot ever see her Lord, what is her condition? Go to Zion and see what happens to God’s house when once defiled! Mark how the holy and beautiful house was desolate and burnt with fire! Remember how God loathed Zion and bade her enemies cast her down, stone from stone, and sow with salt the very site on which she stood! Was there ever destruction like that which fell upon Jerusalem? Let us accept, among our brotherhood, unholy men and women—and let us tolerate and indulge them—and we shall soon see the anger of the Lord wax hot!

Let us, ourselves, give way to laxity of principle and practice. Let us lose our consecration and our communion, and what will soon be the effect? Probably, first, will come heartburning, envy and strife. Next, divisions, schisms, false doctrines, rivalries, contentions. Or possibly the evil may take the form of lethargy, inactivity, worldliness, lack of love to Christ and souls. By-and-by there will be diminished gatherings at the meetings for prayer, a cessation of all earnest pleading and consecrated living. Then a falling-off of congregations. Then a lack of power in the ministry—a defect in the doctrine, perhaps—or else in the earnestness of the speaker. And all the while no conversions and no visits from the Lord!

Shall it be, in years to come, that men will pass by the Tabernacle, and ask, “What is that huge house?” And the reply will be, “It was built by an earnest, godly company in former years, but they are dead and things are changed. What is it now? There is a fine organ and a polished preacher, but the multitudes have departed and the few who still keep together are of the cold, respectable order, who have no life or zeal.” Then will this house be a proverb, a byword and a hissing throughout the whole earth! How often I am jealous about this with a burning jealousy! My heart breaks when I hear of some of you that you live unholy lives! There are some, I fear, among you who so walk as to dishonor the Cross of Christ.

I mean not such as we can lay our finger on and say, “This man is a drunk, or unchaste, or dishonest,” else, as you well know, you would not long be spared—no, not a moment longer than was necessary for the proof of your wrong and of your impenitence in it! But I mean such as cannot be thus dealt with became their sins are not open—the tares that grow up in the wheat—the actions not yet discovered because we cannot cast the lot so as to light upon this man or that, and say, “It is he.” I tremble lest there should be among us some utterly unknown to us and undiscoverable by the most vigilant eye, whose sin, nevertheless, like a leprosy, should eat into the house and make it unfit for the habitation of God! Oh, that we may never be so fallen that God, Himself, shall say, “Let them alone.”

It was an awful moment when, in the holy place at Jerusalem, there was heard the moving of wings and a voice which said, “Let us go hence.” Then the Glory of God will have departed. Woe, woe, woe! Let the curtain drop with a shower of tears upon it! God grant it never may be so!

IV. So now, lastly, dear Brothers and Sisters, LET US TAKE ORDER TO SECURE OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF THE HOUSE. I believe that Jesus is always working in His own way for the purity of every true Church. “His fan is in His hand”—see it moving continually—“and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” God’s melting fire is not in the world where the dross contains no gold, but, “His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem.” “The lord will judge His people.” The Lord tries professors and their professions!

I believe that there is a judgment going on over Church members that some are little aware of. Paul speaks of a Church in his day in this manner. He notes their inconsistencies and adds, “For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep.” A special jurisdiction is over the palace of a king! A special rule pertains to a house which does not apply to people out of doors. Church members are under peculiar discipline, as it is written, “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Our Lord Jesus often makes the ministry to be as a great winnowing fan. Somebody is offended and leaves. What a mercy! You could not have forced him to depart, but he leaves of his own accord—and so the house is cleansed.

The breath of the Spirit blows away much chaff. When our Lord preached His usual doctrine, the chaff kept with the wheat, but when He came to speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, the baser sort were offended and, “walked no more with Him.” Did He grieve over that separation between the precious and the vile? I think not! He meant it should be so. A certain Truth of God put in a certain way, with a personally pointed application—perhaps not intended by the preacher as to that particular individual—is, nevertheless, intended by God for that case and the cutting word removes the rotten branch. Thus the purging work proceeds from day to day. We may expect our Master to come among us, every now and then, with a scourge of small cords to smite right and left to purge the temple of God lest it should become a den of thieves. He is a jealous God and He will not suffer defilement among His own people!

Have you never seen great Christian communities at a certain phase of their existence come into troubled waters and break up like wrecks? There must have been a secret reason—probably the one claimed at the time was by no means the true one. Lack of holiness led to lack of love and unloving spirits soon found a pretext for dispute. Those who should have met this with love and quenched it by gentle wisdom acted in a harsh spirit, being themselves deficient in Grace—and so flint met steel and sparks abounded! Then came fire. Then came general conflagration. The open mischief was an effect, rather than a cause—and it may be hoped was even part of the cure.

True, many a table of the moneychangers was upset and many a dove was seen to fly away in fright—but the scourge did not fail to make a clearance. How much better would it have been had there been no need for such a purging! If churches are not holy, they cannot be prosperous, for God afflicts those who break the law of His house. Now, cannot we give earnest heed that this law is regarded among us? “Yes,” you say, “take care that you who are pastors, elders and deacons are watchful and faithful. Guard well the door of the Church and see to it that you do not admit the ungodly—be vigilant, also, in discipline, so that when any are manifestly unholy they are put away.”

Brothers and Sisters, this is our desire and labor but, after all, what can we do? With all our diligence, what can a small band of officers accomplish in a great Church which is numbered by the thousands? Brothers and Sisters, this must be taken up by all of you. Let every man bear his own burden. I would have every man sweep in the front of his own door. I pray that each person who belongs to this Church may be jealous for its purity and watch, both over himself and his brethren, lest any form of sin should be a root of bitterness to trouble us and, thereby, many should be defiled. Let us set to this work at once! Here is the first exercise for us—let us repent of past failures in holiness. We shall never overcome sin till we are conscious of it and ashamed of it. That is why the Lord said to the Prophet, “You, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house and the fashion thereof.”

The first step towards purity is penitence. Let us bow our heads and lament before the Lord the sins of our holy things, our personal trespasses, our transgressions against love, our offenses against the law of the house! He that is least ashamed will probably be the person who has most cause to blush! And he who will be most humbled will be the man who has least transgressed. In any case we have sinned as a Church and come short of the Glory of God—and an honest confession is due from us. Having acknowledged our error, let us next make the law of God’s house our earnest study that we may avoid offenses in the future. You will hardly keep the law if you do not know it.

Search the sacred Word of God day and night. Let the inspired page be your standard. Never mind what your minister tells you—observe what the Spirit of God tells you. Get to your Bibles, search them, and there see how you ought to behave in the house of God. Be much upon your knees asking the Lord to teach you His mind and will, and specially beseech Him to write His Law upon your hearts, for you will never keep it in your life till it is written there. When you have studied the law of the house, then next be intensely real in your endeavor to observe it. How much of the religion of the present day is a sham! Men talk of being holy—do they know what they mean? We speak of consecration and yet live as if we were mere worldlings hunting for wealth, or fame, or pleasure!

Some sing of giving all to God and yet their contributions are miserably small. Some say they are living wholly for God, but if they had lived wholly for themselves it would not have made any particular difference in what they have done! Oh, let us be real! Do not let us preach what we do not believe, nor profess to be believers in a creed which is not true to our own souls. Get a grip of eternal things! Hold them—feel their solemn weight and live under their influence! That which is unreal is unholy! The bloated Pharisee is unholy. The empty formalist is unholy. But the sincere penitent, the truly honest Seeker after holiness is already holy in some degree! Your eyes, O Lord, are upon truth! Then let us cry for a sincere and growing faith in God concerning this matter of holiness. Let us believe in Jesus, that by His Holy Spirit He can make us holy. Do not let us believe that any sin is inevitable—rather let us feet bound to overcome it. Let us not trust in our own struggling and striving, but let us as much trust Christ to work sanctification in us as to work justification for us. Let faith deal with the water as well as with the blood, for they both flowed from the same fountain in the Savior’s riven side!

And then, lastly, let us pray to be set on fire with an intense zeal for God. I do not believe that there is such a thing as cold holiness in the world. As soon as a bullock was dedicated to God and brought to the altar, it had to be burned with fire—and so must every consecrated life. You and I are never the Lord’s while we are cold-hearted. We must be on fire if we are to be sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Get rid of zeal from the Church and you have removed one of the most purifying elements, for God intends to purge Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. Oh, to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire! May refining fire go through and through our souls till all that defiles shall be utterly consumed and we shall be as ingots of pure gold, wholly the Lord’s!

Thus have we rehearsed in your ears the law of the house. May the Holy Spirit enable you to keep it unto the end.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1054 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“WATERS TO SWIM IN”  
NO. 1054

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 25, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Waters to swim in.”  
Ezekiel 47:5.**

THE whole vision, though bearing other meanings, may be applied to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It began at Jerusalem as a tiny rivulet. By our Savior’s preaching, a few disciples, some of whom became Apostles, were converted. These were the means of the conversion of a still larger number. But at first the stream was very shallow, for the whole Church could meet in one upper room. Even after the Pentecostal increase it was but as a small brook. Herod thought that he could leap across it, or could dam it up, but his persecutions swelled the stream. Very shortly after, the watercourse grew broader and deeper till it attracted the attention of the Roman Emperors and excited their alarm.

They thought that it was time to drain the river lest it should become a torrent so great as to sweep them away. Their attempts to stay its course only added to its floods. Its current became stronger and wider than before, and on it went from age to age till at last it had become a mighty river, watering the whole earth and greatly blessing the nations. It is destined to grow until it shall be like the main ocean itself, for “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” We bless God that the day of small things which dawned at Bethlehem has already grown to a day of great things—and our faith fully expects to see greater things than these!

The vision might equally well be applied to the growth of Christian experience. When we first know the Lord the Gospel is a very precious thing to us. We rejoice in its pardon and the consequent salvation which we expect to receive through it. But, compared with what we shall know of it by-and-by, our knowledge of the Gospel at first is like a tiny rivulet. As we advance in Grace it becomes a river flowing up to the ankles. As we are further instructed, so that our faith is confirmed and our Graces are developed, it deepens into a river up to the knees—and by-and-by up to the loins. And farther on (with some it has already happened—I trust it may happen to us all) it becomes “waters to swim in.” I shall speak of the text as illustrating the Christian’s experience when he arrives at that stage.

At the same time the vision might be applied to our knowledge of the Gospel as well as to our experience of it. The Gospel was gradually revealed, first, in outline in the Old Testament—in symbol and type to the older saints—and then was taught by our Lord. Then the details were, as it were, put into His outline by the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—and so, to our own soul, the knowledge of the Gospel does not shine forth all at once. There is a daybreak before the fullness of noon. There is a blade—a tender green blade—before the full corn in the ear. The babe cries in penitence before the perfect man in Christ Jesus sings the song of assurance.

Perhaps we have not yet come to know the height, and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ—neither have we yet discovered how exceedingly broad the Gospel is—but what we now don’t know we shall know hereafter. Contracted notions we shall leave behind as the bird casts off the shell in which it was imprisoned! Dim ideas will vanish as the trees walking were seen no more when the blind man’s eyes were fully opened. Childish knowledge makes us dream of comprehending the Gospel in the hollow of our hand, but when we become men and put away childish things we shall find in it “waters to swim in.”

I see in the metaphor before us three ideas. The first is abundance. The second is space. And the third is trust, for there are not only great waters, but “waters to swim in.”

I. The first thought of the text concerning the Gospel is this—the idea of ABUNDANCE. Beloved, God has provided for His people, in the Gospel of His dear Son, no stinted store. He has not killed a sheep and invited one or two to His supper—His oxen and His fatlings are killed and, “All things are ready.” The provisions of God are on a royal scale—on an infinite scale. There is so much provided at the Gospel feast that none need keep back from fear that there is not enough! Neither shall the greatest eater at that feast ever say, “I have exhausted what was provided for me.” The wine ran short at the marriage feast at Cana until the Lord came in and then there was enough and to spare.

As a king gives to a king so has God given to the poor ones of the earth—to His afflicted—to sin-stricken souls who seek His face. Honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock He gives His people. Moses spoke concerning Israel, “Butter of cattle and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys; with wheat; and you did drink the pure blood of the grape.” But the food of the spiritual Israel is richer by far. The child of God, as he advances in the Divine life rejoices in the abundance of Covenant provisions. Let me mention some which strike me as exceedingly abundant.

The first is the abundant provision for the removal of sin and for making us accepted in the Beloved. To put away my sin there needed an infinite Atonement. I do not marvel, therefore, that it should have needed the Son of God to die for exceedingly great sin—but sometimes, as my soul has stood at the foot of the Cross and considered who He was that shed His blood for me, I have felt as if the price were too much. When I have seen my sin I thought it impossible for it to be removed. But when I have seen my Savior, I have thought it equally impossible that there could be any conceivable sin which Jesus’ blood could not wash away. An infinite degree of merit must reside in the sufferings of our blessed Lord! Such sufferings as they were, of body, of mind, and of spirit—the suffering of being forsaken of man and of God, too—and being left alone in utter desertion to die when He became obedient even unto death.

It is the astonishment of all worlds that Christ should be the victim for human sin, and, when we think of Him, we say, “O God, what waters there are here of pardoning love—what ‘waters to swim in.’ Surely whole hosts of sin shall be swept away by this mighty river of atoning blood.”—

*“It rises high and drowns the hills  
Has neither shore nor bound.*

*Now if we search to find our sins,  
Our sins can ne’er be found.*  
The wonder is, however, that while there is provision made to put away our sin, there is equal provision made to impute righteousness to us. We were guilty, for all broke the Law. God provided a Substitute who suffered the penalty of our law-breaking, but, He has done more—He has found a Representative who has kept the Law for us, so that after washing us He clothes us. After taking away our guilt He makes us positively righteous and praiseworthy before the Throne of Justice through Jesus Christ, His Son, whose righteousness we wrap about our loins and in it stand fair and comely before the eyes of infinite Purity. Oh, this is right royal and truly Divine!

Here is blood most precious removing every spot, and a righteousness most glorious conferring a matchless beauty, a beauty such as Adam in his perfection never had, for his was but human righteousness! But this day the children of God wear the righteousness of the Lord Himself—and this is the name which Jesus is called, “The Lord our Righteousness”! Brethren, here are “waters to swim in,” if we only contemplate this one particular of the arrangement for our justification in the sight of God!

Turn next to God’s stores for our sustenance and for our protection. For our sustenance there is bread provided from Heaven such as angels have never tasted. There is water leaping from the rock such as the fathers drank not in the wilderness. There is no fear that either the heavenly granary or the celestial fountain shall ever be exhausted. The manna was without limit except according to the capacities of the people—and so the bread which we eat, even Christ the Infinite One is not measured out to us by weight, but each may have according to his eating. We are never straitened in Him—if stinted at all, we stint ourselves. After feeding millions of saints upon Himself for these hundreds of years, Jesus is as full and as precious, and as soul-satisfying as ever He was.

O blessed food! How well has God stored His granaries for all His people! And the heavenly drink is equally abundant. Rivers are ours to drink of—floods and standing pools of living water. Drought can never befall us, for “the deep which lies under” has been broached for us. And as for our protection, think, my Brothers and Sisters, how the Lord’s right arm is uplifted that His power may preserve the saints—how His Wisdom goes to and fro in the earth watching for their good—how His heart of love beats high with constant affection for them. Just think how the whole of Godhead bows itself to protect the chosen—for does He not compare Himself to the hen that covers her chickens? Has He not said, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler”?

God, even our own God, is both the sustenance and the preservation of His people! And if we should need more, though more there cannot be— yet, if our unbelief should think of more—is not all Providence on our side? Blows there a wind that does not waft us blessings? Breaks there a wave upon any shore which does not bear us good? The huge wheels of Providence, as they are, are full of eyes—and these eyes look toward the chosen of God. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” And don’t you see? If your eyes are opened you will see them—horses of fire and chariots of fire surrounding all the saints! Invisible spirits of superior race are servitors to the beloved sons of God! All Heaven’s hosts are ready for our defense!

If it were necessary, the new Jerusalem would empty out itself of its thousands, as Thebes did of its myriads from all its hundred gates—and every angel would, with sword drawn, assail our foes and put them to utter rout—for the Lord will not allow one of the least of His own to perish! See then, Brethren, what “waters to swim in” are here so that for our provision and our protection we need not fear. Our needs are great, but the supplies are greater. Our daily dangers are enough to provoke our anxieties, but the Lord’s eternal preservations lay those anxieties at once to rest. Blessed Lord, we are poor feeble infants, but when we lie on Your bosom we feel ourselves mighty in Your strength. We are penniless beggars, but when we feast at Your table we would not exchange our position for the banquets of Ahasuerus or the feasts of Solomon! It is our bliss to be nothing and to find our all in You.

We must not tarry, however, but remark that the same breadth and depth will be found if we reflect upon the provision made for our training and our perfecting. Beloved, the Lord will not merely keep us alive and preserve us from perishing, but He means to make something of us. He has great designs in view. The poor clay of the earth, when it is first dug up for the brick maker does not know what is to become of it. It passes through many processes and at last is built up into a goodly house—a mansion for its owner. The clay of the pit may yet be built into a palace for a king! And shall we, poor earthly things, ever be living stones in the temple of God? I trust we are in some sense already so! But shall we ever glisten and glow like rubies and emeralds, each one after his own kind, as a portion of that city whose jeweled light is enough to blind the eyes of mortals by its excess of glory?

Shall we ever be a part of the radiance of Heaven? Shall we be revealers in our measure of the Glory of God? Yes! We shall come to that and though it may seem impossible, yet we shall believe it if we reflect a moment. God has already done much for us by giving us the inner life—a matchless miracle! It needs as much of His power to make new hearts and right spirits as to create new worlds—yet He has done that for us. He has, moreover, preserved us up to this moment amid a thousand dangers, and has made those dangers contribute to our growth in Grace. He has made our afflictions minister to our spiritual advancement. I owe more than I can tell to the Engraver’s tool, and yet ‘tis sharp and I feel the lines of its cutting even now. Yet, let not the Engraver stay His hand, for how shall His work be done if He does not bear hard and cut deep? If there are no sharp cuts, surely there shall be no working out of His grand idea!

Moreover, in addition to affliction He has provided all the Truth of God in the Bible to sanctify us. He has given us the blood of Christ to purify us. He has sent forth the blessed and eternal Spirit to refine us, and, as subordinate agencies, He has provided all our comforts, as well as all our trials—all our companionships with holy men and all the beacons of unholy lives—that we may be educated for the skies. He is putting forth His wisdom and His strength, and His prudence, and His love—I must repeat myself—to make something of us, though we are nothing by nature, and “it does not yet appear what we shall be.”

I think, sometimes, when I see my own nature, that it were difficult for me ever to become a vessel fit for the Master’s use in the halls of the golden house above. And then, when I think Who has begun to work us to the same thing, and Who it is that still is persevering in the work—why then I conclude that if I were even worse than I am, He could yet make me what He would have me to be! And seeing the power that is ready to work it out, my soul rejoices in hope of complete conformity to the Divine ideal. Here, again, are “waters to swim in.”

Brethren, take another view of God’s great goodness to us. What “waters to swim in” have we by way of consolations and strengthening. Are you ever cast down? I hope you are not, but if you are, as some of us are frequently bowed down into the very dust, what a relish you will have for the promises of God! I am sure that a number of promises in the Bible were written on purpose for me. You may dispute it and say, “No, they were meant for me.” I have no wish to contest the point, but I still believe, as I have said, that they were meant for me, for they fit my case so exactly even in their very words that they appear as if my case were especially intended. No doubt other Believers think the same, and will join with me in blessing God for such a grand Bible. Well does our hymn-writer put it—

*“What more can He say than to you He has said You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

None can comfort a child like a mother. The mother knows exactly the child’s state, and by her very love she throws a sweetness into what she says which another could not successfully imitate. There are no comforts like the comforts of God. The Comforter puts into the Inspired Word a singular sweetness which the most able ministers cannot arrive at, even though they should be, like Barnabas, sons of consolation. Brothers and Sisters, let us think over our comforts now, for a minute, and our consolations. Have we not this for consolation—that God has loved us with an everlasting love, even the Lord who cannot change? Up to now He has never failed us—He has promised that all good things shall be ours as we need them, and it has been so.

Have we not this for a consolation—that He has given us Christ, and therein has given us all things? Can He deny us anything now, after having given to us His own dear Son? Let us think how dear we are to Christ, how much we cost Him, how precious we are in His sight. Can He leave us? Can He be unkind to us? Let us reflect upon the way in which the Lord has always appeared for us in times of difficulty, and rescued us in days of jeopardy. Turning to the Book and finding it written, “I am God: I change not,” let us be consoled for the future and go on our way confident that all shall be well. All the Covenant promises are meant to console us. All the gifts of Sovereign Grace are intended to give us joy! The attributes of God are springs of consolation for us. The Human Nature of Christ in which He comes near to us is a source of bliss! The gentleness and tenderness of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us on purpose to be our Comforter are dear subjects of delight! Indeed, if we are down cast we must blame ourselves. “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” The consolations of the Spirit are “waters to swim in.”

Beloved, we must draw to a close upon this one thought of abundance—just think of what God has done for us by way of making us happy and noble! He has not only pardoned us, but He has received us into His family. And He has taken us there, not to be His hired servants as we once thought He might do, but He has made us His own sons! And what is more than that, He has made us heirs—and not secondary heirs either—but “joint-heirs with Christ Jesus,” so that we have come right up from the place of the slave into the position of the heir of all things! Our Lord Himself, our dear and ever blessed Savior, was not content to pluck us like brands from the burning—not content to make us His sheep whom He should watch over with tender care—but He has taken us to be His spouse and He calls us His beloved.

Yes, and He has done more. He has taken us to be members of His body, and we are of His flesh and of His bones. Was there ever such an exaltation as this? When Scripture speaks of lifting a beggar from the dunghill and setting him among princes, surely it falls short of this wonder—that of taking a worm of the dust, a sinful wretch that was only fit for Hell—and putting him into union with Christ Jesus, so that he should be a part of the mystical body of the Son of God! This is marvelous, and as I think of it, I feel that I have brought you to the sea shore and shown you an ocean to swim in—the depth of which you cannot fathom! Oh the depths of the mercy of God!

Now, in all this nobility which God has given us there is not a single piece of unhappiness. I should imagine that to rise into some positions in society must entail sorrow instead of happiness, for, as you ascend the heights the air grows chillier and the frosts are more perpetual. But the nobilities which God bestows are, all of them, of that happy—what if I should say—homely, divinely comforting sort, that the nobler we are, the happier we are? If He makes us sons, our sonship is not all responsibility—it means love. And if He makes us heirs, oh, what happiness to be possessors of earth and Heaven! And if He makes us His own spouse, the chief thought of our marriage union is not service, but love! God is not to us, “Baali,” but, “Ishi shall His name be called.” Not, “lord,” but “husband”—duty is there, but love is in the forefront. We become members of His body—it is an honor, but it is much more than that—it is a bliss to be vitally, eternally united to Christ, our Covenant Head!

Why, dear saints of God, however poor you may be, and however low in spirits, and however sickly in body, you have a whole sea of happiness before you! You have a drop of bitterness now and then, but you have an Atlantic of sweetness, rivers of wine and milk. “Rejoice, rejoice,” says the Scriptures, and that most fitly, too, because there are, after all, more reasons for rejoicing than arguments for sorrow. And then, beyond! Beyond! Think of that which remains in Immanuel’s land beyond Jordan! Open your eyes a moment. Do not let them rest upon that stream which is not near so wide as you have fabled it, whose waves are not so rough as your fears have made them. Look beyond that narrow stream of death— what do you see?

Moses’ sight from Nebo is nothing compared with the view which faith gets of the Glory to be revealed! We shall see Him, and shall be like He is and shall be with Him eternally! His glory is our soul’s delight on earth—it shall be our soul’s transport in Heaven! What will it be to see the shining ranks of the glorified, and hear their blessed song and join with them and with the angelic choirs forever and forever?—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,*

*With God eternally shut in.”*  
Oh, Beloved, here are “waters to swim in!” Let us bathe our weary souls in them by faith before we leave this place. The Lord grant it, in the power of His Holy Spirit, and He shall have the praise.

II. But now, secondly, our text gives us the idea of space, amplitude, room. “Waters to swim in.” Room enough. And here, let us remark that in the Gospel, when our experience and our knowledge have deepened, we shall find a place of broad rivers and streams under the following aspects. First, as to thought. Many persons have the notion that the Gospel is very contracted and narrow. I am afraid that a large number of our members have not yet obtained a comprehensive idea of the Gospel—no, I am half afraid that they never will under some preachers who do not seem to have any clear view of the Gospel system themselves, or, if they have, they fail to communicate it.

Some deny the need of a system at all, but, somehow or other, everything we know throws itself into a systematic shape. And though we ought, beyond all things, to deprecate a cast-iron creed and the attempt to force every Truth of God into one circle, yet it is a good thing to have a definite idea of what we believe in the things of God. Some have a tolerably clear idea, but it is a very narrow and contracted one.

Now there is nothing contracted in the Bible—it is a great Book of a great God, inspired by a great Spirit and calculated to give men great minds—for it is, in the great subjects of holy thought, “waters to swim in.” Think only for a moment of one or two subjects of thought, and you will see the “waters to swim in.” Think of God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture. The Father ordaining all things, according to the council of His will—take the whole line of Truth which connects itself with the Father. Then consider the Son as Man and as God, the Surety of the Covenant, the Substitute for His people, the Intercessor, Prophet, Priest, and King— the Lord who is yet to come. You have a wide range of thought.

Then consider the Holy Spirit. Dr. John Owen has written a massive volume upon the work of the Spirit, and you might write a thousand such volumes and not exhaust the mighty theme! He dwells upon the work of the Spirit in creation. The work of the Spirit in sustentation. The work of the Spirit in inspiration. The work of the Spirit upon the human body of Christ. The work of the Spirit upon our Lord in His ministry. The work of the Spirit in regeneration, in illumination, in consolation. Here are “waters to swim in” Brethren! Indeed, the waters are so broad that I cannot attempt even to number them or make a map of them. Take only those lines of thought which come from the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit— and you have boundless Truth before you!

Young man, you need never say, “I need to get a thought-breeding book.” Man alive, was there ever such a thought-breeding book as the Bible? You need never say, “I found myself stinted for need of subjects.” Oh, if you know anything at all in your soul about the things of God, you will admire the infinity of Scripture and never complain of having slender room for thought! Then think of the doctrine of election and all those stupendous Truths of God which spring out of predestination. If you love deep subjects you certainly will find “waters to swim in” there! But if you are not a child of God, you are likely to find them waters to drown in as well as waters to swim in, for it needs a man to be taught to swim by God’s own Grace in such waters as these! But when he once knows how to swim, it is one of the most delightful exercises in the world to take a bold stroke into the Everlasting Covenant and dive into the deep things of God.

Think, again, of the subject which lifts itself aloft from the opposite point—human responsibility, and turn that over—a rugged subject, assuredly, but most true, and as certainly taught in the Scripture as the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty in election. There are many who will not believe both these Truths of God, but rest assured, you will have to put out one eye, and you will practically lose one arm unless you will believe both, for they are both taught in the Scriptures, and both sides of the Truth will furnish you with “waters to swim in.” If a man should have the largest mind that ever existed upon the face of the earth—if he should be a Newton or a Locke—still, if he would set himself down and prayerfully study Scripture, he would find that the themes for meditation are altogether boundless “waters to swim in.”

I could enlarge, but that might not be so profitable to you as to go forward. Brothers and Sisters, there are “waters to swim in,” next, not only as regards subjects of thought but matters of faith. There are topics in Scripture which one can hardly think of very long together—they are too perplexing. If we bend towards them and fix our eye upon them, we may strain our eyeballs before we shall see with understanding. There are mysteries beyond us. I thank God—I bless God that He has given me a Gospel, much of which I cannot understand! For I am sure if I were able to grasp all revealed Truth and I met the devil in my vestry tonight, and he said, “Why, you have comprehended it all in your small brain: therefore, it cannot be from God”—I should not know how to answer him.

But now, if he ever meets me and tauntingly enquires, “How do you make these two doctrines square? How do you make them consistent?” I answer him thus, “Are you, also, omniscient? Is nothing too hard for you?” It is no business of mine to make God’s teaching consistent in man’s judgment! If the Lord has revealed a Truth, all I have to do is to believe it. I will look at it as long as ever I can—I will pry into it as far as I can go—but, when God locks the door and does not leave me the key, I shall not attempt to break the door open. And if He does not tell me, I believe it is my wisdom not to need to know. Going to Heaven does not lie in untying Gordian knots.

Oh, how sweet to have something to believe where you get right out of reason’s depths! We thank God that in the Scriptures there is a good deal which you cannot reason on—which you could not explain to a man who has only reason to go upon—something which he scoffs at because he cannot see what it means by his blind carnal eyes. I am glad to think that there is something for higher faculties to grasp—something for the spirit, the new-born spirit, to lay hold upon! I thank God that there are great things to be believed as well as great things to be understood. And if I were now to try and show you the vast area which is opened up to faith, I am sure you would exclaim in the words of the text, “There are, indeed, ‘waters to swim in.’”

Then, blessed be his name, there are “waters to swim in” not only for thought and faith, but also for love. Some make the doctrines of the Gospel a cold stream, like the waters of the Arctic pole, and love would be frozen if she were to venture into them. But the Scriptures are like the gulf stream, warm, as well as deep, and love delights to plunge into them and swim in them. Time would fail me if I were to try and show you the room there is for love in the Scriptures. We will therefore dwell only on one thing. Think of the love of Christ to us—the love which nailed Him to the Cross—the love which made Him give up His reputation on earth as well as His royalties in Heaven. Think of the love which made Him become a worm and no man, despised of men and a reproach of the people for our sakes!

A certain writer has written two volumes upon the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross. He has managed to write a chapter upon the nails, and upon the sponge, and upon the thorns, and upon the vinegar. And I must confess I have read his book with no small delight, and I have thought that he did not make too much of anything he handled. And, if he did seem to strain a point here and there too much one way, he might have gone a great deal farther the other way if he but had his eyes more open.

In the agonies of Christ there is, to the contemplative mind, a fullness of love unspeakable which makes the heart feel, “now I can love here without stint.” I can love the dear companion of my life. I can love my children. But there comes the thought, “I may make them idols, and I may thus injure both them and myself.” That is not “waters to swim in.” But, if we loved the Lord 10,000 times more than we do, we should transgress no command in so doing—no, rather, the only transgression lies in falling short! Oh, that we could love Him more! There can be no excess of love in loving Him supremely. The coolest logic can justify the most intense enthusiasm towards Christ. If a man had no heart, but were all head, he might reasonably act towards the Savior as those do whose whole nature is on a blaze with affection for Him, and who seem, sometimes, to have forgotten the dictates of reason in the impulses of love. Oh, what “waters to swim in” is the love of Christ us!

But, it is just the same with the love of the Father. And, (I think I have told you once or twice lately), I am sure it is so with the love of the Holy Spirit. While it was most gracious of the Lord Jesus to come and live with men, is it not quite as gracious of the Holy Spirit to dwell in men? I marvel at Christ among sinners, but I marvel quite as much at the Holy Spirit in sinners, for the best of saints are still sinners! To live in us, indwelling in these poor bodies of ours—oh, the love of the pure and Holy Spirit to do so! Here are, indeed, “waters to swim in.”

Yet, once again. I have not exhausted this thought of space. There is room here for the exercise and expansion of every faculty within the range of the Gospel. These are days of “modern thought.” As you are all aware, men have become wondrously wise and have outgrown the Scriptures. Certain unhappy children’s heads are too big, and there is always a fear that it is not brain, but water on the brain—and this “modern thought” is simply a disease of wind on the brain—and likely to be a deadly one if God does not cure the Church of it. Within the compass of the orthodox faith— within the range of the simple Gospel—there is room enough for the development of every faculty, however largely gifted a man may be!

It doesn’t matter, though the man is a Milton in poetry, though he is a master in metaphysics and a prince in science—if he is but pure in his prose, accurate in his metaphysics, and honest in his science—he will find that the range of his thought needs no more space than Scripture gives him. It has been thought by some that these persons who run off to heretical opinions are persons of great mind. Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, it is a cheap way of making yourself to be thought so, but the men are nobodies! That is the sum of the matter. We are satisfied with the theology of the Puritans and we assert this day that when we take down a volume of Puritan theology we find in a solitary page more thinking and more learning—more Scripture, more real teaching—than in whole folios of the effusions of modern thought!

Modern men would be rich if they possessed even the crumbs that fall from the table of the Puritans. They have given us nothing new, after all. A few variegated bladders they have blown—and they have burst while the blowers were admiring them! But, as for anything worth knowing which has improved the heart, benefited the understanding, or fitted men for service in the battle of life—there have been no contributions made by this “modern thought” worth recording. Whereas the old thought of the Puritans and the Reformers, which I believe to be none other than the thought of God thought out again in man’s brain and heart, is constantly giving consolation to the afflicted, furnishing strength to the weak, and guiding men’s minds to behave themselves aright in the house of God and in the world at large.

There are “waters to swim in,” in the Scriptures! You need not think there is no room for your imaginations there. Give the coursers their reins—you shall find enough within that Book to exhaust them at their highest speed. You need not think that your memory shall have nothing to remember—if you had learned the Bible through and through, and knew all its texts—you would have much to remember above that! You would still need to remember its inner meaning, and its conversations with your soul, and the mysterious power it has had over your spirit when it has touched the strings of your nature as a master harper touches his harp strings and has brought forth music which you knew not to be sleeping there.

There is no faculty but what will find room enough in the Word of God, if we will but obediently bring it to the service of the Lord. There are, in this respect, “waters, to swim in.”

III. But now, lastly, the text has the idea of TRUST, at least, to my mind. I think it will have to yours, also. “Waters to swim in.” I should like to swim very much. When I have been at the seaside I have had a great passion for swimming, and I think I should have been able to swim by this time, but I could never persuade myself to take both feet off the bottom at one time. I have gone into the bath and when I have felt a little of the buoyancy of the water I have lifted one foot, and I have been half inclined to remove the other, but somehow it was not done. I could not, after all, quite trust the liquid element.

The text speaks, of “waters to swim in,” and swimming is a very excellent picture of faith. In the act of swimming it is necessary that a man should float in the water—so far as he is passive and the water buoys him up. You must keep your head above water if you are to swim. We are told that the body is naturally buoyant, and that if a person would lie quite still upon the water he would not sink—but if he kicks and struggles he will sink himself. The first sign of faith is when a man learns to lie back upon Christ—to give himself up entirely to Him—when he ceases to be active and becomes passive! When he brings no good works, no efforts, no merits to Jesus by way of recommendation, but casts his soul upon the eternal merit and the finished work of the great Substitute. That is faith in its passive form—floating faith.

In the heavenly river you must float before you can swim. I pray God to teach every sinner here to rest upon Jesus. You need to save yourself, do you? You will drown, Man! You will drown! As surely as you live you will drown! Will you give up and let Christ save you? Will you believe that He can save you? Fall back into His arms. You will float, then. There is no drowning a soul that gives itself up to Christ, and trusts entirely to Him. But the text does not speak of waters to float in, though this is essential. Many people never get beyond that floating period, and they conclude that they are safe and all is well because they fancy their heads are above water.

But the man who is really taught of God goes on from the floating to the swimming. Now swimming is an active exercise. The man progresses as he strikes out. He makes headway. He dives and rises—he turns to the right, he swims to the left, he pursues his course—he goes where he wills. Now, the holy Word of God and the Gospel are “waters to swim in.” You know only what it is to float—many of you. You are resting in the Truth of God for your salvation, but making no advance in heavenly things. Oh, Beloved, let us learn to swim in those waters—swim in them! I mean let us learn to trust God in active exertions for the promotion of His kingdom—to trust Him in endeavors to do good.

How blessedly our friend, Mr. Miller of Bristol, swims! What a master swimmer he is! He has had his feet off the bottom many years and as he swims he draws along behind him some 2,000 orphan children, whom, by God’s Grace, he is saving from the floods of sin and bringing, we trust, safe to shore. Dear Brother, dear Sister, could you not swim, too? “Oh, but I have no money.” You need to walk, I see. “But I have very slender gifts compared with what I need.” Cannot the Lord give you gifts and graces? Will you not trust Him? Dear Brother, are you called to serve God in a very difficult sphere of labor? Cannot you go on? “I have nobody to hold me.” Oh, I see, you are all for walking on the bottom. Brethren, it is “waters to swim in.” Cannot you swim without any help except the help of the All in All?

See how the arch of Heaven stands without a pillar? See yon lamps of Heaven how they burn? Who gives them oil? See how they are swung in Heaven without a golden chain to hold them in their place? Yet they flicker not! Neither do they fall from their sockets—neither does the arch of Heaven tremble! May the Holy Spirit teach us to trust! Oh, may God teach us not only the passive trust which leans on Christ and floats, but the active trust which manages the waters—walks them, swims them, dives into them at will, as God helps it! We are not trustful enough of the invisible God. We are young eaglets, born of God to mount up to the sun, but we stand shivering by the nest, not daring to try our wings.

Young eaglets, trust the invisible air—trust it and rise aloft! It shall bear you up, and you shall not fall. Trust it more! Put out all your wing strength. Lean on it more and it will bear you up, up, up, beyond clouds and mists, up to the very sun itself! He shall rise highest who can trust most. He shall have most who can believe most in God. If you will treat with the Eternal on His own terms of boundless credit, and trust yourself without reserve to Him, there are great things in store for you!

Blessed Master, give us “waters to swim in.” Though they should be stormy waters. Though they should be drowning waters to our unbelief— they shall be swimming waters to our faith! And as we swim to Heaven we will rejoice in You, “having no confidence in the flesh.” May God bless these few words to you, beloved Friends, and comfort us all with His own consolations, and be unto us ever more and more God All Sufficient. Amen.

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THE MODERN DEAD SEA AND THE LIVING WATERS

NO. 1852

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 19, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The waters shall be healed.”  
Ezekiel 47:8.**

Ezekiel is robed in dreadful tempest and his whole book is “as the terrible crystal” for brightness and for mystery, yet he often gives us visions of exceeding comfort. For instance, who can think without joy of that tender branch of the cedar which is to be planted by God in the mountain of the height of Israel—which shall grow so exceedingly that all fowl of every wing shall dwell in its branches? Do we not all rejoice that, whatever may become of the institutions of modern society, we have received a Kingdom which cannot be moved? The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, which began as a tender slip, is yet to increase till it is likened to a goodly cedar “upon a high mountain and eminent”—is not this an unspeakable joy? Think, also, of that other vision, so weird and strange, of a valley full of dead bones, “very many” and “very dry.” What an answer does that vision give to the question of unbelief! “Can these dry bones live?” How plainly does the Lord answer—“I will put My Spirit in you and you shall live”! When I think of that goodly cedar, I see that the Kingdom will come unto Christ. And when I think of the valley of dry bones, I am comforted concerning the masses around me. We, too, as we walk through this morgue of a city, may hope that life will conquer death and an exceedingly great army, quickened by the Spirit of our God, shall yet rise from these dry bones!

The remarkable vision which lies open before us, is exceedingly reassuring to those who are troubled by reason of the dreadful condition of the times—and which of us is not? The Prophet bids us think of those waters, dreary and dreadful, known by the suggestive name of the Dead Sea! This was the “Chamber of Horrors” of the land of Canaan! Travelers describe it as a place of utter desolation. Lying in a deep hollow, some 1,300 feet below any other sea, the Dead Sea may be described as a deep sunken into the earth, like the mouth of the abyss. Masses of bitumen float upon its surface and line its shores. Sulfurous exhalations abound and on its banks are hot sulfuric springs. Bathing in its thick brine is not pleasant, for it causes the skin to tingle with its acrid salts long afterwards. Neither is it desirable to linger upon the brink of it—there is nothing to attract you to do so. Very scanty is the vegetation; few are the birds and rare the living things. It is the domain of destruction! The sea is so salty that no fish can live in it and though it has been asserted that smaller organisms exist in it, these have seldom been found—on the contrary, the fish that come down into it from the Jordan die at once—and drifted shellfish are washed up dead upon the bank. Nothing of life loves the brine, the sulfur and the bitumen of the Dead Sea. The slimy lake is, at seasons, dangerous to health, and even to life. Travelers have, of late, crossed it safely at the right season—but formerly those who made a voyage upon it rarely returned to tell the tale, or, before long, sickened and died.

The doomed lake bears dark mysteries in its bosom—down deep in its depths lie the drowned cities of the plain, whose infamies provoked the wrath of Heaven and brought upon them a fire-shower such as earth has never known before or since. It may be that the briny waters hide mysteries of sin which were better hidden—for modern crime is fertile enough in inventions of filthiness and needs no aid from the rottenness of antiquity. Thus, the Dead Sea is a place most dread and dismal—the bath of death, the haunt of despair, the home of desolation—and in these respects it is a fit picture of our fallen humanity, a truthful symbol of the whole world which lies in the Wicked One. The world of men is cursed by evils of dreadful name. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” There are no mysteries of love in this lost world, but mysteries of sin, of judgement and of the wrath of God are plentiful! The world is a veritable Dead Sea upon a gigantic scale!

Such, also, is the city in which we live—must I call it “modern Sodom”? Every wave that breaks upon the shore of this human lake now seems to wash up remains of monstrous things unearthly, inhuman, beastly, devilish! Fair islands, here and there, rise out of its dark deeps—the bright creations of God’s Grace—but all around them the waters cast up mire and dirt. God is at work creating new heavens and a new earth and, in the process, forms of beauty are developed. But to this day the old unrenewed city remains a reeking copy of the Hell which burns below. Those who have dared to look into its depths return with horror upon their faces to say that it were not lawful for a man to utter what they have seen! London is a simmering cauldron of vice and crime. O God, how long shall it be?

In certain respects, such is every man’s natural heart until he is renewed by Grace. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—and may be well typified by the Sea of Death. If we could but look into it with such eyes as God has, what would we not see? When we are led to gaze on it through our tears because the Holy Spirit has anointed our eyes with eye salve—and we perceive things in their naked truth—we are distressed beyond expression. What a thing is human nature! Mr. Whitefield used to say that man is half beast and half devil. But to my mind he is all beast and all devil if God does not hold him in check by the restraints of fear and the fetters of Law. Let him alone and who can imagine what man would grow to? All manner of iniquities, such as lust, greed, oppression, drunkenness, falsehood, cruelty and murder lurk within the human heart, like wild beasts in the jungle! No man knows what villainy he is capable of—he only needs to be placed under certain circumstances and he will develop into a very fiend!

Thus the world, the city, the heart are each symbolized by the Dead Sea. Can they ever be purified? Can these waters be healed? According to our text, the Lord says expressly, “the waters shall be healed.” Let us believe His promise and take heart of hope from this good hour! Here is room, my Brothers and Sisters, for the faith which, like charity, “believes all things, hopes all things.” If any of you desire to exercise a faith by which you can glorify God, believe that the world can yet be delivered from sin—believe that London can yet be made a holy city! Believe that your own heart, by the power of God’s Spirit, can be purified even as Christ is pure! Even when it seems to be furthest off from hope; even when we are staggered at the sin which surrounds us, we are still to believe that the Lord shall reign forever and ever—and sin and Satan shall be crushed under our Redeemer’s feet!

Let us believe in God as God deserves to be believed in. Let us rely implicitly upon Omnipotence and trust without a doubt in that strong will which can never be turned from its purpose of Grace. “The waters shall be healed”—all the brine and bitumen of the Dead Sea shall not stop the Divine work. The putrid waters of London shall be made sweet as the well of Bethlehem! The atrocities of war and oppression shall cease and the reign of evil shall end, for the Lord has purposed it and it shall be done! The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—London must be won for Jesus and our own hearts must be wholly His! “The waters shall be healed.”

Ezekiel saw in vision the means of the healing of the dreary Lake of Death—the method was simple, but effectual. What he saw represented the Gospel dispensation. The whole system of Divine Grace—the Gospel attended by the Power of the Holy Spirit, the Cross and all the Truths of God that come out of it, the message of salvation, the preaching of faith, the testimony of God the Father to the redeeming work of His Son—all this is the river which flows down into this desert world by its own force and is now making its way into the most horrible guilt and corruption, with set purpose—that the waters may be healed!

I want to encourage your faith, this morning, in a time when that faith is very sorely tried. Be of good courage, for the waters, of which we all loathe to drink, shall be purified! “The waters shall be healed.”

I. And, first, to encourage your faith, I bid you to CONSIDER THE PROMISE. The place where the promise is written, in plain black and white, upon the sacred page, is opened before your eyes. Put your finger on it and let it rest there. Thus says Jehovah, “The waters shall be healed.”

We feel sure that this Word of prophecy shall be accomplished to the letter in due time because He that made the promise is able to fulfill it. Apart from us and all our weaknesses; apart from man and all his wickedness, God, who has spoken the Word, will perform it without fail. The Lord knows what He says. He speaks advisedly and not after the manner of the rash and boastful. Neither do His hands neglect to do what His lips have promised. He brings His supreme power and Godhead to carry out the Word of His mouth. The promise of Grace is the fiat of Omnipotence— “The waters shall be healed.” One “shall” of God is worth all the legions of an empire! Yes, all the forces of the universe. “Shall,” says God, and the event is sure. What can resist the thunder of His Word? Who shall stay His hand, or frustrate His design? Hear, O unbelief, and doubt no more— “The waters shall be healed!”

The Lord will fulfill this Word thoroughly. This promise shall not be kept to the ear only, but it shall be fulfilled in the largest conceivable sense. The Prophet, in vision, saw the waters of the Dead Sea so completely healed that there were fish in it—yes, swarms of fish, and these fish so many that there was occupation for all those who cast the net, so that they stood from one shore to the other! Where there had been no life before, living things literally swarmed and teemed, as in the great main ocean itself! Brothers and Sisters, when God speaks of what He is about to do in the world, by way of Grace, interpret it very broadly—get no narrow ideas into your minds concerning the Grace of the Infinite! When our Lord Jesus sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied, He will not have seen a handful of men, here and there, gathered to Him, but He will have seen a multitude that no man can number, worshipping the Father, each one of whom shall eternally bless His name for deliverance from sin! What hosts have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Ah, Beloved, God will cleanse London perfectly clean when He puts His hand to it! Even this Augean stable shall yet be sacred as the temple of Jehovah! No cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter will God make—He will purge out secret sins, both in high places and in cottages— and He will create for Himself, in this place, a city of priests! Glory be to His name for such a hope! Blessed be the Lord God! He will sanctify our hearts and spirits—in the secret parts He will implant truth and in the hidden parts He will make us to know wisdom!

Observe that when God makes the promise on which my finger is still resting—for I love to press the very words, “The waters shall be healed”— He gives us an idea of how He will do it. He will fulfill this Word in connection with the present dispensation. To my mind this is clear enough from the fact that these waters flowed forth from Mount Zion. They flowed originally from that ancient hill of which God had said, “Here will I dwell forever.” The healing stream proceeded from that sacred place, the Holy of Holies, on Mount Zion, which is the type of God’s indwelling in His Son Jesus and in His Church. The rising river flowed hard by the altar of burnt-offering and became visible to the prophetic eye as it trickled forth from under the closed door at the east end of the Temple. These waters, in vision, were seen to flow towards the east—to create greenery in the desert and to melt into the Dead Sea. From this I gather that our God means to use His Church for His purposes of Grace. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.”

We believe that He means to win His ultimate triumphs by the preaching of the Gospel. Whenever the coming of our Lord shall be—and oh, that it were today, for we never needed Him more than now—whenever His Second Advent shall take place, yet it shall not be a dishonor to the Church, but it will be her glory to triumph with the King at her head. It may be that by His personal appearing, she shall win the victory. If our Lord delays His coming, He will send the wondrous influences of the Divine Spirit in much greater abundance than today—and then His Church shall work marvels in the land and salvation shall adorn her! The King shall marshal His troops around the central city of His choice and His Church shall be glorious in the eyes of all men because of the splendor of her Lord!

Do not throw down your weapons and say, “Christ must come and wage this war.” Perhaps so, but still He will carry on the battle by His chosen people. It is ours to stand fast like British squares in the day of battle. Hold the fort because your Lord is coming! Do not abandon it under some idea that He will work after a novel fashion and dispense with the Gospel and the testimony of His saints. I believe that the Lord Jesus will win the battle on the old lines—“Up, Guards and at them!” Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears, for you must fight as long as you live since the Lord has sworn to have war with Amalek from generation to generation. If you die at your posts, so be it—but never desert them! Till Jesus comes, gird yourselves and fight His battles. Your rest remains and it will be a full reward to you, but you have not yet come to it. By the river of God, which flows this day, the waters shall be healed.

Note, carefully, that this Divine promise, “the waters shall be healed,” will not put aside instrumentality, but when it is fulfilled, it will call forth more abundant agencies. The waters run into the Dead Sea and purify its waters. Then fish begin to multiply and man’s part comes in—“The fishers shall stand upon it from En Gedi even unto En Eglaim.” Rest assured that there will be plenty of fishers when, by His healing process, the Lord makes plenty of fish—we shall be fishers of men in right earnest when the times of refreshing shall come from His Presence! The Lord does not intend to put the fishers on one side any more than He will dismiss the reapers in the time of harvest. Mark how the Lord Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He never intends the Gospel net to be laid aside till all His elect are taken in it and drawn out from the waters of sin and death.

Those will be happy days when the Lord will cause the people to long for the Gospel—when those horrid wretches who are now lying asoak in the sulfurous lake of sin shall become wholesome fish and invite the fisher to cast his net! In those days many of you, my Brothers, who never handled a net before, will be moved by a holy call to catch men! And you, my Sisters, will have to help us with the rope to draw the net on shore! You slothful Christian men and women who have never gone to sea in this fishery, will then be moved to the work and will say, like Peter, “I go afishing.” All round the lake, the Prophet saw fishermen and he says of the waters, “They shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.” Oh, for the day when every Believer will be fishing for the souls of men! God send us that blessed time right speedily!

On the strength of the promise now before us, if there were nothing else, let us look for such a consummation. “The waters shall be healed”— purity shall prevail—the Kingdom of God shall come. Our daily prayer shall not go up to Heaven in vain. Let us again cry—“Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen!”

II. Having asked you to consider the promise, I invite you, next, to CONSIDER THE WONDER OF THE HEALING WATERS that we may be helped, thereby, to believe that healing will come, even to the Dead Sea of this present evil world, this present sinful Babylon, this present deceitful heart.

The wonders of the waters which Ezekiel saw, lay in many things. First, consider, from where they came. These waters sprang from the midst of Jerusalem, from the secret place of God’s Throne—and this was why they were so potent. The 12th verse ascribes the fruit-producing power of the waters to this—“because they issued out of the sanctuary.” In that sanctuary was the Throne of Jehovah—Eternal Sovereignty is the fountainhead of those gracious decrees in which the Lord has purposed to do good to the sons of men. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and in the freeness of His sovereign will He has purposed that this Dead Sea of humanity shall yet be healed! The healing waters flow from the Throne of God and of the Lamb. As God is God, He has decreed and purposed to redeem His people—and in that decree and purpose is the fountain of good to men.

These waters flowed, in the vision, hard by the Altar of Burnt-Offering. Learn from this that the one channel of mercy to the sons of men is by the Sacrifice of Christ. By that Altar, where our great High Priest offered up Himself once and for all, there flows the River of Life. Since Christ has died, the world must yet be blessed. Those drops of blood that fell on Calvary were never gathered up and they have left the broad crimson mark of the redeeming Lord upon this globe of ours and, therefore, His it must be! Mankind shall be delivered from utter destruction because in Christ Jesus, our God has found a Ransom. There is hope in this, that “the waters shall be healed.”

These waters, though they flowed unseen across the Temple area, presently bubbled up from under the threshold of the door of the house. You know who is the Door of the Temple of God—by Him we enter in unto God—and by Him God comes forth in blessing unto us. The waters flowed from below, welling up from “the deep that lies under,” in the Person and work of our Lord. Salvation comes not to us from any of the sons of men, but from the deeps of God’s own heart. Streams of ever-flowing mercy flow to us through our Lord Jesus Christ! Blessed be His name!

When the waters first appeared, the Prophet saw them trickling from under the closed door and this suggests another interpretation. The east door was shut, according to the vision recorded in the previous chapter, but the waters gushed forth from under the threshold. Old Judaism had its door closed against us Gentiles and yet the Gospel came from it to the nations! Israel’s door is now shut till the Prince shall come and enter through it, yet from under its threshold, the river of the Gospel flowed to us Gentiles! Holy men of Jewish race came forth to tell of salvation bought with blood and justification perfected for faith—and by their means the heathen received the Light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! The stream began in the eternal purpose, it flowed through the sacrifice of Christ and proceeded out of the midst of that old Temple whose gate was shut! In Abraham’s seed, all the nations of the earth are blessed! Surely that which comes from God’s purpose through the sacrifice of Christ cannot be in vain. If God could make old Judaism to bud and blossom with the Gospel, what can He not do? If from under the shut gate the waters came gushing forth in gladsome stream to us perishing heathen, they can still flow to the vilest of the vile!

Note next, as a wonder in connection with these waters, how they increased. They deepened so fast that, although there was but a little stream at the beginning, within less than a mile there were waters to swim in! Yes, they had become so deep and broad that the Prophet had to use an expression in the dual, signifying a double stream—the flood had become too deep and wide to be passed over! These waters were not fed by rivulets running into them, but they miraculously grew of themselves. In the vision they advanced from being ankle deep to being up to the knee and then up to the loins, and then they rose to be deep, unfathomable waters! All this the Prophet tested by his own wading into them.

Now, if this happened by God’s power, and if this happened so speedily, we may look for other marvels! “The waters shall be healed”—the Dead Sea shall yet teem with life! You and I have waded into these waters, have we not? If so, we know how they have increased upon us. Do you not remember when you rejoiced to have received a little Grace, so that it washed your feet and your life was cleansed? Do you not remember how very speedily these waters were up to your knees and you had power with God in prayer? It was but a few hours, more, before your heart was comforted and your inmost spirit was made glad—for the waters were up to your loins. Very soon, perhaps within hours, you were swimming in streams of heavenly love as you found that Christ was yours, your God your Heaven, your All! Do you not see that the God who has done all this for you can do as much for others? Can He not heal the waters of the Dead Sea of our day? Let us hope on, work on and believe in God to the end!

Putting our finger, again, upon that promise, let us rest assured that “the waters shall be healed.”  
Rapidly—for I have to be brief where there is so much to be said— notice what these waters produced. They began to flow and very soon vegetation came into the wilderness. They flowed into the desert and into the Acacia Vale, as Joel calls it. And soon, on both sides of the river, there were trees and, all of a sudden, the trees were bearing fruit! Wherever the Gospel goes, it carries life, growth and fruit with it. The fruits were for man’s nourishment—these were the ordained food of Paradise, the best provender for man at his best! What food there is in the Gospel! Wherever it flows, the famine of the soul ceases. The Gospel contains all manner of fruit, for all sorts of seasons and appetites. It provides food for the young and food for the old; food for the feeble and food for the strong; food for the happy and food for the sad! This Tree of Life brings forth fruit abundantly, constantly and speedily. The leaves of the Trees of Life contained medicine, full of mystic virtue—they were for the healing of the people. Whatever diseases afflict men, they have but to pluck these leaves, and apply them, and health follows! Oh, that blessed Gospel! It has had a double effect for our good, for it has fed our souls and healed our infirmities! Well might its waters be called a double stream!  
Do you not know that it is thus singularly useful? If you have never eaten of its fruit, I must seem to be talking nonsense to you. If you have never been sick and felt the healing power of its leaves, I must seem to mock you with decisions. But if you have been hungering and thirsting, you know what these streams and these fruits are—and if you have been sick unto death—you have found, in God’s Grace, a medicine better than the balm of Gilead—and it has made you whole! If the Gospel can thus cause Trees of Life to grow, the waters shall be healed— the horrible Dead Sea of lust shall yet be purified, the sulfurous breath of vice shall yet be blown away, the death of sin shall yet give place to holy life—and the Lord, alone, shall be exalted where before He has been dishonored!  
As a further wonder, note where the stream flowed. One would have thought that such a clear crystal stream as this, proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb, would have sought a pure channel for itself among the gardens of the Lord. But instead we are told, “These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea which, being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.” What a mercy it is that the Gospel goes into the desert! Think of what this island used to be, when our ancestors wandered about in their nakedness among its oak groves. Think of the times when the great wicker image was set up and the Druids surrounded it, and that image was crammed full of hundreds of men and women who were all to be consumed in one dread fire while the people stood by to see their fellow creatures offered to their national Moloch!  
That is all over now. No longer is the mistletoe cut with the golden sickle, or the fierce deity appeased with blood of men. The missionary came and preached the Gospel and the Druids ceased out of the land. They were both the legislature and the hierarchy, but they could not stand before the Divine Truth of God! They were everybody then, but they are nobody now. I do not know what may yet happen here, but I do know this—when the Gospel comes, the images, the idols, the filthy things, the cruel things, the horrible things must go. The Gospel is still sent to sinners and it will save sinners. We are to preach the Gospel to every creature, “beginning at Jerusalem,” and He who bade us do this will not permit us to labor in vain. The River of Life once purified Britain and it will cleanse it yet again—“The waters shall be healed.”  
The waters ran down into the horrible sea. You would have said, as you stood there, “No! No! Do not waste these pure floods in that Hell lake! Do not let them disappear in pollution! Jordan, for many years, has been lavishing her silver streams upon this Dead Sea and it has absorbed them all, but it has not been made a whit the purer—and every fish that has drifted down the Jordan has died as soon as it has touched this detestable lake! Do not pour the heavenly river into such a Pandemonium.” Many speak thus nowadays—“Do not meddle with this vice and wickedness. Do not even hear about it, for it will pollute you! Forget its foul flow, it is sulfurous as Tophet—the smell of such iniquity will choke you!” This avoidance of evil is natural and safe, but what is to become of this Dead Sea if the precious crystal stream does not flow into it? Will God abandon our race to the devil? Would He have His Church abandon her function of salting the earth? I do not believe it! I tell you, there is to be a link made by almighty Grace between the Temple at Jerusalem and the very site of Sodom and Gomorrah—a silver stream is yet to traverse the space between the Throne of the Most High and the foul Dead Sea—mercy is to triumph over judgement and righteousness is to conquer sin! It shall yet be said on earth and sung in Heaven, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”  
Blessed be His name, that to the very chief of sinners this life stream has flowed and will continue to flow till time shall be no more! Who can diminish this flood? Not even he that glories to drink up Jordan at a draught! Who can divert it? It is not to be turned by the will of man. Who can destroy its saving force? Not even the Dead Sea, itself, shall be able to contend against the healing energy of this wondrous river. Let us begin to sing of the river whose streams make us glad. Let our spirits break out with exultation, for, “the waters shall be healed.”  
III. Thirdly, for a moment or two I want you to CONSIDER THE EFFICACY OF THE WATERS. I will quit the figure in some measure in order to explain how the Gospel is adapted to heal the wickedness of men. “What does the Gospel do?” asks one. I answer—In the Gospel we set before men the horrible nature of sin and thus we lead them to turn from it. He does not preach the Gospel who fails to declare that sin slew the Son of God! The Cross unveils the baseness and ingratitude of sin and makes it to appear exceedingly sinful. The Gospel brings men to know the unchangeableness of the Divine Law and that sin is the transgression of that Law— and that every sin will have its just recompense of reward. There is no preaching the Gospel unless you declare the terrors of the Lord. God has winked at the times of man’s ignorance, but now commands all men, everywhere, to repent, for sin is not a thing to be played with, but a deadly enemy to be shaken off into the fire, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand. All this tends to the removal of human sin.  
The Gospel gives man hope and that is a grand thing for the degraded and self-condemned. To have a hope that you can be a better man is a great help in escaping from sin. To hope that you can be renewed and become like the angels of God, though now you are like the devils in Hell, is a great encouragement to turn to God! My Gospel bids me go to the very vilest of the vile and bid him hope. I count no man so loathsome that God may not look upon him in love. What a Gospel this is, for hope is the beginning of amendment, the first letter of the alphabet of reform! Where there is no hope, the sinner gives the reins to his lusts and thinks it wise to enjoy his sin while he may. O Souls, this is the Gospel, indeed, to you, that there is forgiveness—forgiveness, even, for loud and crying sins!  
The Gospel purifies men because it gives them Christ, Himself, to be their Savior. It brings them the Son of God to be their salvation. It says, “Poor Souls, you cannot help yourselves! Here is One on whom help has been laid, even a mighty One! Here is One that took your sin and put it away. Here is One that will be a Friend to you in your worst times of need. Here is One that is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh—lay your burdens down at His dear feet, for He has a fellow feeling for you! Here is a Leader and Commander for you who will lead you forth from the slavery of sin. Come, buckle on your harness to war against your sins, for He will give you power to overcome them.” I tell you there is no Gospel like a Gospel that says, “Sinner, here is Christ for you!” Poor, wearied, burdened, heavy-laden Sinner, take Christ to be yours and you have all you need between this place and Heaven!  
Moreover, the Gospel does not merely tell men certain Truths of God, but it gives life, power and Grace to them. There comes with the Gospel an almighty Power which changes the nature of the man. It touches his understanding and enlightens it. It touches his will and changes it. It touches his affections and purifies them. This Power is the Holy Spirit, equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son—nothing less than very God of very God! This Holy Spirit goes forth with the Gospel, giving hearts of flesh, causing men to be born again and creating all things new. The Truth comes not in Word only, but in the Power of the Holy Spirit. The waters shall be healed by such a Gospel, attended by such a Power as this!  
I heard it said the other day, “We do not need more preachers, for the supply is more than equal to the demand.” But then, the Gospel creates its own demand! Wherever the Gospel goes, it makes men thirsty for itself. It makes men hungry for itself. It does its own work without aid from any foregoing human preparedness! It does not even ask to be left alone—it will effect its purpose even though it is tampered with! Its own essential Omnipotence secures its own preservation, enlargement and success. How I marvel at those who quit the heavenly stream for their own little brooks and streams! A certain divine has lately made a discovery by which he is going to pour a flood of light upon the Bible! The Bible, it seems, has been a dark, mysterious Book to our forefathers—though martyrs died for it and saints were comforted by it—yet those poor beings were in the dark for lack of 19th Century discoveries! At length the hour has come, and the man with it—a great genius has arisen who has found light with which to illuminate the Bible!  
We used to sing—  
*“A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun.  
It gives a light to every age,  
It gives, but borrows none.”*  
Are we to alter our tune and cheerfully accept the contributions of this uncommon person? I think not! Did you ever hear of a madman who, with a common match, determined to show up the sun in the middle of the day? Come here, you that never saw the sun before! It is a dim affair, but we will strike this match and then you shall see what you shall see! Brothers and Sisters, this talk is all foolishness—neither the scientists nor the divines can light up the Light of God! This Book is clear enough of itself and this Gospel is mighty enough of itself without the aid of human wisdom! It will not be cleared, but clouded, by modern doting upon evolution! The river of the Gospel will force its own way despite modern thought! It will win and conquer, whoever may oppose!  
The power of the Gospel to cleanse this horrible Lake of Gomorrah lies in this—it touches the heart, it moves the affections, it changes the nature, it renews the entire man! Moreover, it binds men in a holy brotherhood and leads them back to their Father and their God. Its torrent bears away the pride which makes one man stand at a distance from his fellow. It drowns the oppression by which the great man thinks to trample down the poor. Its waves say, as they flow, “All you are Brothers and Sisters and One is your Master, even Christ.” Thus it works a holy revolution among men and a restoration of the royal rights of Jesus. God send it, send it to us, to London and to the entire world—and to His name shall be the praise!  
IV. I must close by noticing, fourthly, THE LESSON OF THE WATERS. What is their voice to us, today?  
I think the first lesson is that God works in very unexpected ways. There is that Dead Sea. We look down upon it with horror. Can it ever be healed? It never would have occurred to you or to me that yonder Temple, so pure and sacred, would have a spring welling up from under its threshold. Or that it was so little and so tiny that you might cover it with your hand, at first, and yet from that spring should come a sufficient purgation even for Sodom’s sea! The Lord knows how to do His own work and He does it by apparently slender means. “Who has despised the day of small things?” Mark the little band at Jerusalem, when the number of the men was about 120—that stream grew within a few days till we read that—“the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls.” Then another day or so after, we read, “And the number of the men was about five thousand.” That small beginning most rapidly increased, is increasing and will increase!  
The Gospel has the same potency and force about it, today, that it has had in ages past. Always expect the unexpected! Consider that God has great things in reserve. He shot yon arrow, but His quiver is still full! He has scarcely begun the battle! Jehovah of Hosts has stricken here, a blow and, there, a blow, but behold, He comes forth to do greater execution by the sword of His strength! O great Prince, “Ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach terrible things”! Come quickly, we pray You! What else ought we to learn? As the Dead Sea has to be cleansed by that stream of water, all that we can do is, first of all, pray. Pray, “Spring up, O Well!” Pray that out of the midst of each of us may flow rivers of Living Water. Pray that God would work by His Spirit yet more abundantly. The Holy Spirit has descended— we do not need Him to be poured out, but we would realize His power in another fashion—we would descend into the floods of His sacred influences—we beg of Him to baptize us into His mighty waters and sweep every sin away before Him!  
When we have done that, what next have we to do? Why, begin fishing. Wherever this stream rushes along, there will be fish. In this London there are fish. Go and fish in the streets, fish in the street corners, fish in any little room you can open! Fish in the great crowds if they will come to you. The stream is breeding swarms of life—be you fishers of men! God says to His Church today, “I have much people in this city.” Do not despair! God has an elect company in every parish of London. Get to work by this sea and stand there from En Gedi to En Eglaim, from Highgate to Norwood, from Stratford to Kensington, from one end of the city to the other! God help you to cast the net!  
Above all, we must not come to be the marshes of which we read just now. Certain spots of land were overflowed by the river and the sea, but afterwards, they were left high and dry as the stream retired, so that they were neither sea nor dry ground, but marshes. Beware of this! The most abominable beings out of Hell are Christians without Christianity, and there are plenty of them! They have “a name to live and are dead.” They have no love to men, nor love to God, nor zeal for Christ’s Glory—and yet they talk of being Christians! Beware of high professors who are unholy livers! These are jackdaws with peacocks’ feathers stuck upon them—and they shall, one day, be stripped of all their plumes. These are not the children of the living God, but children of the devil!  
When they are brought before the Judge, to have their true parentage discovered, they shall be cut in sunder! So the great Solomon will ordain! Oh, that you and I may be true-born children of God! May we never be among those mongrels who are neither heathen nor Jews, neither Christians nor outsiders! May we be one thing or the other! Let us heed the voice of the Prophet—“If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.” All the blessing that ever comes from Heaven will never save neutrals, for “the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.” God deliver us from such a curse, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 9:8-15; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Revelation 22:1-15.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—19, 874, 353.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2182 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—A GLORIOUS NAME FOR THE NEW YEAR  
NO. 2182

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 4, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord Is There [or in the Hebrew, ‘Jehovah-Shammah.’]”  
Ezekiel 48:35**

THESE words may be used as a test as well as a text. They may serve for examination as well as consolation and, at the beginning of a year, they may fulfill this useful double purpose. In any case they are full of marrow and fatness to those whose spiritual taste is purified. It is esteemed by the Prophet to be the highest blessing that could come upon a city that its name should be, “JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, The Lord Is There.” Even Jerusalem, in its best estate, would have this for its crowning blessing—nothing could exceed this. Do we reckon the Presence of the Lord to be the greatest of blessings? If in any gathering, even of the humblest people, the Lord God is known to be present in a peculiarly gracious manner, should we make a point of being there? Very much depends upon our answer to these queries.

Doubtless many would be greatly pleased if there were no God at all, for in their hearts they say, “No God.” God is not to them a father, a friend, a trust, a treasure. If they were to speak from their hearts and could hope for a satisfactory answer, they would ask, “Where can I flee from His Presence?” If a spot could be found where there would be no God, what a fine building speculation might be made there! Millions would emigrate to “No God’s Land,” and would feel at ease as soon as they trod its godless shore! There they could do just as they liked, without fear of future reckoning.

Now, Friend, if you would escape from the Presence of God, your state is clearly revealed by that fact. There can be no Heaven for you, for Heaven is where the Lord’s Presence is fullness of joy. If you could be happy to be far off from God, I must tell you what your fate will be. You are now going away from God in your heart and desire and, at last, the great Judge of All will say to you, “Depart, you cursed”—and you will then be driven from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

I know that there is a company who can truly say that they feel only happy when they are conscious that God is with them. The place where they meet with the Lord is very dear and precious to them because of His unveilings. The memory of holy convocations is sweet because the Lord was among them. They would not care to go where God is not. If there were a place forsaken of God, however happy and full of merriment men might think it, they would not be found among its guests. Where we cannot enjoy God’s company, we will not go. Our motto is—“With God, anywhere. Without God, nowhere.” In Him we live, and move, and have our being and, therefore, it would be death to us to be apart from God! Without God we should be without hope. Ah, my dear Friend, whatever your difficulties, trials and sorrows, all is well with you if God is your delight and His Presence your joy! But, however high your temporal enjoyments may rise, it is all wrong with you if you can rest away from the God of Grace. The child must be in a sad state of heart when he does not care to have his father’s approving smile. Things must be terribly wrong with any creature when it can be content to walk contrary to its Creator. Nothing but the corruption of the heart could permit any man to be at ease away from God.

Will you permit these thoughts to saturate you for a little time? I have spoken them with the desire that each one of us may ask himself, “Is the Presence of God my delight?” If so, I am His, and He will be with me. On the contrary, “Is the Presence of God a matter of indifference, or even of dread?” Then my condition is one of guilt, disease and danger. May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, set me right!

This much may stand as a preface, but it must not be treated as most prefaces are, namely, left unread, or glanced over and forgotten. I pray you, carry it with you all along.

I. Now kindly notice that, according to our text, THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE GLORY OF THE MOST GLORIOUS PLACE. The Prophet Ezekiel has been telling us many remarkable things which I shall not attempt to explain to you—and my chief reason for not doing so is the fact that I do not understand them, myself. Even if I could open up every dark saying, now is not the time to go into an explanation of all the sublime mysteries which were seen by the eagle eye of Ezekiel, for I seek present, practical edification—and this we can gain in an easier way. It is clear from the text that when God shall bless His ancient people and restore them to their land—and the Temple shall be rebuilt and all the glory of the latter days shall arrive—this will still be the peculiar glory of it all, that, “the Lord is there.” The Prophet works up a climax and closes his Book of prophecy with these glorious words, “the Lord is there.”

What a glorious state this world was in at the very first, in the age of Paradise, for the Lord was there! Our glorious Creator, having taken the first days of the week to make the world and fit it up for man, did not bring forward His dear child until the house was built and furnished and supplied for his use and happiness! He did not put him in the Garden to dress it till the roses were blooming and the fruits were ripe! When the table was furnished, He introduced the guest by saying, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” The Lord put man, not in an unreclaimed plot of soil where he must hunger till he could produce a harvest—but into an Eden of delights where he was at home with creatures of every sort to attend him! He had not to water dry lands, nor need he thirst, himself, for four rivers flowed through his royal domain, rippling over sands of gold. I might say much of that fair garden of innocence and bliss, but the best thing I could say would be the Lord was there! “The Lord God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day” and communed with man—and man, being innocent, held high converse with his condescending Maker! The top stone of the bliss of Paradise was this allcomprehending privilege—“the Lord is there.”

Alas, that has vanished. Withered are the bowers of Eden—the trail of the serpent is over all landscapes, however fair. Yet days of mercy came and God’s saints, in divers places, found choice spots where they could converse with Heaven. In the first days, our gracious God spoke with His chosen ones in their daily walk, as Enoch; or under the oak, as Abraham; or by the brook, as Jacob; or before the bush, as Moses; or near the city wall, as Joshua. Wherever it might be, the place became to them the gate of Heaven, for the Lord was there! Amid a torrent of sin and sorrow, you may cross the stream of time upon the steppingstones of the places marked, “JEVOHAH-SHAMMAH.” The Lord’s delights were with the sons of men and to them, nothing brought such bliss as to find that the Lord still would be mindful of man and visit him.

In the days when God had called out unto Himself a chosen nation, He revealed Himself at Sinai, when the mountain was altogether on a smoke and even Moses said, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” Well might he feel a holy awe, for the Lord was there! I will not dwell upon the Glory of the tabernacle that was pitched in the wilderness, with its costly furniture and its instructive rites, for, after all, the Glory of the tabernacle was that the Lord was there! A bright light shone between the wings of the cherubim and so the Psalmist, in later days spoke unto the Lord saying, “You that dwells between the cherubim shine forth.” Above the sacred tent was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day—an emblem of the constant Presence of God, for all through the wilderness His glorious marching was in the center of the armies of His Israel. The desert sand glowed with the blaze of the present Deity! No spot on earth was so like to Heaven’s high courts as that wilderness the Lord, Himself, led His people like a flock. Holy was Horeb, for the Lord was there! Then were the days of Israel’s espousals, for the Most High tabernacled among her tribes and made them “a people near unto Him.”

In Canaan, itself, the days of sorrow came when the nation went after other gods and the Lord became a stranger in the land. When He returned, and delivered His people by the Judges, then the nations knew that Israel could not be trampled on, for the Lord was there. This was the Glory of David’s reign. Then the Lord made bare His arm and the enemies of His chosen were driven like snow from the bleak sides of Salmon when the rough blast carries it away. This was the shout of the joyful people, “The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge!” Never were the hills of Judah more fruitful, nor the vales of Sharon more peaceful, nor the homes of Israel more restful, nor the sons of Zion more valiant than when to the harp of David the song was raised, “They have seen Your goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. This is the hill which God desires to dwell in; yes, the Lord shall dwell in it forever.”

You remember how, in later ages, when Solomon was crowned and his reign of peace had been inaugurated, he built for God a Temple adorned with gold and precious stones, and all manner of cunning, work of the artificer? But it was not that glittering roof, it was not those massive pillars of brass in the forefront, it was not the hecatombs of bullocks whose blood was poured forth at the altar which were the glory of the Temple on Mount Zion. Beautiful for situation, it was the joy of the whole earth, but its Glory lay in this—“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.” The excellence of the Temple was seen when, on the opening day, the Lord revealed Himself and the cloud filled the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud—for the “Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord.” Little remains for man to do when in, very deed, the Lord dwells in the midst of His saints. Apart from priests and ceremonies, that place is sacred wherein the Lord Most High has His abode. Say of any place, “Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There,” and be it tent or temple, you have spoken glorious things of it!

I almost tremble while I remind you of the truest Temple of God— the body of our Lord. The nearest approach of Godhead to our manhood was when there was found, wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that Child who was born, that Son who was given, whose name was called, “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” As for you, O Bethlehem, favored above all the towns of earth, out of you He came, who is Immanuel, God With Us! Verily, Your name is Jehovah-Shammah! All along, through 30 years and more of holy labor, ending in a shameful death, God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. In the gloom of Gethsemane, among those somber olives, when Jesus bowed and in His prayer sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground, He was “seen of angels” as the Son of God bearing human sin! Speak of Gethsemane and we tell you God was there! Before Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas and on the Cross—the Lord was there! Though, in a sense, there was the hiding of God, and Jesus cried, “Why have You forsaken Me?” yet in the deepest sense Jehovah was there, bruising the great Sacrifice. The thick darkness made a veil for the Lord of Glory and behind it, He that made all things bowed His head and said, “It is finished.” God was in Christ Jesus on the Cross, and we, beholding Him, feel that we have seen the Father. O Calvary, we say of you, “The Lord is there.”

Here I might fitly close, for we can mount no higher, but yet we could not afford to leave out those other dwellings of the Invisible Spirit who still, by His Presence, makes holy places even in this unholy world! We have to remind you that God is the Glory of the most glorious living thing that has been on the face of the earth since our Lord was here. And what is that? I answer, Jesus is gone—the Prophets are gone and we have no Temple, no human priest, no material Holy of Holies—

*“Jesus, wherever Your people meet,  
There they behold Your Mercy Seat!  
Wherever they seek You, You are found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

And yet there is a special place where God dwells among men and that is in His Church. He has but one—one Church, chosen by eternal election, redeemed by precious blood, called out by the Holy Spirit and quickened into newness of life—this, as a whole, is the dwelling place of the Covenant God! Because God is in this Church, therefore the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.

“The Lord is there” might be said of the Church in all ages. I have seen the crypts and underground chapels of the catacombs. And it made me feel that they were glorious places when I remembered that the Lord God was there, by His Spirit, with His suffering people—when holy hymn and Psalm and solemn prayer went up from the very heart of the earth from men who were hunted to the death by their foes—the Lord was there! In those dreary excavations, unvisited by sunlight and wholesome air, God was as He was not in the palaces of kings and is not in the cathedrals of priests! In this land of ours, when a few people met together, here and there, to hear the Gospel and to worship, they made cottages, caves and hollows in the woods to be “holiness unto the Lord.”

Yes, and when crowds met beneath your Gospel oaks, or gathered together by the hillside to listen to the pure Word of Grace, the Lord was there and souls were saved and sanctified! When the Puritans solemnly conversed together of the things of God and held their little conventicles for fear of their adversaries—God was there! On Scotland’s bleak moors and mosses, when the Covenanters gathered in the darkness and the storm for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons—God was there! Those who wrote in those days tell us that they never knew such seasons in days of peace as they enjoyed among the hills, amid the heather, or by the brook—for Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord was there! And so onward, to this very day, wherever the chosen of God lift up holy hands and worship Him, whether it is in cathedral or in barn, beneath the blue sky or beneath a thatched roof—anywhere and everywhere when the heart is right and the soul adores the living Lord, this is the special Glory of the place— “Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There!”

Flying forward, as with a dove’s wing, to the future that is drawing near, we think of the Truth of God that there is to be a millennial age—a time of glory, peace, joy, truth and righteousness. But what is to be the Glory of it? Why this, “Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There!” The Lord Jesus Christ will come and begin His personal reign on earth among His ancients. In like manner, as He went up into Heaven, and the disciples saw Him, so will He descend a second time, to be seen here among men. And His glorious Presence shall fashion the golden age, the thousand years of peace! Then shall the nations shout, “The Lord Is Come!” What hallelujahs will then rise to Heaven! Welcome, welcome, Son of God! How will all His faithful ones rejoice with unspeakable joy and sing and sing again, for now the day of their reward has come and they shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! In all the Glory of the latter days everything is wrapped up in this one phrase, “the Lord is there.”—

*“Oh, come, You Day-Spring, come and cheer Our spirits by Your advent here!  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death’s dark shadows put to flight!  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to you, O Israel!”*

Up yonder, where many of our beloved ones have already gone—up yonder, within that gate of pearl where eyes cannot, as yet, see, what is it that makes Heaven with all its supreme delights? Not harps of angels, nor blaze of seraphim! Just this one fact, “the Lord is there.” What must it be to be with God? O soul that loves Him, what will your fullness of pleasure be when you shall dwell with Him for whom your soul is hungering and thirsting! What joy to be “forever with the Lord!” This perfect bliss may be ours this very day! We little know how near we are to our glorification with our Lord. The veil is very thin that parts the sanctified from the glorified—

*“One gentle sigh, the soul awakes—  
We scarcely can say, ‘he’s gone,’  
Before the ransomed spirit takes  
Its mansion near the Throne.”*

The joy and glory of those Divine mansions is that “the Lord is there.” Heaven’s loftiest peak shines forever in this clear light—The Lord God and the Lamb are the Light thereof—“the Lord is there.”

Enough of this. I have proved my point, that the Glory of the most glorious place is that “the Lord is there.”  
II. Suffer me for a few minutes to speak to you upon another point— THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE BEST PRIVILEGE OF HIS CHURCH. It is her glory that “the Lord is there.” Note this, and mark it well. Brothers and Sisters, we as a Church have grown to great numbers and we are not deficient, either, in gifts or in Graces, or in work for our Lord. But let me solemnly remind you always that our chief, our only strength, must always lie in this—“the Lord is there.” If the Lord should depart from us, as He has gone from churches which are now apostate, what an abyss opens before us! If He should take His Holy Spirit from us, even as the Glory departed from the Temple at Jerusalem, then our ruin would become a thing to mention with dread, a case to be quoted for a warning to future generations! O Lord, our God, take not Your flight! Abide with us, we pray You! Our only hope lies in Your making the place of Your feet glorious among us!  
If the Lord is among us, the consequences will be, first, the conservation of true doctrine. The true God is not with a lie—He will not give His Countenance to falsehood. Those who preach other than according to His Word, abide not under His blessing and are in great danger of His curse. If any man speaks another gospel (which is not another, but there are some that trouble us), God is not with him—and any transient prosperity which he may enjoy will be blown away as the chaff. God is with those who faithfully speak His Truth, hold it devoutly, believe it firmly and live upon it as their daily bread. May it always be said of this Church, “the Lord is there,” and, therefore, they are sound in the faith, reverent towards Holy Scripture and zealous for the honor of Christ! Trust-deeds and confessions of faith are useful in their way, even as laws are useful to society, but as laws cannot secure obedience to themselves, so articles of belief cannot create faith, or secure honesty. And to men without conscience, they are not worth the paper they are written upon. No subscription to articles can keep out the unscrupulous! Wolves leap into the fold however carefully you watch the door. The fact is, the most of people say, “Yes, that doctrine is in the creed and is not to be denied, but you need not preach it. Put it on the shelf as an ornament and let us hear no more about it.” Truth must be written on the heart as well as in the book! If the Lord is among His people, they will cling to the eternal Truths of God and love the doctrine of the Cross, not by force of law, but because Divine Truth is the life of their souls.  
Where God is present, the preservation of purity will be found. The Church is nothing if it is not holy. It is worse—it is a den of thieves! Setting the seal of its pestilent example upon evil living, it becomes the servant of Satan and the destroyer of souls. Who is to keep the Church pure? None but God, Himself. If the Lord is there, holiness will abound and fruits of the Spirit will be seen on all sides. But if the Lord is once withdrawn, then flesh and blood will rule and gender towards corruption, after its own manner—and the church will become a synagogue of formalists. Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, continually, that the Lord may dwell in our Zion, to maintain us in all holy obedience and purity of life!  
Where God is, there is the constant renewal of vitality. A dead church is a reeking Golgotha, a breeding place of evils, a home of devils. The tombs may be newly whitewashed, but they are none the less open sepulchers, haunts of unclean spirits. A Church all alive is a little Heaven, the resort of angels, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. In some of our churches everybody seems to be a little colder than everybody else. The members are holy icicles! A general frost has paralyzed everybody and though some are colder than others, yet all are below zero! There are no flowing rills of refreshment. Everything is bound hard and fast with the frost of indifference. Oh, that the Lord would send forth His wind and melt the glaciers! Oh, that the Spirit of God would chase winter out of every heart and every church! No human power can keep a church from the frostbite which numbs and kills. Unless the Lord is there, growth, life, warmth are all impossible. You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent and give Him no rest, but cry day and night to Him, “O Lord, abide with us! Go forth with our armies! Make us to be the living children of the living God!”  
When the Lord is there, next, there is continuing power. With God there is power in the ministry, power in prayer, power in all holy work. We may do a vast deal of work and yet nothing may come of it, but, on the other hand, we may only be able to do comparatively little and yet great results may flow from it, for results depend not on the quantity of the machinery, but on the Presence of the Lord!  
Do you not all know persons who are not peculiarly gifted and yet are eminently useful? You do not remark anything about them that is specially noticeable and yet their whole career enlists attention by its power. Their words are effective, for there is character behind them. A consistent life gives force to a plain testimony. It is not so much what is said as who says it! And that is not all—God, Himself, is at the back of the man who is living for Him. He causes him to speak in His name so that none of his words fall to the ground. Is it not said of the godly, “His leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper”? This is so with every Church where the Lord abides. His Presence makes it a power with its children and adherents, a power with the neighborhood and a power with the age. Its example, its testimony, its effort is effective! God uses it and, therefore, it answers its end. The power is with God—but the Church is the instrument by which that power exercises itself. He uses a living people for the display of living power and He gives to them, both life and power, more and more abundantly. As we desire power with which to labor for God, we must pray that the God of Power will remain in our midst.  
Furthermore, whenever it can be said of an assembly, “the Lord is there,” unity will be created and fostered. Show me a church that quarrels, a church that is split up into cliques, a church that is divided with personal ambitions, contrary doctrines and opposing schemes—and I am sure that the Lord is not there. Where there are envying, jealousies, suspicions, backbiting and dislikes, I know that the Holy Dove, who hates confusion, has taken His flight. God is Love and He will only dwell where love reigns. He is the God of Peace and will not endure strife. The children of God should be knit together. It would be a shameful sight, indeed, should children of His family fall out and chide and fight. Saints who dwell with God love each other “with a pure heart, fervently.” Some professors act as if they hated each other! I may not say, “with a pure heart,” but I will say, “fervently.” Where God is present, the Church is edified in love and grows up, like a building fitly framed together, to be a holy Temple in the Lord. Oh, for more of this unity!  
Where the Lord is, there is sure to be happiness. What meetings we have when the Lord is here! It is a Prayer Meeting, but when you have said that, you have not fully described it, for it is far more. It was an unusual meeting for prayer, for, God being there, every prayer was spoken into His ear and all the desires and petitions of the saints were prompted by His Holy Spirit! Why, the very room was lit up with the Glory of the Lord! And whether we were in Heaven or not, we could hardly tell! What happy times we have in preaching the Word of the Lord when God’s own Presence is realized! His paths drop fatness. What joyous seasons we have frequently enjoyed at the Communion Table! The provision is but bread and wine, but when, by faith, we perceive the real and spiritual Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the breaking of the bread we eat His flesh, and in the fruit of the vine we drink His blood! When we have gathered in the Lord’s Presence we have sung—  
*“No beams of cedar or of fir  
Can with Your courts on earth compare!  
And here we wait, until Your love  
Raises us to nobler seats above.”*

At the Master’s Table I have often been so blessed that I would not have exchanged places with Gabriel! The Lord was there—what more could I desire? Joy, delight, rapture, ecstasy—what word shall I use?—all these have waited around the Table of Fellowship, as musicians at a king’s banquet. If God is there, our Heaven is there!

III. I shall now close by noticing, in the third place, that since this Presence of God is the Glory of the most glorious place and the choice privilege of the most privileged, it is our exceeding joy. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS OUR DELIGHT IN EVERY PLACE.

We will think of our own dear homes. What a delightful family we belong to if it can be said of our house, “Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There”! Has it a thatched roof and a stone floor? What does it matter? The father of the family lives near to God and his wife rejoices to be his fellowhelper in prayer, while the children grow up to honest toil and honorable service. Assuredly that cottage home is dear to God and becomes a place where angels come and go! Because God is there, every window looks towards the Celestial City. It is a comfort that we need not go across the road to morning prayer, or step out every evening to worship, for we are priests, ourselves, and have a family altar at home where the incense burns both morning and night. We talk not of matins and vespers, but we glory that “the Lord is there” when we bow the knee as a household!

What is more delightful than to gather round the family hearth to hear the Scriptures read and listen to the senior, as he talks to the younger ones, of what God has done for him and what the Lord is waiting to give to all who trust Him? Free from all formality, family prayer makes a house a temple, a family a church and every day a holy day! Truly, I may say of families of this kind, wherever they dwell, that it is “none other but the House of God, and it is the very gate of Heaven,” for, “the Lord is there.” Friend, is God in your house? If it has no family prayer, it has no roof to it. There is no true joy in domestic life unless the Lord is there. All else is fiction! God alone is true delight. I charge you, if your homes are not such that God could come to them, set your houses in order and say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Will you dare to dwell where God could not lodge with you? May all men say of your home, “The Lord is there!”

Here is a Christian who lives alone, altogether apart from family life. All his dear ones are dead, or far away. In his lone chamber, when he bows his knee in secret prayer, or whenever he takes his walk abroad to meditate, if he is, indeed, a true lover of the Lord Jesus, “the Lord is there.” Wherever the Believer’s lot is cast, if he lives in fellowship with Christ, he may say of his quiet room, or of the garden walk, or even of the stable or the loft, “Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There.” Many a humble attic is a right royal residence, for, “the Lord is there.” Better Paul’s inner dungeon at Philippi, with his feet fast in the stocks—and the Presence of the Lord— than the most grand apartment of Caesar’s palace and an unknown god! The Lord is very gracious to His lonely ones. They can say, “And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” In a hospital, or in a workhouse— what does it matter if Jehovah is at your side to cheer you?

Some of us can bear witness that we have had the nearest approaches of God to our souls in times of intolerable pain and even in seasons of intense depression of spirit as to earthly things. “I was brought low, and the Lord helped me,” said David. And we can say the same. The Lord has said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,” as much as to say, “If I am not with you anywhere else, I will be with you then.” In the furnace, one like unto the Son of God was seen. If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego never had that glorious fourth Person in their company before, they had Him when they were cast into the midst of the glowing coals! Jehovah-Shammah makes a seven-times-heated furnace a pleasant arbor! We may say of the refining fire, of the threshing floor and of the oilpress, “God has been there!” In the time of trouble He has been a very present help. One might almost say, “Send me back to my prison,” as one did say who lost God’s Presence after he had gained his liberty! One might well cry, “Ah, let me have back my pain if I may again overflow with the joy of the Lord’s Presence.”

Dear Friends, I thank God that you and I know what it is to enjoy the Presence of God in a great many different ways. When two or three of the people of God meet together and talk to one another about the things of God, the Lord is never away. You remember that blessed text, “They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another.” They had holy talks about heavenly things. It was such sweet conversation that the Lord, Himself, turned eaves-dropper and listened and heard. What He heard pleased Him so well that He, then and there, made a note of it. Yes, and wrote it down and ordered that “a book of remembrance” should be preserved “for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Was not this sure evidence of His most gracious Presence? John Bunyan knew that God was there when he went about tinkering and came to Bedford—and there were three godly women sitting in the sun, at work—and as they worked they talked so sweetly that the tinker stood and listened and was drawn to better things! By such means he became a Believer and a preacher—and the writer of the “Pilgrim’s Progress”—which has so refreshed us all. The Lord was there and, therefore, he dreamed a heavenly dream in Bedford jail. Wherever His people meet, the Lord is graciously near. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Yes, but when Christian people go forth to work—when you come to your Sunday school, or go out with your bundle of tracts, to hand them out in your district, or when you join a little band and stand on the street corner, yonder, and lift up your voice in the name of Jesus—you may expect, if you go with prayer and faith, that it shall be written, “JehovahShammah, The Lord Is There.” It is only a young man standing up in a cottage to speak and he has not much to say, yet there are penitential tears and broken hearts—it is so, for God is there! It is only a humble woman speaking to a few persons of her own class and yet angels are rejoicing over a repenting sinner—yes, because God is there! It is only a little room in one of our back streets and the city missionary has come in. There are a dozen or two of the neighbors called together and he is talking of Jesus and His love—oh, but if the Lord is there, do not tell me that the missionary is not in the Apostolic succession—he need not claim it, he is, himself, an Apostle of God to those poor people! He needs no gorgeous vestments, nor the swell of an organ, nor even the thunders of the multitude as they raise the solemn hymn! The few so simple and so poor have God with them and it is enough! Wherever you are seeking to do good, in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, it shall be said “the Lord is there.”

And now, from this time forth, Beloved, you that fear God and think upon His name, wherever you go, let it be said, “Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There.” I often feel sorry when the Sabbath is nearly over and so do many of you. I know you wake on Monday morning and take those shutters down, again, or go off to that workshop where you suffer so much ridicule, or return to the ordinary grind of daily labor and mix up with so many of the ungodly—and you do it mournfully. Now, pray that you may keep up the Sabbath tone all week! Make every place, wherever you go, to be the House of God. A dear Brother of ours went to a shop where he worked with four ungodly men—and his Lord went with him. It was not long before we had the privilege of baptizing that friend’s master and all his shop mates, for the Lord was there! The other day there came a fresh man to work who could not bear to hear a word upon religion, but our Brother was the means of his conversion, too, and the new man is coming among us, warm with his first love! Our Brother made up his mind that he was not going to be conquered by any scoffers, but, on the contrary, he was determined to conquer them for Christ! He will not yield to the influences of sin, but he resolves, in the name of the Lord, that evil influences shall yield to the power of the Truth of God and to the attractions of the Cross. Write across your workshop, “The Lord is here.” If you cannot do it literally, do it spiritually, “Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There.”

Do not be found anywhere where you could not say that the Lord was there! If you are called into the world in the pursuit of your daily vocation, cry unto the Lord, “If Your Spirit goes not with me, carry me not up hence.” Determine that you will have the Spirit of God with you and, if it is in busy Cheapside, or in the lonesome country while you are hoeing the turnips or attending to a flock of sheep—in any field, any street, or any room—it shall be said that God is there! Take Jesus with you when you go and, when you come home, may His Spirit still be with you! God grant that it may be so! The Holy Spirit can work you to this!

What shall I say to those who do not know the Lord and do not care for Him? O Friend, the day will come in which Jesus Christ will say to you, “I never knew you: depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” Do not let Him say that, but, tonight, commence an acquaintance with Him. May His Holy Spirit help you to do so! I am sure the Lord Jesus Christ could not say to me, “I never knew you.” It is impossible, because I could reply to Him, “Never knew me, Lord? Why, I have been to You with so many burdens. I have run to You with so many troubles that I am sure You know me as one knows a beggar whom he has relieved many times a day—

*‘Do You ask me who I am?  
Ah, my Lord! You know my name.’*  
You remember me, for in my despair I cried to You and You did relieve me of my burden! You know me, for in my sorrow, my broken heart found no comfort but in You! You have known me all these years in which I have had to cry to You for something to preach about, and for help while

preaching. You know how I have had to come to You and confess my failures, and mourn my shortcomings, and lament my sins, and trust in Your blood for cleansing.”

My Lord cannot say that He does not know me, for He has known my soul in adversity. Blessed be His name, I know Him and lean all my weight upon Him! They that know Him shall be with Him and He will receive them unto Himself forever—and this shall be their Glory—“JehovahShammah, The Lord Is There.” With Him shall they dwell, world without end! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 45:8-25.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—774, 847, 806.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
DEAR FRIENDS—In this, the beginning of another year, I find myself in Mentone gradually recovering health after a period of pain and weakness. To begin Volume 37 of weekly sermons has fallen to the lot of no other man. I am grateful for the peculiar privilege and all the more so because all the previous 36 volumes continue to be purchased and read, and preached. I beg each friendly reader to breathe a prayer for the preacher and for these hundreds of sermons, that the Lord may use both the living voice and the printed page to His own Glory and to the salvation of men. Man’s thoughts change, but the Word of the Lord endures forever—and this is the Word which in these sermons is preached to men. May the Holy Spirit acknowledge the testimony!  
Wishing to all my readers A HAPPY NEW YEAR,  
I am their servant for Christ’s sake,  
*C. H. SPURGEON.*

“DARE TO BE A DANIEL”  
NO. 2291

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 15, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank.” Daniel 1:8.**

VERY much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days. I like a remark of Mr. Ruskin’s that I remember to have read, though I cannot quote it verbatim. He says, “People often say, ‘We excuse the thoughtlessness of youth,’” but he says, “No, it never ought to be excused. I had far rather hear of thoughtless old age, when a man has done his work—but what excuse can be found for a thoughtless youth? The time for thought is at the beginning of life and there is no period which so much demands, or so much necessitates, thoughtfulness as our early days.” I would that all young men would think so. They say that they must sow their “wild oats.” No, no, my dear young Friend, think before you sow such seed as that, and remember what the reaping will be. See whether there is not better corn to be found than wild oats and try to sow that. Then think how you will sow it and when you will sow it, for, if you do not think about the sowing—

*“What will the harvest be?”*  
If there is any time when the farmer should think, it is surely in the early stages of the plowing and the sowing. If he does not think, then, it will be of small use for him to think afterwards.

Daniel was a young man, and he did think. It was his glory that he so thought that he came to a purpose, and he purposed, not with a kind of superficial, “I will,” but he, “purposed in his heart,” and gave his whole self to a certain definite purpose which he deliberately formed. He was a young man—he was also a captive—and that rendered it the more remarkable that he should come to such a decision. He had been stolen away from his father’s house and carried into a foreign land. And you know what men say, “When you are in Rome, you must do as Rome does.” But here was a young man in Babylon who would not do what Babylon did—a youth in a king’s court who would not eat what the king ate, or drink what the king drank—a captive whose very name had been changed in order to make him forget his country and his God, for the change in name, as I told you in the reading, was meant to be significant of a change in religion.

But though they might change Daniel’s name, they could not change his nature, nor would he give up anything that he believed to be right. Captive as he was, he had a right royal soul, and he was as free in Babylon as he had been at Jerusalem. And he determined to keep himself so, for he, “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank.” Oh, that we had a multitude of young men who knew how to put their feet down! We have a great number, now, who are watching to see where to put their foot down, and they will try to put it down, not where it is most solid ground, but where it is most turfy, and easy, and soft to the feet! May God give us back the old grit that used to be in old-fashioned Christians, to whom custom was nothing, but God’s Word was everything—to whom it mattered not whether it brought loss or gain—but they did the right and followed the right, cost what it might!

Now, it was because Daniel, while yet a youth, a captive, a student, was so decided in what he did, that his later life became so bright. He would never have been called, “a man greatly beloved,” if he had not been made, by Grace, a youth greatly decided. Neither would he have advanced to the reign of Cyrus, as we read just now, if he had not stood firm in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. You shall read the evening of life in the morning of life, and you shall decide what your evening is to be by what your morning is! God help you, who are beginning life, for, if God begins with you and you begin with God, your life will be one of happy usefulness which will have a truly blessed end!

I am going to talk just now, not so much about Daniel, as about the whole subject of a spirit of decision in such a time as this. Our first head will be that there are temptations to be resisted by us, as there were by Daniel. Secondly, there are right methods of resisting temptation. And, thirdly, there are certain points which will have to be proved by experience while we are in this process of fighting against temptation.

I. THERE ARE TEMPTATIONS TO BE RESISTED. There never was a man yet who had faith and who had not trials. Wherever there is faith in God, it will be tested at some time or other—it must be so. It cannot be that the house shall be built, even on the Rock, without the rains descending, the floods coming and the winds beating upon that house. Though it shall not fall, yet it shall be tried by a force that would make it fall were it not Divinely sustained.

Now, first, look at Daniel’s temptations. In his case, the temptation was very specious. He was told to eat the portion of food that, every day, came from the king’s table. Could he need any better? And he was commanded to drink the measure of wine, generally the best in the world, that was sent from the king’s table. He might have fared like a prince! Could he have any objection to that? He had no objection except this—that it would defile him. Do you understand what he meant by that? There were certain foods used by the Babylonians, such as the flesh of swine, the flesh of the hare and of certain fish, that were unclean, and when these came from the king’s table, if Daniel ate them, he would be breaking the Law of Moses as given in the Book of Leviticus, and thus he would be defiled. Remember that the food which was allowed to Israel was to be killed in a certain way. The blood must be effectually drained from the flesh, for he that ate the blood defiled himself thereby.

Now, the Babylonians did not kill their beasts in that way and the eating of flesh which had not been killed according to the Law would have defiled Daniel. You know how careful the Jews are to this day with regard to the butchering of the food they eat. More than that, usually such a king as Nebuchadnezzar, before he ate food, dedicated it to his god. BelMerodach was greatly venerated by Nebuchadnezzar as god, so that a libation of wine was poured out to Merodach, and a certain portion of food was put aside, so that, in fact, it was offered to idols—and Daniel felt that he would be defiled if he ate of meat which might be unclean, and which was certain to be offered to idols—it would be breaking the Law of God— so Daniel would not eat it.

But the temptation to do so must have been very strong, for somebody would say, “Why, what difference can it make what you eat, or what you drink?” Under the Christian dispensation, it might be another matter, but under the Jewish dispensation, it made a great deal of difference whether a man ate or drank certain things. Others would say, “Why is Daniel so particular? There have been other Jews here who have unhesitatingly eaten the king’s meat. We read of king Jehoiakim, that he had a portion from the king’s table every day, and he does not seem to have made any objection! Why does this young fellow put his back up so and make himself so odd, and so different from everybody else? There is no use in being so strict and sticking out about little things.” So the temptation came to Daniel with great speciousness.

Then, the temptation seemed the road to honor. To consent to eat of the king’s meat and to drink of the king’s wine, seemed to be the way to get on in Babylon. They would say to Daniel, “Surely, if you begin by objecting to what the monarch sends you from his table, you will never get on at court. People with a conscience should not go to court.” I do not say that, today, but I do think that they ought not to be members of Parliament! It must be amazingly difficult for a man with a conscience to go in and out there! But for Daniel to begin with a conscience like this, so particularly tender that it was offended by a glass of the king’s wine, or a morsel of the king’s meat, why, any good old fatherly man would have said, “My boy, you will never get on—your religion will always stand in your way. I am sure you will never come to be much.” That would have been a great mistake, however, for Daniel became a great ruler and he prospered in the world through that very conscientiousness which it was thought would spoil all his prospects!

Somebody would whisper in Daniel’s ear, “It is the law of the land. The king, who is supreme, has ordered that you should eat this portion and drink this measure of wine each day.” Yes, but whatever the law may be, and whatever custom may be, the servants of God serve a higher King and they have but one rule and one custom! “We ought to obey God rather than man.” They are ready to be the most obedient subjects up to a certain point, but when the Law of God comes in, then are they dogged to a degree of obstinacy. They can burn, but they cannot turn—they can die, but they cannot deny the Law of the Lord, their God!

In Daniel’s case, if he had done what it was proposed to him to do, it would have been giving up the separated life. He felt that if he constantly fed upon the luxurious food of the king, he would be reckoned to be a Chaldean like the king, and so, to keep up his separation as belonging to the chosen seed, of whom Balaam prophesied, “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations,” Daniel would not eat of the royal fare which was provided for him. Had he done so, he would have melted into a Chaldean and given up being an Israelite, to whom belonged the promises. This is the temptation of the present day. Profess to be a Christian, but float along the common current of the world! Take the name of a Christian and go to your place of worship, and go through your ceremonies—but do not bring your religion into your business! Act as other people do! This is the temptation of the time—as the majority of men think, so think you—and as the majority of men say, so say you! And as the majority of Christian professors talk, so talk you! This is the Satanic temptation which is wrecking our churches and doing, I know not how much mischief to men of God! But Daniel, though tempted strongly to do like that, would not yield. He “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank.”

Now, in our own case, what are the particular temptations to which we, as believing men and believing women, are exposed?  
I cannot go into the question of individuals, but I can imagine someone here, tonight, who is in a position where he is asked to do what it is not right for him to do. But he says, “I shall be fired if I refuse to do it! I know others do it and I must do it.” My dear young fellow, allow me to put before you, Daniel, who purposed in his heart that he would not eat the king’s meat. I talked, the other day, with a gentleman who was the trustee for one of the wealthiest men in England, and who now is trustee of the money that the same gentleman has left to all his children. Those children have grown up and have come to years of maturity, but they still make him the trustee, paying him for looking after all their money, which is an immense amount. I was asking him how it was that he gained the confidence of the family so that they put him in such a position where all that they have is under his care and discretion.  
He said that he remembered, when he was but a boy, the head of the establishment said to him one day, “Say that I am out,” and he replied, “Please, Sir, I could not say that, for it would not be true.” Of course the master was very angry and told him that he must not bring his scruples there, or he would never get on in life—but he never asked him to tell a lie again—and when somebody was needed to act as confidential clerk, that young fellow was selected and, knowing him to be one who would be faithful and true, his master took the opportunity to promote him! And he put implicit confidence in him from that hour. Sometimes you will find that to be out and out for the right will be the making of you. I would not urge integrity upon you from such a motive, but, since the devil will tell you that it will be the ruin of you, I will urge you to stand fast to the right, to speak the truth at all times, to be straightforward, for you will find that honesty is the best policy. Any man who speaks the truth will find it the best thing in the long run! To lie, to stray from the truth, to stall, to try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds involves you in a world of difficulty and trouble! Be straight as Daniel was. The Lord help you to be so!  
But now it comes to Christian people in another way. Some would tempt us to assist the cause of God by amusements. Christian people are asked to go to places, well, very doubtful places, to say the least, and sometimes this evil is introduced into religion, till, as one of our friends said most truly in prayer, tonight, they have brought the theater into the house of God! They have really done so and brought back chaos and old night, primeval darkness. Oh, that God would speak, again, and say, “Let there be light,” and chase these things of darkness away once and for all! I charge every Christian here to make his resolve that, if others do these things, as for Daniel, he has purposed in his heart that he will not defile himself with the king’s meat, or with the wine which the king drank!  
So today, again, there is the temptation of love for intellectual novelty. Instead of the old, old Gospel, and the old, old Book, for which God be thanked forever, we are to place science, which is generally conjecture, in the place of Revelation—and the thoughts of men are to cover and bury the sublime thoughts of God. I see ministers and churches deluded and led astray by these temptations. As for me, if no one else will say it, I purpose in my heart not to defile myself with this portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank. We need still to have old-fashioned Believers who will sing the verse we sang just now—

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

God send us many Daniels of that sort!

And, besides this, we have, nowadays, the temptation to general laxity. People do, even Christian people do, what Christian people should not do. And they excuse themselves by quoting the example of other Christians, or by saying, “We are not so precise as our fathers were.” Has God changed? Is there not a text that says, “The Lord your God is a jealous God”? Does He permit His people to sin and take pleasure in it? And are we to forget that precept, “Be you holy, for I am holy”? Is there to be no separation from the world? And is it no longer true that, “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”? Is there no such text as this, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”? I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, now, if never before, tie everything up as tightly as you can! The storm is now so heavy that you need to go with close-reefed sails. Oh, for a Daniel’s declaration that you will not defile yourself with the portion of the king’s meat, or with the wine which he drank!

I could continue long at this point, but I have given you the general principle which you can work out for yourselves. Christians have meat to eat of which the world knows not. We have our re-creation—that is the way to pronounce recreation—re-creation. We go to our Creator and He makes us anew. We have our nights of holy mirth. We have our days of delight. There is a King, a portion of whose meat we rejoice to eat, and of whose wine we delight to drink. But as to questionable things, things of the world, and all that tends towards departure from the living God, we say that, by His Grace, we determine not to defile ourselves with them!

II. Now I come to the second point. THERE ARE RIGHT METHODS OF RESISTING TEMPTATION.  
And the first is that the heart must be set. “Daniel purposed in his heart.” He looked the matter up and down and he settled it in his heart. Before he asked Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego anything about it, he had made up his own mind. Oh, for a made-up mind! Oh, for the man who knows how to look at his compass and to steer his vessel where he ought to go! God grant you Divine Grace, young man, to nail your colors to the mast and to be determined that you will keep to the right course, come fair wind or come foul! Daniel had settled it in his heart. The Grace of God is a great heart-settler. Where it comes, men become firm and positive, for the Lord teaches them to profit.  
The next thing is that the life must be willing. Daniel was helped in carrying out his resolution by his own personal character. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Whenever a man is brought into favor and tender love, and is a good man, there is something about him that has commended itself. There is a something about him that is lovable, or he would not have been loved. It is of no use for a man to say, “I have made up my mind upon certain things,” and to keep doggedly fighting over those matters, while, at the same time, the whole of his life is unkind, ungenerous and unlovable. Yes, by all manner of means be a martyr if you like, but do not martyr everybody else, for it is very possible to get so much grit in you that you become all grit. There are some who have carried firmness into obstinacy and determination into bigotry, which is a thing to be shunned. Yield everything that may be yielded! Give up mere personal whims and oddities, but as for the things of God, stand as firm as a rock about them. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince who was set over him, but there was in Daniel, by God’s Grace, a generosity and frankness and nobleness of character which even the mighty Chaldean admired. Oh, for a grand character to support one’s religious determination!  
Then observe that the protest must be courteously borne. While Daniel was very decided, he was very courteous in his protests. He went to the prince and he told him his scruples. He requested that he might not be obliged to defile himself. There are many ways of doing the same thing and some people always select the very ugliest way of doing everything. Let us ask for wisdom and discretion in doing that which is right. Firmness of purpose should be adorned with gentleness of manner in carrying it out. It was so with young Daniel.  
Next to that, self-denial must be sought. I do not think that Daniel had any objection to eat flesh, or to drink wine, for he evidently did both, according to other portions of this Book, but his objection was, for religious reasons, against the king’s meat and the king’s wine, so he said, “To make it clear that nothing that enters my lips has ever been dedicated to idols, let me have nothing to eat but vegetables—lentils, beans, peas and such like things—and for drink, let me have that of which kings do not often take much, let me have nothing but water, in order to make quite sure that I have no libation that has been offered to idols.”  
So Daniel and his three companions denied themselves luxuries, which, perhaps, they enjoyed as much as anybody else, so as by no means to defile themselves with anything which had been associated with the Babylonian idols. If you will be out and out for God, you must expect self-denial and you will have to habituate yourself to it. Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for loss of friendships; be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by Him who bought you with His precious blood. He that should run the gauntlet of earth and Hell for a thousand years, and yet hold fast his integrity, would be a gainer by all that he lost—he would gain an increase of eternal joy by all he suffered. Therefore, I charge you, seek for the Daniel spirit.  
And then the test must be boldly put. Daniel showed his faith when he said to Melzar, “Feed me and my three companions on this common fare; give us nothing else. We do not ask you to leave us to our plan for twelve months; try us for a short time. I do not say a day or two; but take as many days as you like. Put us to the test and if, at the end of the appointed time, we are not all the better for our plain fare, then we will consider further, but, for the present, will you try us?” I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried. He should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. “There,” he says, “hammer away if you like.” Do you need to be carried to Heaven on a feather bed? Do you need to always be protected from everybody’s sneer and frown—and to go to Heaven as if you were riding in the procession on Lord Mayor’s day? Well, if so, you are very much mistaken if you think you are going to have it so! God give you courage, more and more of it, through faith in Himself! May you be willing to put your religion to every proper test, the test of life, and the test of death, too!  
III. Now, in closing, I want to show you that THERE ARE CERTAIN POINTS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE PROVED BY EXPERIENCE. I speak, now, to you Christian people who hold fast by the old doctrines of the Gospel, who mean to hold fast by the old ways and will not be led astray by modern temptations. Now what have you to prove?  
Well, I think that you have to prove that the old faith gives you a bright and cheerful spirit. Really, I cannot help laughing, sometimes, when I see myself as some other people see me. One gentleman describes me as having “settled down into an ever-deepening gloom.” It is a curious thing that I was not aware of this at all! You who know me and with whom I mix— have you noticed this “ever-deepening gloom” falling upon me? Do I preach like a man who has lost all the joy of life and all his comfort? I think not! If there is a happier man beneath the skies than I am, I will not change places with him, for I am perfectly satisfied to take things as they come to me—and I am glad that he has more to rejoice in than I have! Yet I am sure I do not know what he has that I have not. I have God in Heaven, I have God on earth! My heart is filled with an intense satisfaction in the firm conviction that what I believe is true and that what I preach to you is true! I am ready to stand before the Judgment Seat to give an account of what I have preached! That which I have asked you to believe, I myself believe, and if I am lost with faith in Christ, and you are lost, well, we will both be lost and go down in the same ship, for I have not a little private boat on the davits, ready to be let down, that I may got away by myself! I shall stick to the old ship and be the last man to leave it—and I shall not leave it—neither will the ship go down, but it will carry us all safely to the desired haven!  
Well, dear Friends, if you hold by this truth, do not let that ever make you gloomy! Men talk of “Gloomy Calvinism!” Have you never read about that “awful gloomy Calvinism”? Think of Calvin, a man who suffered from somewhere about 83 separate diseases—the most pained and tortured of all men as to his body—yet look at his life and read his Commentaries and his other books, and see the deep and wondrous calm that filled his mighty soul! There was nothing gloomy about his Calvinism—it was all bright and light and cheering to him. They do not know us, or they would not attack us as they do! Perhaps they would, though, for the enemies of the Truth of God are always ready to lie in their throats.  
Another point that we shall have to prove, dear Friends, is that the old faith promotes holiness of life. There are some who say, “Those people cry down good works.” Do we? If you bring them as a price to purchase salvation, we do cry them down. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” and, as somebody says, “The rags have the best of it, for they are worth more than our righteousnesses.” We do say that, but, though we cry down good works as a ground of confidence, we wish to abound in them more and more to the glory of God! Go to some people and hear them talk about good works and go to other people and see them done! We wish for you and for ourselves, that we may be so holy in our lives and so gracious in our conversation that even our adversaries shall be compelled to say, “Whatever their doctrines may be, their lives are right.” We have to prove that we are fatter and fairer than those who eat the king’s meat! God help us to prove that we are more truthful and more godly than those who have not like precious faith!  
The next thing, dear Friends, is that we must prove that the old faith produces much love of our fellow men. You know that, nowadays, the watchword is, “the enthusiasm of humanity.” It is a curious thing that those churches that have such a wonderful “enthusiasm of humanity” speak of us as if we were always talking of God and forgetting men. Well, well, which of these new-fangled churches has an orphanage? It is very fine to talk about Christian socialism and what you are going to do for the poor—but what have you done? Much of it is just chatter, chatter and nothing else! But the godly, who feel that God is All, are, after all, those who care most for men. And those who believe most firmly that the unbelieving sinner will be lost are the men who are most anxious to have him saved! Those who believe that there is no salvation but by the precious blood are determined that Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. Those who believe that salvation is all of Grace, from first to last, are moved to preach it with heart and soul wherever they have the opportunity. And, when God makes up His last account, it shall be found, I trust, that the best lovers of men have been those who were first of all the best lovers of God! By your help, by your kindness, by your benevolence, prove it, so that when they come to look at you who have eaten nothing but vegetables and who have drunk water, they may find that, after all, you appear fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who ate the portion of the king’s meat and drank his wine. Let our labor for the conversion of souls be incessant! Let us abound and superabound in it!  
And then, dear Friends, let us prove that the old faith enables us to hare great patience in trial. He who believes the Doctrines of Grace is the man who can suffer! He who falls back on Predestination and the Sovereignty of God is the man to bear burdens that would crush another! And when we come to die, who will die best? Will it be the man who is trusting in his own righteousness, or trusting in constantly changing philosophy that alters like a chameleon, according to the light that falls on it? Who will die best? You, with all this flimsy stuff, or he who, believing in his God, and in his Bible, falls back upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ?  
Finally, Brothers and Sisters, what is needed is that we who hold the old faith should be in a better state of spiritual health. May every Grace be developed! May every faculty be consecrated! May your whole lives be spent in walking with God and may you be such men and women that, if we need evidences of the truth of our holy religion, we may bring you forward and say, “See what Grace has made them! A belief in the Doctrines of Grace has fashioned them as they are, and they, themselves, are the proof of what they believe.”  
May God bless to many here the words which I have spoken so feebly— and may many a young man—  
*“Dare to be a Daniel!  
Dare to stand alone!  
Dare to have a purpose firm!  
Dare to make it known!”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **DANIEL 1.**

Verse 1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. Sin always brings its punishment. King Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord, so God used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to be the rod in His hand to scourge His sinful people and their wicked king.

2. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand. It was not merely that Nebuchadnezzar was strong enough to overcome the Jews, but God handed over His people into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. The enemy cannot touch the Church of God without Divine permission.

2. With part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. See how holy things, once used for the noblest purposes, become of no further service when the Spirit of God is gone from the Church. You know that when the Philistines captured the Ark of God, and put it in the temple of Dagon, the fish-god fell down broken before the Ark. Nothing of this kind happened in Babylon. The holy vessels were put into the heathen temple and no miraculous result followed, for God cares nothing for golden vessels in and of themselves. When sin has polluted His people, their precious things are nothing to Him. They may go where men please to carry them. All their value lies in God accepting the service rendered through them. So, Brothers, you may keep up your attendance at the Lord’s Supper, and your preaching, and your gathering for worship—but they will all be nothing without the Spirit of God!

Look how the Lord’s Supper is turned into the sacrifice of the “mass,” and how Baptism is represented as the channel or medium of regeneration, when once the Spirit of God has gone from the Divinely-appointed ordinances! Besides these holy vessels, Nebuchadnezzar took the best of the people of the land and carried them away captive. He singled out the rich and the noble—those who had education and other attainments— while he left the poorest of the land behind. Sometimes those who are the most exalted will have the most suffering.

3, 4. And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes; children—youths—

4. In whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar was, in many respects, an enlightened ruler. He looked upon this as one of the best things that he could do for his court and vast empire, that he should pick out the best of the young men of every nation, who should bring their national knowledge with them, and then, being sprightly in body and nimble in mind, should be trained to become counselors, or advisers of the court, or be prepared to fill important offices as they became vacant.

5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank. Treating them exceedingly well, thinking, perhaps, that the very food they ate might help to tone their minds for the work to which he had called them. He wished to make them into true Chaldeans, so he ordained that they must eat of the meat he ate and drink of the wine he drank.

5. So nourishing them three years. Putting them to college, as it were, for three years—  
5, 6. That at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You know these men’s names, you will recognize them when you hear them in their altered form.  
7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names. This was to Chaldeanize them, to take away from them everything Jewish.  
7. For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. Now these young men’s Jewish names had, each one of them, the name of God worked into their texture. I need not stay to bring it out, but there is a signification about each name connecting it with God. You hear in two of them the sound of El, which is a name of God, and in the other two, the termination Iah, which brings out the name Jehovah. The new names that were given to them appear to have been connected with idols—at all events, it was so with Belteshazzar and Abednego, or Abednebo. The intent was to make Babylonians of them.  
8. But Daniel purposed in his heart.—I always like to come across a, “but,” when there is any scheme of this kind. When the plan is to seduce men from right, then it is a happy thing to have a but, but, but, “But Daniel purposed in his heart,” determined, settled, fixed it.  
8. That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Daniel here mentions only himself, but the three others were one with him in the resolve and the request. He was the leader. Sometimes there would be no Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, if there was not a Daniel. The other three might never have had the strength of mind if it had not been for the Daniel who dared to stand alone. But having such a brave leader, they dared to stand with him. We often owe much to spiritually-minded men who are able to help others to take a right course.  
8, 9. Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. It was like the case of Joseph and Potiphar. Daniel’s gentle disposition, his loving ways, his open and frank spirit had won upon the prince of the eunuchs, so that he not only regarded him with favor, but even had a tender love for him. God has the hearts of all men under His control and He may give His people favor where they least expect it.  
10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall you make me endanger my head to the king. What a reign of terror there is in a despotic country where kings can do as they will! For the smallest offense, a man’s head may be in danger!  
11, 12. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove your servants, I beseech you, ten days; and let them give us vegetables to eat, and water to drink. I like it that the Holy Spirit uses their old names whenever it is proper that they should be used. May we never lose our old names! I mean, our new names, for they have grown old with some of us now! May we always be known as the servants of God and not as Chaldeans! The prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a kind of hint, that, if the officer under him chose to take the responsibility of altering the food and drink, he might do so, and the prince would not interfere with the experiment. So Daniel turns to Melzar and says to him, “Prove your servants for a suitable time. Let us have vegetables to eat, and water to drink.” He put his request in an extreme light in order to be quite sure that nothing brought to him would come from the king’s table.  
13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as you see, deal with your servants. “If we do fall off and grow thin, and look pale and ill through this coarse food, as you think it, well then, alter it. But if, on the other hand, we should be as well as those who have eaten the king’s meat, and drunk the king’s wine, then let us keep to our vegetables and water.”  
14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. A round number, standing for a sufficient period to afford a fair test.  
15. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer—and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. I doubt not that the satisfaction of heart which they had in keeping themselves undefiled tended to give them a good digestion and thus they were more likely to be well than were the others.  
16, 17. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them vegetables. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. God can help us in our study. We may pray as much over what we have to learn as over what we have to do. I believe that, often, a difficult problem can be best solved by prayer. All true knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom are the gifts of God.  
17-19. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. They were made to be his attendants, his advisers—these very men who had been so absurd as not to eat the food from the royal table—so obstinate as to consider that they would defile themselves if they did! It is these absurd and obstinate people who cannot be bent, but must be straight—the upright men who shall stand before kings—for God is with them.  
20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. They communed with God and that was better than being magicians or stargazers! Men of God are ten times better than all that lot put together!  
21. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus. Those two words summarize the whole of Daniel’s history—“Daniel continued.” May God give to each of us here Divine Grace to continue as Daniel did!

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IS IT TRUE?

NO. 1930

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1886,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1886.

**“Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said to them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” Daniel 3:14.**

DEAR Friends who are not yet decided, if you would become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ it will be well for you to count the cost. It was our Lord’s custom to bid men consider what His service might involve. His frequent declaration was, “He that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me.” He knew and would have us know that it is no child’s play to be a soldier of the Cross. If we count upon ease in this warfare, we shall be grievously disappointed. We must fight if we would reign.

One reason for this is that the world, like Nebuchadnezzar, expects us all to follow its fashions and to obey its rules. The god of this world is the devil and he claims implicit obedience. Sin in some form or other is the image which Satan sets up and requires us to serve. The tyranny of the world is fierce and cruel—and those who will not worship its image will find that the burning fiery furnace has not yet cooled. If you mean to be a Christian and, therefore, intend to cast off the bondage of this present evil world, your resolve must be taken to bear all consequences rather than worship the idol of the hour. The world’s flute, harp, sackbut and psaltery must sound in vain for you! A nobler music must charm your ears and make you bid defiance to the world’s threats. The true Believer’s stand must be taken and he must determine that he will obey God rather than man. That which commends itself to your conscience as right and pure and true, you must follow without reserve—but that which is wrong and foul and false—you must quit with fixed resolve!

You cannot be Christ’s disciple unless you have come to this point and abide by it, for Jesus leads only in the ways of righteousness. He who is a loyal subject of King Jesus will not attempt to live in sin and live in Grace, too, for he will know that no one can serve two masters. The love of the world and the love of God will no more mix than oil and water. To attempt a fusion of these two is to bring confusion into your heart and life. The prophetic challenge is a wise one—“If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.” One or the other you may serve, but not both! Every man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and has been washed in His blood—and has been made a partaker of the Divine Nature—will understand that he has done with the friendship of this present evil world. The world may demand that he should yield to its behests, but as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will refuse to do so. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said to Nebuchadnezzar, so will true Believers say to the world—“We will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”

Now, if you can refuse to sin, if you can refuse, even, to parley with iniquity, it is well with you. If you stand out for truth and righteousness, your conscience will approve your position and this is, in itself, no small comfort. It will be an ennobling thing for your manhood to have proved its strength and it will tend to make it stronger. Your course of resolute right will be acceptable with God and this, also, is an exceedingly great reward. I had rather please the Lord than win the applause of all the angels in Heaven and all the princes on earth! In that day, when the blessed and only Potentate shall distribute crowns and palms to the faithful, it will be the height of bliss to hear Him say, “Well done, you good and faithful servant.”

Perhaps some of you may say, “We will not bow before the gods of the world, but we will worship God only: we will follow Christ, and none beside.” This is a brave resolve—you will never regret it if you stand to it even to the end.

We are glad to hear you speak thus, but is it true? “Is it true?” These words I shall take by themselves and set them on fire. No question can be more necessary or more searching than, “Is it true?” It is very well to profess, but, “Is it true?” It is very fine to promise and vow, but, “Is it true?” It is a bold thing to talk of defying Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, but, “Is it true?” Skeptics question your declaration with a sarcastic sneer. Sinners question it with an open unbelief and saints question it with deep anxiety to have you sincere. From many sides comes the query, “Is it true?” It must be asked, it will be asked, it ought to be asked and, therefore, I ask it, “Is it true?”

I. Follower of Christ, BE READY FOR THE QUESTION, “IS IT TRUE?” Do not reckon to live unnoticed, for a fierce light beats about every Christian. You will be sure to meet with someone whom you respect or fear who will demand of you, “Is it true?” Nebuchadnezzar was a great personage to these three holy men—he was their despotic lord, their employer, their influential friend. In his hands rested their liberties and their lives. He was, moreover, their benefactor, for he had set them in high office in his empire. All hope of further promotion lay with him and if they would prosper and rise in the world, they must earn his smile. Many young Christians are tried with this temptation. Many worldly advantages may be gained by currying favor with certain ungodly men who are like little Nebuchadnezzars—and this is a great peril. They are bid to do wrong by one who is their superior, their employer, their patron. Now comes the test! Will they endure the trial hour? They say that they can endure it, but is it true? Let my hearers stand prepared for such an ordeal, for in all probability it will come. Some Nebuchadnezzar will put it to you pretty plainly—“Will you do as I wish, or will you obey God?” At such a time I pray that you may answer in the right manner without a second thought—and so prove that your love to God is true.  
Nebuchadnezzar spoke in peremptory tones, as if he could not believe that any mortal upon earth could have the presumption to dispute his will! He cannot conceive that one employed under his patronage will dare to resist his bidding! He demands indignantly, “Is it true?” He will not believe it! He must have been misinformed! Can there exist a being in all his wide dominions who can have the impudence to think for himself, or the audacity to insinuate that it can be wrong to do what Nebuchadnezzar commands? He will not believe it! It is condescension on his part even to ask, “Is it true?” You will meet with persons so accustomed to be obeyed that they think it hard that you do not hasten to carry out their wishes. The infidel father says to his boy, “John, is it true that you go to a place of worship against my wishes? How dare you set up to be better than your father and mother?”  
Often ungodly men profess that they do not believe in the conversion of their fellow workmen. Is it true, John, that you have become religious? A pretty fellow! Why, you used to sing a jolly song as well as other people and now you whine out a Psalm like other canting hypocrites! Is it true? Why, you could empty a glass and follow pretty games like the rest of us— and now you profess to be afraid of doing wrong! Is it true? Are you really such a fool? You seem almost afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should be hauled over the coals. Are you really the same fellow who could once drink and swear? “Is it true?”  
They insinuate that you are out of your head, that your wits have gone wool-gathering and that you are the dupe of fanatics. I do not see the sense of such suggestions, but I suppose they do. In one form or other they put to you the question, “Is it true? Can you really be of this opinion and do you really intend to carry it out?” Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I want you to be ready for this assault and ready to answer without hesitation—“It is most certainly true.”  
You will not be able to go through life without being discovered—a lighted candle cannot be hid! There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all during the war and come out when the palms are being distributed! They hope to travel to Heaven by the back lanes and skulk into Heaven in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set! How was it Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came up to the front when the king’s command was given? They could not consistently keep back. They were public men, set over provinces and it was necessary that they should set an example. They had been summoned with the rest of the rulers to attend the great ceremony and their course of action upon this public occasion would be a guide to all other Jews in the Babylonian dominions!  
It would not have been enough for them to stay at home and send in the excuse that they were not well, or were called elsewhere upon urgent business. Others might do this and not be blamed, but these leaders could not shun the conflict. They must try the question between the living God and the golden idol. They must not only abstain from idolatry, but they must bear their public protest against it or else they would be unfaithful to their Lord. Rest assured, my fellow Christians, that at some period or other—in the most quiet lives—there will come a moment for open decision! Days will come when we must speak out or prove traitors to our Lord and to His Truths.  
Perhaps you have fallen among godly people and so you have gone on quietly for a time—but look for storms! If you live with worldlings, perhaps they have not yet suspected you because of your exceeding closeness of disposition—but your secret will be discovered! You cannot long hold fire in the hollow of your hand, or keep a candle under the bed. Godliness, like murder, will soon be discovered! You will not always be able to travel to Heaven in secret! In every house there comes a time when each person of the family has to take sides and acknowledge to whom he belongs. The most timid wife, or the most unassuming child will be compelled to say, “I, also, am Christ’s disciple.” Be ready at once to answer the question, “Is it true?”  
To be fully prepared to answer the enquiry of opposers, act upon sound reasons. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Be able to show why you are a believer in God, why you worship the Lord Jesus Christ, why you trust in His atoning Sacrifice and why you make Him the regulator of your life. Show why you cannot do what others do—why, being a child of God—your nature is changed and you have no wish to do that which you once delighted to do in the days of your unregeneracy. Ask the Lord to help you to go to work with Bible reasons at your fingertips—for these are the best of reasons and bear a high authority about them—so that when the question is put to you, “Is it true?” you may be able to say, “Yes, it is true and this is why it is true! At such-and-such a time God revealed Himself to me, in His Grace, and opened my blind eyes to see things in a true light. He renewed my nature when He delivered me from the burden of sin. He made me to be a child of God when I found peace through His name and, because of all this, I cannot grieve my loving Lord by living in sin. I am not my own, I am bought with a price and, therefore, I must do the will of Him that redeemed me with His own blood.”  
I am sure that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would never have stood out against the imperious monarch as they did if they had not known their bearings and well understood why it was that Jehovah, alone, is to be worshipped as God. When the mind is established, the heart is more likely to be firm. Know your duty and the arguments for it and you are the more likely to be steadfast in the hour of temptation. These three men were instructed men, well trained in the Law of the Lord and, therefore, they stood fast where the more ignorant and uninstructed yielded at once.  
Next, take care that you always proceed with deep sincerity. Superficial profession soon ends in thorough apostasy. Only heart-work will stand the fire. Never let your speech outrun your heart. Do not profess to be more than you really are. Remember, all your professions will have to be tested and the question will be made a burning one for you, “Is it true?” Mind that it is true, all true, thoroughly true! Alas, my Friends, how much there is of praying, singing, teaching and preaching which is not real work! How much there is of Christian thought—yes, and what we call, “experience”—which is not true to the person who talks of having thought and experienced it! How much of external religion is fiction, fluff, form, foam! What is needed is solid reality. We need a religion which will bear us up under the heaviest burdens and make us patient under the sharpest pains. We need a religion which we can die with. It is a most blessed thing to be able to face death every day like the Apostle who said, “I die daily”— by this daily education we shall learn how to die gloriously at the last. Put yourself through your paces and do not believe that your religion is worth a penny unless it will bear death, judgment and the eternal world.  
God grant us to be true in our first repentance and very thorough in it and, as we begin, so may we go on, not borrowing our religion and using it at second-hand, but with personal sincerity making every truth our own. We need that the Revelation of God should be a revelation to us—that repentance, faith, hope, love, holiness should be our own private possessions, our own inheritance! Then when the question comes, “Is it true?” we shall promptly answer before the living God, “It is true. O You heartsearching Lord, You know that I love You!”  
This being done, accustom yourself to act with solemn determination before God on every matter which concerns morals and religion. Many very decent people are not self-contained, but are dependent upon the assistance of others. They are like the houses which our London builders run up so quickly in long rows—if they did not help to keep each other up they would all tumble down at once—for no one of them could stand alone! How much there is of joint-stock company religion, wherein hypocrites and formalists keep each other in countenance! Where things are not quite so bad as this, yet there is too little personal establishment in the faith. So many people have a “lean-to” religion. If their minister, or some other leading person were taken away, their back wall would be gone and they would fall to the ground.  
In some cases the wife and mother, or the husband and father, or the friend and teacher constitute the main support of the individual’s religion—he leans upon others and if these fail him that is the end of his hope. Friends, this sort of religion will not do! You cannot, all your life, have these good people to be your supporters and if you could have them in life they must be separated from you by death. It is a safe thing for every Christian to be in the habit of judging for himself as to what is right and then to adhere to it whether others do so or not. We have need, nowadays, to set our face as a flint against sin and error. We must purpose in our own heart what we will do and then stand to our purpose. Happy is he who dares to be in the right with two or three. Happier still is he who will stand in the right even if the choice two or three should quit it! He who can stand alone is a man, indeed! Every man of God should be such. Athanasius contra mundum is a grand figure. Against the whole world Athanasius proclaimed the Godhead of Christ and he won the day. If you will not go to the world, the world will have, one day, to come to you.  
Once more, dear Friends, when your determination is formed, act in the light of eternity. Do not judge the situation by the king’s threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you! Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but listen to the music of the glorified! Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you and so you are not moved. It may be that you will be unable to grow rich in your trade if you are honest, but in the light of eternity, you will gladly forego the luxuries of wealth to keep a clear conscience. It may be that you will be discharged from your employment unless you can wink at wrong and be the instrument of injustice. Be content to lose place rather than to lose peace. These three holy men took the burning fiery furnace into their account and yet they cast the balance in favor of fidelity to God! Brothers and Sisters, have an eye for the endless future. Never forget Heaven and Hell and that sublime gathering around the Great White Throne when you and I shall be of the company.  
Now I am sure that these good men believed in immortality or they would never have dared the violence of the flames. The martyrs, when they went to the stake, were great fools unless they believed that they should live forever and that in the great hereafter they would find a Divine recompense for the torments they were about to suffer! If in this life, only, they had hope, they were certainly poor economists. Believing in the Glory of that word, “Well done, good and faithful servants,” and weighing eternity as against time—and life at the right hand of God as against a cruel death—the martyrs felt that the eternal was by far the weightier matter and so they went to prison and to death without a question! These three brave men dared the rage of an infuriated tyrant because they saw Him who is invisible and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. You also must come to live a great deal in the future or else you will miss the chief fountain of holy strength. If you are living for this life, you will soon sell your souls for so many pieces of silver. But if you project yourselves into eternity and live the life eternal, no bribe will lure you from the ways of righteousness. If your ears can hear, by anticipation, the thunder of that sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” you will not dare to incur it! If that sweeter sound, “Come, you blessed,” charms your ears, you will be strong in your resolve to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Yes, with eternity before you and around you—your determination will be fixed—and you will, with dauntless spirit, meet the challenge, “Is it true?”  
God make us champions of His holy cause! Heroism can only be worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Humbly yielding your whole nature to the power of the Divine Sanctifier, you will be true to your Lord even to the end! At the foot of the Cross, with your eyes upon those blessed wounds and your whole soul trusting in Him that lives and was dead, you will not be ashamed of your Lord, nor afraid of the consequences of obeying Him!  
This much upon this first head of our discourse—be ready to answer the question, “Is it true?”  
II. But now, secondly, IF YOU CANNOT SAY THAT IT IS TRUE, WHAT THEN? If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you cannot say, “It is true,” how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ’s Cross and are willing to follow Him at all hazards, then listen to me and learn the truth!  
Do not make a profession at all. Do not talk about Baptism or the Lord’s Supper, nor of joining a Church, nor of being a Christian! For if you do, you will lie against your own soul. If it is not true that you renounce the world’s idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should profess to be what he is not—it is a sin of excess, a superfluity of evil! If you cannot be true to Christ; if your coward heart is recreant to your Lord—do not profess to be His disciple, I beseech you. He that is married to the world, or flint-hearted, had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war.  
If you have made a profession and yet it is not true, be honest enough to quit—for it can never be right to keep up a fraud! A false profession is a crime and to persevere in it is a presumptuous sin. Whatever you are, or are not, be transparent, sincere, truthful. If there is any man here who, says in his heart, “No, I cannot suffer for the Truth of God’s sake. I will follow Christ as far as it is good walking and costs nothing, but I will not go through the mire for Him,” well, then, turn back at once for you are no true pilgrim! If you are determined not to press onward even though the way should lie through the Slough of Despond, you had better make the best of your way home to the City of Destruction, for you are not a man that God has called into this Kingdom. “Strange advice,” you say. Yes, but prudent advice, too! Listen to me! If any of you are ashamed of Christ, afraid of man, unwilling to be abused for Christ’s sake, then, like the faint-hearted men with Gideon, it will be well for you to go home and no longer encumber the little band of the true-hearted.  
Will you, then, go back to your old ways? I am sure you will if you cannot answer the question of my text. But remember, that in so doing you

ill have to belie your consciences. Many of you who are not firm in your resolves yet know the right. You will never be able to get that light out of your eyes which was shone into them from God’s Word. You can never again sin so cheaply as others—it will be willfulness and obstinacy in your case. I am sure that many of you will have desperate work to get to Hell. You will have to ride steeple-chase over hedge and ditch to reach Perdition, for the Lord has put that within you which will never let you rest in sin, or be easy in ungodliness. The Lord has taught you too much to let you be comfortable slaves of ignorance and vice! You who have tasted of the powers of the world to come are spoilt for this world—and if you are such cowards that you will not press forward for the next—you are, of all men, most miserable! Your consciences will dog you, haunt you and torment you. Dare you run the risk of being pursued by such a foe, compared with which the furies of classic fable were gentle beings?  
Remember, also, that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will, himself, be ashamed. He will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the Cross and this man was afraid to acknowledge Him! To win the smile of a silly maid; to escape the jest of a coarse fellow; to win a few pieces of silver; to stand respectable among his companions, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord! And now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of Glory! He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in Hell get away from him, for many of them were more honest than he! Is there such a man or woman as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let Him come forth and admit his crime and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior.  
If your avowal of faith in Jesus and opposition to sin is not true, you had better withdraw it and be silent, for by a groundless presence you will dishonor the cause of God and cause the enemy to take up a reproach against His people. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had stood before Nebuchadnezzar and had made a compromise, it would have dishonored the name of the Lord. Suppose they had said, “O king, we believe in Jehovah, but we hardly know what to do in our peculiar circumstances. We desire to please you and we also dread the thought of the burning fiery furnace and, therefore, we must yield, though it greatly grieves us.” Why, they would have cast shame upon the name of Israel! O Brothers and Sisters, do not talk about principle and then pocket your principles because they are unfashionable, or will cost you loss and disrepute! If you do this, you will be the enemies of the King of kings! God commanded His people not to bow before engraved images, but the king of Babylon commanded them to do so at once or die. Which would they obey? To whom would they render the most honor?  
That was the point. It would have been idle to say that they would only do it once, that it would be only a mere form and so on, for had they bowed the knee to the engraved image, they would have set Nebuchadnezzar before Jehovah. They might have pleaded that to refuse the great king was virtually to commit suicide, but they kept from such crooked reasonings. They might have argued that it was wise to save their lives because they could be so very useful to the Israelites and to the cause of true religion. How often have I heard this plea for remaining in an erring church and professing to believe what is not believed! Men do evil that good may come and after bowing in the house of Rimmon, wash their hands and pray, “The Lord pardon Your servants in this thing.”  
I am glad that the three holy children were not “careful to answer,” or they might have fallen upon some crooked policy or lame excuse for compromise. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do right and leave results with the Lord! To do wrong cannot, under any circumstances, be right! For the Lord’s servants to be false to their conviction is always an evil thing, a root that bears wormwood. Yes, these men would have cast a slur upon the living God, upon their nation and upon themselves had they flinched in the moment of trial. Thousands of men and women are doing this continually. Shame upon them! They plead their own necessities, their large families, their position, their hopes of usefulness and the examples of others—but none of these things can excuse cowardice towards God. If by doing a little wrong, we could effect a great deal of good, we would not, thereby, be excused! This is a common way of drugging conscience and I beseech you be upon your guard against it, for it comes to this—that you are a better judge of what you ought to do than God is and your judgment is superior to the Law of God! Is not this high presumption? Does it not, also, suggest itself to you that some would serve God if it did not pay better to serve the devil? And is not this Judas Iscariot all over again, the son of perdition reproduced?  
I want you to remember, also, that if you renounce Christ, if you quit Him in obedience to the world’s commands, you are renouncing eternal life and everlasting bliss. You may think little of that, tonight, because of your present madness, but you will think differently before long. Soon you may lie on a sick bed gazing into eternity and then your estimate of most things will undergo a great change. I know what that solemn outlook means, for I have been called several times to lie in spirit upon the brink of eternity—and I can assure you it is no child’s play. The solemn article, the judgment, the declaration of destiny—these are not little. It requires all the faith a man can summon to enable him to look forward, calmly and intelligently, to that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.  
Come, my Hearers, look to the eternity which awaits you! I charge you to remember that if you take the mess of pottage and barter away your birthright, you will bemoan yourselves at the last. In your dying hours, you may find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. In another world there will be no hope of reformation or of escape from the result of sin. In eternity you will look up from under the fierce wrath of God and see no way of escape, for you will then be too wedded to evil to be able to escape from it! In that day which shall burn as an oven, what will you say to yourself for having sold your Lord? Oh, do not, for the sake of a man’s frown or a woman’s smile, forego eternal life! If God goes, all is gone! To lose your Savior is to be lost yourself! Oh, my Beloved, take the roughest road rather than part company with your Best Friend!  
The question is a very solemn one—“Is it true?” And if it is not true, I still stick to my advice—do not say that it is so, do not add to all your other sins, a lying profession—but act in all honesty as you stand before God.  
III. But now, thirdly, let us consider what follows IF IT IS TRUE. I hope that many here can lay their hands upon their hearts and quietly say, “Yes, it is true; we are determined not to bow before sin, come what may.” Well, then, if it is true, I have this much to say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters—state this when it is demanded of you. Declare your resolve. This will strengthen it in yourself and be the means of supporting it in others. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego spoke out in the presence of the furious king. Perhaps they might have taken means to hide themselves from the ordeal, but they judged it to be their duty to come forward and take the consequences—and there they were.  
This word is meant for certain Christian people who come in and out of this house and join with us in public worship, but have never openly acknowledged themselves to be disciples of the Lord Jesus. Whenever we gather to the remembrance of our dying Lord, they either take their seats among the onlookers, or else they go home. This raises many anxious thoughts in our minds. We are especially exercised with this question— these people have a faith which they refuse to acknowledge—will such a faith save them? Scripture evidently lays great stress upon obedience to the Lord and taking up His Cross and following Him. Will Jesus save those who will not come out and bear His reproach? He claims of all His followers that they follow Him in the daylight. It is written, “If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”  
He bade us preach this as His Gospel—“He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.” These are not words of mine, but of the Lord Jesus, Himself! Take heed unto yourselves that you do not slight them! I dare not leave out part of His Gospel command when I am preaching it. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, stand on His side! Why are you slow to do so? I compared one, the other day, to a rat behind the wainscot which only comes out at night when the candles are put out and there are crumbs to be picked up. Too many Christians attempt to live in that style. Dare I call them Christians? Do not be such miserable creatures, but quit yourselves like men! Tremble lest you perish among “the fearful and unbelieving.” Join with me, I pray you, in singing—  
*“I’m not ashamed to acknowledge my Lord, Or to defend His cause!  
Maintain the honor of His Word,  
The Glory of His Cross.”*  
There are many dear children in this place, both boys and girls, who have not been ashamed in their early days to come forward and confess the Lord Jesus Christ! God bless the dear children! I rejoice in them. I am sure that the Church will never have to be ashamed of having admitted them. They, at least, show no cowardice—they take a solemn delight in being numbered with the people of God—and count it an honor to be associated with Christ and His Church. Shame on you older ones who still hold back! What ails you, that babes and sucklings are braver than you? By the love you bear to Christ, I charge you—come forth and confess His name among this evil and perverse generation!  
Is it true? Then joyfully accept the trial which comes of it. Shrink not from the flames. Settle it in your minds that, by Divine Grace, no loss, nor cross, nor shame, nor suffering shall make you play the coward. Say, like the holy children, “We are not careful to answer you in this matter.” They did not cringe before the king and cry, “We beseech you, do not throw us into the fiery furnace! Let us have a consultation with you, O king, that we may arrange terms. There may be some method by which we can please you and yet keep our religion.” No! They said, “We are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”  
Dear Friends, let us be ready to suffer for Christ’s sake. Some will say, “Do not be imprudent.” It is always prudent to do your duty! We have not enough, nowadays, of the virtue nicknamed imprudence. I would like to see a display of old-fashioned imprudence in these cold, calculating, selfish days! Oh for the days of zeal, the days when men counted not their lives dear to them that they might win Christ! Men sit down and reckon up what it will cost them to do right and weigh their conduct as a matter of profit and loss—and then they call such wicked calculations prudence! It is sheer selfishness! Do right if it costs you your life! Where would England have been if the men who won our liberties in former ages had bartered with the world for gain? If they had saved their skins, they would have lost their souls and ruined the cause of God in England! He loves not Christ who does not love Him more than all things! Oh for men of principle who know no loss but loss of faith and desire no gain save the Glory of God! Be this your cry—  
*“Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes.”*  
You may lose a great deal for Christ, but you will never lose anything by Christ. You may lose for time, but you will gain for eternity! The loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting! You will be a gainer by Christ, even if you have to go to Heaven by the way of persecution, poverty and slander. Never mind the way—the end will make full amends. The treasures of Egypt are mere dross compared with the riches of endless bliss!  
If it is true that you are willing, thus, to follow Christ, reckon upon deliverance. Nebuchadnezzar may put you into the fire, but he cannot keep you there, nor can he make the fire burn you. The enemy casts you in bound, but the fire will loosen your bonds and you will walk at liberty amid the glowing coals! You shall gain by your losses! You shall rise by your casting down! Many prosperous men owe their present position to the fact that they were faithful when they were in humble employments. They were honest and, for the moment, they displeased their employers, but in the end earned their esteem. When Adam Clarke was put out as an apprentice and his master showed him how to stretch the cloth when it was a little short, Adam could not find in his heart to do it. Such a fool of a boy must be sent home to his mother and his godly mother was glad that her boy was such a fool that he could not stoop to a dishonest trick! You know what he became. [1760-1832 – Influential British Methodist famous for his preaching and Bible commentary.] He might have missed his way in life if he had not been true to his principles in his youth. Your first loss may be a lifelong gain!  
Dear young fellow, you may be turned out of your employment, but the Lord will turn the curse into a blessing. If all should go softly with you, you might decline in character and by doing a little wrong, learn to do yet more and more—and so lose your integrity and with it—and all hope of ever lifting your nose from the grindstone! Do right for Christ’s sake, without considering any consequences, and the consequences will be right enough. If you take care of God’s cause, God will take care of you! Rest assured that uprightness will be your preservation and not your destruction. It will be your highest wisdom to let all things go that you may hold fast your integrity and honor the name of the Lord!  
Lastly—and this is a consideration not to be forgotten. If you will stand up for Jesus and the right, and the true, and the pure, and the temperate, and the good—not only will you be delivered, but you will do great good! This Nebuchadnezzar was a poor piece of goods, yet he was compelled to acknowledge the power of these three decided and holy men. They were thrown into the furnace and they came out of it—and what did Nebuchadnezzar say? Before this, it was, “The image that I have set up,” and now he declares that no man shall speak a word against the God of Israel on pain of being cut in pieces! There is no having influence over the great men, or the little men of this age except by being firm in your principles and decided in what you do! If you yield an inch you are beaten! But if you will not yield—no, not the splitting of a hair—they will respect you!  
The man who can hide his principles, conceal his beliefs and do a little wrong, is a nobody! He is a chip in the porridge—he will flavor nothing. But he who does what he believes to be right and cannot be driven from it—that is the man! You cannot shake the world if you let the world shake you, but when the world finds that you have grit in you, they will let you alone. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to feel the influence of these men— and, even so, the most wicked and the most proud feel the force of the true-hearted, the brave and the good! For this let us pray God to give us new hearts and right spirits. For this let us cling to the blessed Cross of Christ and yield ourselves up to the power of the blood and water which flowed from His wounded side! So shall our lives be powerful! And if not illustrious in the eyes of men, they shall be acceptable in the eyes of God!

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THREE NAMES HIGH ON THE MUSTER ROLL  
NO. 2217

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 16, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.”  
Daniel 3:16-18.**

IF YOU read the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, you will think that Nebuchadnezzar was not far from the Kingdom of God. His dream had troubled him, but Daniel had explained it. Then the king made this confession to Daniel, “Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret.” He acknowledged that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the greatest of gods, and was a great interpreter of secrets, but in a short time we find this man setting up an idol and persecuting to the death those who would not worship it. He seems, indeed, to have turned the blessing into a curse, and made the image of his dream the pattern of the idol he set up for the nation to worship, thus making that through which God had graciously revealed His power and wisdom, the very instrument of his folly and vainglory.

Man’s proud heart is the same in all generations and the same thing happens even today. Have you not seen in your time men seriously impressed? They could not hold their own. They seemed stricken down by the force of the Truth of God and you felt almost sure that they would become, like Saul of Tarsus, true converts, and even Apostles of the faith. But after a while they forgot it, forgot it all, and became, at last, the most bitter and determined opponents of the Truth of God before which they seemed once to bow. Every minister who has a congregation of any considerable size must have met with such people. I remember one who, being at a Prayer Meeting where there was much wrestling power with God, was so overcome that he prayed aloud and seemed to cry with all his heart for mercy—and before he left, he said that he had found it. But the next day he declared that he would never go to such a meeting again— that he had been almost caught, but he would not trust himself in such society any more.

And I fear that he never did, for he could always speak with great severity against the people who met for prayer and were earnest in the faith. We know, then, what to expect—that some who seem like fish almost landed, will, nevertheless, slip back into the stream—that it will happen unto them according to the true proverb, “The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” They will go out from us because they are not of us, and the last state of such men will be worse than the first.

This great king of Babylon was an absolute monarch. His will was law. No man ever dared to dispute with him. Who would differ from a gentleman who could back up his arguments with a fiery furnace, or with a threat to cut you in pieces and to make your house a dunghill? And now, when it comes to this, that he sets up a god of his own, a huge colossal statue, and gathers all the princes and potentates of his world-wide dominion together to bow down before this image, it seems a strange thing to him that there should be anybody found who would not do so!

And yet there were three Jews who mastered him! Once before they had broken the laws of his court and refused to eat unclean meat—and though they ate nothing but vegetables and water, “At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.” Having stood firm for the right, before, they were the bolder to face the more terrible ordeal. The king himself had exalted them in the land and he expected them, of course, to do his bidding and set an example to others. But these three of the despised race of the Jews were unconquerable even by the master of the whole world! They stood out before Nebuchadnezzar and carried their point for God and for conscience.

As we dwell upon this deed of noble heroism, may we become sharers in the courage and faith of these men whose names stand high on the roll of worthies in the Kingdom of God! Thirteen times their names recur in this chapter, like a refrain to the song which speaks of their deed of valor.

Notice, first, the excuses they might have made. Secondly, the confidence they possessed. And thirdly, the determination at which they had arrived.

I. First of all, as we think of these three brave Jews, let us consider THE EXCUSES THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE. They were accused by the Chaldeans who had so recently been saved from death by Daniel and his three friends. The surest way to be hated by some people is to place them under an obligation. “What favor have I ever done him, that he should hate me so?” said one. But in this case the wrath of man was to praise God. The incensed monarch called the offenders before him and, scarcely believing that in his realm any could have defied his authority, he put the alternative plainly before them. “Here is the golden image; you three Jews are to bow down before it. If you do not, there is the burning fiery furnace—and into that you shall be cast at once. What is your answer?”

They might have said to themselves, “ It is perfectly useless to resist. We cannot contend against this man. If we submit, we do it unwillingly and surely, being coerced into it, we shall be but little blamed. A man cannot be expected to knock his head against a brick wall, nor throw his life away and, therefore, we will bow our heads, as the rest of the multitude have done, and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.” It is a bad excuse, but it is one that I have often heard made. “Oh,” says a man, “we must live, you know; we must live.” I really do not see any necessity for it. We must die, but whether we must live or not, depends upon a great many things, and it is infinitely better to die than to sink your manhood and to violate your conscience at a tyrant’s bidding!

Again, they might have said, “ We are in a strange land, and is it not written by one of our wise men, ‘When you are in Babylon, you must do as Babylon does’? “Of course, if we were at home, in Judea, we would not think of such a thing. We would remember how God has said, ‘You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.’ If we were at home, we would obey that Law of God, but we are many hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem, and surely we may be permitted to yield in this point.” Thus have I known many who say they are Christians at home, act differently when they are abroad. They have not regarded the Sabbath, neither have they even regarded the decency or the indecency of the amusements to which they have betaken themselves, because, after all, they were not at home! “We would not do this in England, but we are in Paris, you see, and the case is altered,” they say. Is the case altered? Is God the God of this island and not the God of the Continent? Has He ever given us permission to do abroad what we may not do at home? It is a vile excuse, but commonly enough made.

They might also have said, “ We are officers of the land,” and seeing they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they might have found some difficulty in detaching their private religion from their public duty. They were high officials! And what an excuse this is for a great deal of roguery and trickery everywhere! A man gets elected to a parish vestry, or a council, or a board—and when he once gets to sit on that board he seems to have left his honesty at home! I say not that it is always so, but I am sorry to say that it has often been so. The official has no sooner put on his robes of office than his conscience has vanished! But these men were not so foolish as to think that because they were made rulers in Babylon, they might, therefore, sin against the Most High God! It is true that they were bound to obey the lawful orders of their sovereign, but whether it is right to obey men rather than God, their conscience could easily enough judge. So they never made that excuse.

But, then, they were prosperous men. They were getting on in the world and I believe that God sent this trial to Shadrach, Meshach and AbedNego because they were prospering. They might have said, “We must not throw away our chances.” Among the dangers to Christian men, the greatest, perhaps, is accumulating wealth—the danger of prosperity! Wesley sometimes used to fear that Christianity was self-destructive, for when a man becomes a Christian, the blessings of this life are his, too. He begins to rise in the world. He leaves his old position behind him and, alas, too often, with increasing riches, forgets the God who gave him all! There is much truth in this idea and unless the Spirit of God abides with His people, we might, indeed, see our faith thus commit suicide! It is a danger to be guarded against, both by liberal giving and by frequent intercession!

We often pray for Christians in adversity and it is right that we should do so, but it is even more necessary to pray for Christians in prosperity, for they run the risk of gradually becoming soft, like Hannibal’s soldiers destroyed by Capuan holidays, who lost their valor in their luxury. Many a man who was an out-and-out Christian when he was lower down in life has, when prosperous, become much too great a gentleman to associate with those who were his honored Brothers and Sisters before. I have seen it scores of times and it is a shocking thing. May God grant that we may never turn His mercies into an excuse for sinning against Him! You who are rich have no more liberty to sin than if you were poor. You who rise in the world have no more right to do wrong than you had when you were down in the world and his lordship is no more honorable at a prizefight than the bullet-headed boxer! We must do right! We must never do wrong, or plead our position in society, or our prosperity in worldly things as a reason why we may do what others might not do!

Again, further, they might have excused themselves thus. The putting up of this image was not altogether a religious act. It was symbolical. The image was intended to represent the power of Nebuchadnezzar and bowing before it was, therefore, doing political homage to the great king. Might they not safely do this? They might have said, “We are politically bound.” Oh, how often we hear this brought up! You are told to regard the difference between right and wrong everywhere, except when you get into politics! Then stick to your party through thick and thin! Right and wrong vanish at once. Loyalty to your leader—that is the point! Never mind where he leads you, follow him blindly! You are even told that you may do wrong because it is politically right! I hate such an argument! These men never, for a moment, entertained that evil thought! It is true that politics were mixed up with this image, but whatever might be mixed up with it, they would not worship it, for God had said, “You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them,” and these sturdy Believers would do nothing of the kind under any pretense whatever.

A very soothing salve for their conscience might have been found in the absence of any command to renounce their own religion. They might have encouraged each other to submit, by saying, “We are not called upon to deny our God.” They need not believe the idol to be divine, nor confess the least faith in it—in their hearts they might make a mental reservation as they bowed—and they might have whispered to one another and said that it was a devil, and not God. They might have excused themselves to their own conscience by saying that they prostrated themselves to the music and not to the idol—or that they made obeisance to the king rather than to his image. In fact, if their consciences had been as elastic as some modern ones, though that was hardly possible, as the virtues of India rubber were scarcely known, then, they might have said that, in bowing down before the image, they were praying to Jehovah, since He might be worshipped anywhere and under any circumstances! They might have said that, although they looked at the image, they did not worship it. But beyond the glitter of its gold, their thoughts rose to the God of Glory. Anything, in fact, will serve for an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise and, especially in these half-hearted days, it is very easy to find a specious reason for a false action if some temporal benefit is attached to it! Modern charity manufactures a multitude of excuses with which to cover sins.

A stronger argument, however, might have been secured from the fact of the universal submission to the decree. “Everybody else is doing it,” they might have said. That morning, when the rising sun was saluted by the strains from those varied instruments of music from Persia, Greece and Babylon—when all the music of the world seemed gathered together— everybody bowed. There were Jews there, thousands of them—and they all bowed. There were fire worshippers there—men who hated the worship of graven images—but they all bowed. There were men there who had gods of their own which they reverenced—but they all bowed before Nebuchadnezzar’s god. “What a singular being you must be to stand out against the fashion of the time!” the tempter might have said. “Your own countrymen have bowed and you will not—better men than you, let me tell you, have bowed, but you will not!”

No, they will not, these three singularities, these strange eccentricities! It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right! And to be eccentric is not commendable unless the eccentricity consists in not being concentric with any kind of evil way! In spite of all the apostate crowds, these brave men would not yield—not they! Though millions bowed, what had that to do with them? My dear Hearers, I ask you to cultivate a brave personality. In the service of God, things cannot go by the counting of heads. You must follow the Lord’s will wherever it leads you, whether you go alone or not—

*“Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone.”*

They might have said, “It is only for once, and not for long. Ten minutes or so, once in a lifetime, to please the king—such a trivial act cannot make any difference. At any rate, it is not enough to brave the fiery furnace for. Let us treat the whole thing as a huge jest. It would be ridiculous to throw away our lives for such a trifle.” Have you never heard such arguments in these days? This indulgent 19th Century has plenty of easy maxims of a very similar sort. In the supreme hour many fail because the trial is seemingly so small. They mean to stand for God, but this is scarcely the right time! They will wait and choose a more worthy occasion, when something really heroic can be attempted. Were they to stand for such a little thing, the world would laugh with derision at such a straining out of a gnat! So Adam eats the apple, Esau the pottage and the one temptation, unresisted, issues in life-long loss! Not even for a few minutes in a lifetime would these three brave men deny their God. May their stubborn faith be ours!

Another excuse that they might have made was, “ We can do more good by living than we can by being cast into that furnace. It is true, if we are burned alive, we bear a rapid testimony to the faith of God, but if we live, how much more we might accomplish! You see, we three are Jews, and we are put in high office—and there are many poor Jews who are captives. We can help them. We have already done so. We have always seen justice done to God’s people, our fellow countrymen, and we feel that we are raised to our high office on purpose to do good. Now, you see, if you make us bigots and will not let us yield, you cut short our opportunities of usefulness.”

Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning! They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went “outside the camp.” This is doing evil that good may come and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience! If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it! And if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am to do it! It is yours and mine to do the right, though the heavens fall—and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequences may be. “That is strong meat,” do you say? Be strong men, then, and feed on it.

But they might also have said, “ Really, this is more than can be expected of us. If we had been asked to contribute our tithe to the support of the religion of Jehovah, we would cheerfully do so, but to yield our lives in this horrible way, to be cast into a burning fiery furnace is more than flesh and blood can bear!” Yes, and some of us could not answer that argument, for, perhaps, it is pressing upon ourselves. Remember what Jesus said to the multitudes who went with Him, “If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” We must stand to a full surrender and say, “Let it cost what it may, I make no exception. I take all risks. I will follow Christ, the Lamb, wherever He goes, even should I die while I am following Him!” He that does not come to that has not taken the position which Christ demands of us— and which His Holy Spirit must work in us before we are fully converted to the faith. “Strong language again,” says one. God make you strong enough to apply it to yourself!

Thus I have set before you the excuses that these three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, might have made.  
II. In the second place, let us assure our own hearts by admiring THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THEY POSSESSED. They expressed it very emphatically and clearly. They had a very definite, solid, foursquare faith.  
First, they said, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.” The word, “careful,” there, does not give you the meaning. Read it, “We are not full of care as to how to answer you.” They did answer very carefully, but they were not anxious about the answer. It was not a thing that troubled them in the least. They knew what they were going to say. They did not deliberate. They did not hesitate. They said, “Nebuchadnezzar, we can answer you at once on that point.” They were so calm, so self-collected, that they could talk to him, not as a king, but as Nebuchadnezzar. When it came to life-work, it was man to man, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to Nebuchadnezzar—and they told him that they had no difficulty in answering him.

In the second place, they did not judge it theirs to answer at all. I find that it may be read, as in the Revised Version, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter,” meaning, “We will not answer you. It is not for us to answer you. You have brought another Person into the quarrel.” Let me read the words that precede my text. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” In effect, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego replied, “It is not for us to answer you. There is Another that will do that. You have challenged God and God shall make His own reply.” It was bravely spoken. They threw the onus of this matter upon God, Himself! So may you. If you will do right, it is God’s affair to see you through. You have nothing to do with the consequences, except patiently to bear them—the consequences must be with God. Only you do right. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and obey Him and keep the command of the Most High, and then whatever comes of it, it is no fault of yours. That must be left with God.

Then notice what they say. “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” They avowed their faith in the Omnipotent God, knowing that if He chose, no mighty man of Babylon could ever throw them into that furnace. The furnace itself must die down and become cool as ice if God so wills it. They tell the tyrant to his face, enveloped as he was in the flame of his wrath, that God can save them out of the fire. Their God was almighty and they put their trust in Him.

What is more, they add, “And He will deliver us out of your hands, O king.” Whether they burned in the fire or not, they were sure they would be delivered. “If we die, we shall be out of your reach, but we may not die. We may live beyond your reach! You have asked the question, ‘Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?’ and we answer you, ‘Our God will deliver us out of your hands, O king.’”

Now, Beloved Friends, if any of you are in great difficulty and trouble, tempted to do wrong, no, pressed to do it, and if you do what is right, it looks as if you will be great losers and great sufferers—believe this—God can deliver you! He can prevent your having to suffer what you suppose you may and if He does not prevent that, He can help you to bear it and, in a short time, He can turn all your losses into gains, all your sufferings into happiness! He can make the worst thing that can happen to you to be the very best thing that ever happened to you! If you are serving God, you are serving an Omnipotent Being, and that Omnipotent Being will not leave you in the time of difficulty, but He will come to your rescue! Many of us can say with Paul, “We trust not in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.”

The Lord has helped us in the past, He is helping us in the present and we believe that He will help us all the way through. He will help you, too, if you just follow His Word and, by a simple faith, do the right thing. I believe that we have reason to expect interpositions of Providence to help us when we are called to suffer for Christ’s sake.

III. But here is the point that I want to make most prominent—the third one—THE DETERMINATION AT WHICH THEY ARRIVED. “If not,” if God does not deliver us at all, “be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.” Grand language! Noble resolve! “If not, if we have to go into the fire, into the fire we will go, but we will never bow the knee to an idol.” So these gracious Jews were enabled to say!

They did not base their loyalty to God upon their deliverance . They did not say, as some do, “I will serve God if it pays me to do so. I will serve God if He helps me at such and such a time.” No, they would serve Him for nothing! Theirs was not cupboard love. “If not, if He does not deliver us, if it is His will that we should be burned alive, we surrender ourselves to His will, but we will not break His Divine command, or make idolaters of ourselves by bowing before an image which has no life in it, which could not even set itself up, but which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.”

They resolved that they would obey God at all costs . Now, I knew a young man, once, to whom a certain ordinance of Christ was made known as being Scriptural, but as far as he could see, if he followed that ordinance, every door would be shut against him. If he was bold to do as he thought he ought to do, according to his Master’s command and example, it would be the ruin of everything! Well, he did it, and it was not the ruin of anything—and if he had to do such a thing again a hundred times over, he thanks God that he would do it. There is such sweetness in having to make some sacrifice for God. There is such a heavenly recompense, that one almost envies the martyrs! Rather than pity their sufferings, one feels an intense longing that such honor had been ours and that we had had the moral courage and holy stamina to suffer for God even as they suffered. Who among the bright ones are the brightest in the land of light? They that wear the ruby crown of martyrdom most certainly lead the van, for they suffered, even to the death, for their Lord. O Friends, it is a glorious thing when we make no calculation of costs, but with our whole heart and soul follow the Lamb wherever He leads us!

Let us walk in this heroic path. But some will say, “It is too hard. You cannot expect men to love God well enough to die for Him.” No, but there was One who loved us well enough to die for us, and to die a thousand deaths in one, that He might save us. If Christ so loved us, we ought so to love Him. “Well,” says one, “I think it is impossible. I could not bear pain.” It is possible, for many have endured it! I remember that one of the martyrs who was to be burned on the following morning, thought that he would test himself—and there being a large stove in the cell, he put his foot into it to see whether he could bear to have it burnt—and soon shrank back. Therein he was foolish, for when he went out the next morning to stand on the firewood and burn, he stood like a man and burnt bravely to the death for his Master! The fact was, his Lord did not call him to burn his foot in the stove, and so He did not help him to bear it. But when He called him to give his whole body to the flames, then Divine Grace was given.

There is a story of a martyred woman who had a child born to her a few days before she was burnt and, being in great pain, she cried aloud. One said to her, “If you cannot bear this, what will you do when you come to burn?” She said, “Now you see the pains of nature which befall a woman and I have not patience enough to bear them. But by-and-by you shall see Christ in His members suffering and you shall see what patience He will have, and what patience He will give to me.” It is recorded of her that she seemed as if she had no pain at all when she yielded herself up to Christ. Do not judge, by what you are, today, what you would do if you were called into trouble! Divine Grace would be given to you. I have no doubt that many of the most timid of those who truly love the Lord would be the very bravest—while some who think they would be brave would be the very first to start back. You may never be called to such a trial as that, but still, if you cannot bear the small trials, how would you bear the great ones?

“I cannot bear to be laughed at,” says one. But though there is something cruel about mocking, it does not break anybody’s bones. And being laughed at—well, really, I have sometimes thought, when I have seen a good joke cracked over my poor head, that there is so much misery in the world that if I might be the cause of making a little more mirth, I should be glad. And even if it is told against me, if it made somebody feel a little merrier, it was not a matter for great sorrow. And then you go into the workshop and they point at you and say, “There comes a canting Methodist!” Remember, that is the way in which the world pays homage to Christianity! If there is anything genuine in the Christian religion, the world pays its respect by laughing at it and caricaturing it. Accept their compliments, not as they intend them, but as you choose to read them, and you will not be grieved.

You, Shadrach, not afraid of a burning fiery furnace, are surely not going to be frightened by the laughter of a silly boy or girl in the workshop! Alas, this unworthy fear enters into all relationships! I have known men afraid of their wives! I have known fewer wives, however, afraid of their husbands, for they are generally bold for Christ and can suffer for His name’s sake. I have known children afraid of their parents and some poor parents, six feet high, afraid of their children! Oh, what poor worms it makes of us when we begin to be afraid of our fellow creatures! Do right and fear nothing—and God will help you.

To enable us to get the spirit of these three holy men, we must get, first, a clear sense of the Divine Presence. If a man feels that God is watching him, he will not bow his knee to an idol. Neither will he do evil, for God’s eye is upon him. He will endure, “as seeing Him who is invisible.” And though the floods of ungodly men lift themselves up, he will remember the Lord who sits upon the floodwaters and is higher than they. The man who realizes God’s Presence is, by that invisible Companionship, rendered invincible! Greater is He that is for him, than all that can be against him—

*“For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win.  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.”*

We must, next, have a deep sense of the Divine Law. I have already reminded you of the Law of God, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” No Virgin Mary, no cross, no crucifix, no picture, no image, no visible object is to be regarded with reverence or worshipped instead of God. All this must be put away! That is clear enough and, therefore, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, feeling that God was near and knowing what God’s Law was, dared not violate that Law of God, but would sooner die.

Above all, to keep us right, we must have a mighty sense of the Divine love. We shall never obey God till, by His Grace, we have new hearts and those hearts are full of love to Him through Jesus Christ. Then, if you love Him, you will say, “What? Put an image of gold in His place? Never! Join the multitude in worshipping a colossal statue instead of the invisible Jehovah? Never!” With holy indignation you will choose the furnace of fire rather than have that purer flame which glows in your heart quenched, or made to burn dimly.

To some of you this must seem very trifling because, you say, “I do not care about religious forms and ceremonies. Let me enjoy myself while I am here—that is all I ask.” Well, you have made your bargain and a sorry one it is! If this life is all, how ought a man to live? I am sure I cannot tell you. Perhaps the wisest thing of all is, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” But there is another world and a life beyond! And it is sometimes incomparably wise to fling this life away that we may win the life eternal! Our Lord often reminded His hearers of this great Truth, “He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

“But what did these three men do?” asks one. “They simply did not bow their heads and they were cast into the fiery furnace. What did they do?” They influenced their age, their people and all time. These three men influenced the city of Babylon and the whole Babylonian empire! They certainly influenced King Nebuchadnezzar. They influenced the next age and, to this hour, the influence of their brave stand for God in His eternal Unity and for the non-worship of any visible thing has held the Hebrew race firmly to this one point! It was principally through these three men that the whole Jewish people were taught their deep hatred of everything like idol-worship. And they were, by such men as these, and some who followed after, weaned from their tendency to wander after idols—and tethered fast to the worship of Jehovah, the one living and true God. Would God that the Jews as a nation went further and knew our Lord Jesus Christ!

Still, it is something that they are yet alive upon the earth bearing witness that there is but one God, Creator of Heaven and earth, who only is to be worshipped. More than that, the influence of these three men lives in this audience and will live in thousands of audiences in days to come. Does it not make your pulse race? Does it not make your heart leap within you? Have you not said to yourselves, “This is a noble example”? Oh, that we may rise to it! In an age like ours, when everything is sold, when you can buy anybody, when the flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer and all kinds of music carry everything before them, when a mask and a visor will infatuate even a saint—it is time that there were some men of the stern old mold of these three Jews who could not and would not, yield— whatever might happen. The pillars of the earth might be dissolved, but these men would still stand upright and bear the whole world upon their shoulders by the grand power of God that made them strong.

These three men command the admiration of Heaven and earth . A fool would have pointed at them and said, “There go three fools—gentlemen high in office, with large incomes and wives and families. They have only to take their cap off and they may live in their wealth! But if they do not, they are to be burnt alive and they will not do it! They will be burnt alive. They are fools!” Yes, but the Son of God did not think so. When He, in Heaven, heard them speak thus to King Nebuchadnezzar, He said, “Brave, brave men! I will leave the Throne of God in Heaven to go and stand by their side.” And invisibly He descended, till where the fires were glowing like one vast ruby, where the fierce flame had slain the men that threw the three confessors into the burning fiery furnace, HE came and stood! And there they walked! It was the greatest walk that they had ever had! On those burning coals the four of them were walking together in sweet fellowship! They had won the admiration and the sympathy of the Son of God who left Heaven, itself, that He might come and stand side by side with them!

It was, therefore, comparatively a little thing that they won the admiration of Nebuchadnezzar. That proud imperial tyrant cried to those about him, “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered, “True, O King.” And he, with his visage white with ghostly fear, said, “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” He himself could not but stand there and, awestruck, admire these three heroes! And today you do the same. These three men still live! From the glowing coals their voices call aloud to us, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

To close—if we would be servants of God, we must be Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ. Come and trust Jesus Christ and you are saved! When you are truly saved, you are to be saved from all hesitation about obedience to God—so saved, that from now on God’s Law is your rule. Then, with that holy Law imperative upon you, you will go forth into the world and say, “It is not mine to ask what others will do. It is not mine to shape my course by them, not mine to enquire what will bring me most profit, what will bring me most honor. It is mine to look up to You, my God, and ask, ‘What would You have Me to do? By Your Grace, I will do it at all costs.’”

I wonder how many young men to whom these words are addressed have pluck enough in them to come out on Christ’s side? I believe that many young men do not want an easy life. They would rather have a hard time and a stern battle. We still have brave spirits among us who like to lead the forlorn hope and are not afraid. I challenge such to come and serve my Master fully and thoroughly! They shall have a rough time of it, but they shall have glory, honor and immortality as their reward. Make a whole burnt offering of yourself, my Brothers and Sisters—body, soul and spirit—for Christ! These three young men “yielded their bodies,” as we read in the 28th verse. “I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Let the faith of your spirit carry your whole body with it in hearty obedience to God’s command, and let this be true of you—

*“In full and glad surrender,  
I give myself to You.  
Yours utterly and only  
And evermore to be.  
O Son of God You love me,  
I will be Yours alone!  
And all I have, and am, Lord,  
Shall henceforth be Your own.”*

But I fear that I speak in vain to many who will turn away and say, “This world is for me.” Well, if you make a choice of this world and of ease and pleasure for yourself, then you have chosen Egypt’s treasures and you have disdained the reproach of Christ—and you shall find, one day, how dreadful a folly you have committed! God grant that you may find it out soon and not in the world to come! God bless you and save you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 3.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—486, 670, 671.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:  
Very little can be added to former notes concerning MR. SPURGEON except this—He firmly believes that our gracious God has spared his life in answer to the “effectual fervent” prayers of the Church of Christ all over the world. And it is his confident conviction that the Lord will, in due time, raise him up and fully qualify him for future service. He cannot yet be considered out of danger—therefore continued supplication for his complete restoration is earnestly entreated, with hearty thanksgiving for the answers to prayer already received. MR. SPURGEON is very desirous that friends everywhere should know that he is full of gratitude for their prevailing prayers and loving sympathy, and that from his sickroom he presents heartfelt petitions that rich blessings may be bestowed upon all of you.

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CONSOLATION IN THE FURNACE

NO. 662

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 26, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt.  
And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”  
Daniel 3:25.**

THE narrative of the glorious boldness and marvelous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite, in the minds of Believers, firmness and steadfastness in upholding the Truth of God in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young men especially, since these were young men, learn from their example both in matters of faith in religion and matters of integrity in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all rather than lose your integrity, and when all else is gone still hold fast to a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal.

It were no waste of time for the preacher to spend half-a-dozen mornings in insisting again and again upon the necessity of the Christian being obedient universally and constantly to the dictates of his conscience, for this is an age requiring sturdy independence and stern adherence to the truth. As to whether the most severe precision of integrity will turn out to be the best policy or not, I shall not care to dispute. I am talking just now, not to men guided by the will-o’-the-wisp of policy, but by the pole star of Divine light and I beseech them to follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, then walk by faith and not by sight.

I do pray you, Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, do my God the honor to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether He will be your debtor! See if He does not, even in this life, prove His Word that “Godliness is great gain,” and that they who “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, shall have all these things added unto them.” Mark you, if in the Providence of God it should be the case that you are and continue to be a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord pays you not back in the silver of earthly prosperity, He will discharge His promise in the gold of spiritual joy! And I would have you remember that a man’s life consists not in the abundance of that which he possesses.

To have a clear conscience, to wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offense is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield or the traffic of Tyre could win. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention. An ounce of heart’s ease is worth a ton of gold. And a drop of innocence is better than a sea of flattery. Burn,

Christian, if it comes to that—but never turn from the right way! Die, but never deny the Truth. Lose all to buy the Truth of God! Sell it not, even though the price were the treasure and honor of the whole world, for “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

But my particular design in referring to the narrative this morning was not to use the whole of it as an incentive to young Christians by way of earnest advice, although I confess I feel much inclined to do so. But I have this one verse on my mind, where the astonished despot saw his late victims quietly surviving the flames which he intended for their instant destruction. I desire to use his exclamation as a consolation to afflicted Christians everywhere. Concentrate, then, your thoughts on the words before us and may the Holy Spirit be our Instructor.

I. We will commence by gazing into the place WHERE GOD’S PEOPLE OFTEN ARE. In the text we find three of them in a burning fiery furnace, and singular as this may be, literally, it is no extraordinary thing spiritually, for, to tell the truth, it is the usual place where saints are found. The ancients fabled of the salamander, that it lived in the fire. The same can be said of the Christian without any fable whatever!

The ancient Church, in a favorite metaphor, described itself as a ship. Where should the ship be, but in the sea? Now the sea is an unstable element, frequently vexed with storms. It is a troubled sea which cannot rest. And so the Christian finds this mortal life to be far from smooth and seldom settled. It is rather a wonder when a Christian is not in trial, for to wanderers in a wilderness, discomfort and need will naturally be the rule rather than the exception. It is through “much tribulation” that we inherit the kingdom. There is no life so joyous as that of a man bound for the Celestial City. And, on the other hand, there is no life which involves so much conflict as does the life of a pilgrim to the skies.

The furnaces into which Christians are cast are of various sorts. Perhaps we may divide them into three groups. First, there is the furnace which men kindle. As if there were not enough misery in the world, men are the greatest tormentors of their fellow men. The elements in all their fury, wild beasts in all their ferocity, and famine and pestilence in all their horrors have scarcely proved such foes to man as men themselves have been.

Religious animosity is always the worst of all hatreds and incites to the most fiendish deeds. Persecution is as unsparing as death and as cruel as the grave. The believer in Jesus, who is one of a people everywhere spoken against, must expect to be thrown into the furnace of persecution by his fellow men. “If the world hates you,” says our Lord, “it hated Me before it hated you.” “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Some suppose that these words are out of date—old-fashioned words—words that refer only to Apostolic times. I answer, you are out of the Apostolic faith or else you would painfully find them to be still standing in all their force!

At times the Christian feels the heat of the furnace of open persecution. What multitudes of saints have mounted to Heaven like Elijah in a chariot of fire? Their seraphic spirits found a safe way to Heaven through the flames, for they were guarded by ministering spirits whom God has made as flames of fire. Thousands of the precious sons of Zion have been left to rot in dungeons, or have been slain upon the mountain side, or have perished in penury and need. And to this day there are many that endure trials of cruel mocking and are, in various painful ways, made to bear the cross, for if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution.

Another furnace is that of oppression. In the iron furnace of Egypt the children of Israel were made to do hard bondage in brick and in mortar. And doubtless many of God’s people are in positions where they are little better than slaves. Oppression is far from dead—under the most free form of government there is always a possibility for the heads of households and the masters of establishments to practice the most galling oppression towards those whom they dislike. And doubtless many choice spirits are still trod down as straw is trod for the dunghill. There is also the furnace of slander. The ripest of fruit will be pecked at most by the birds. Those who have most of God’s image will have most of the world’s contempt. Expect not that the world shall speak well of you, for it never gave your Master a good word. “Shall the disciple be above his master, or the servant above his Lord?”

Expect to be misunderstood—that is man’s infirmity. Expect to be misrepresented—that is his willful hatred. A very strenuous effort is being made just now to mark our denomination with the famous “S. S.” which was the old log of the Puritan “Sower of Sedition.” This slander is very ancient, for in Nehemiah’s day the accusation ran, “This city of Jerusalem of old made sedition against kings.” And this is the charge now against our missionaries and, indeed, the whole of us, that we are accomplices with those who stir up the people to sedition. Sirs, we shall not disclaim the fact that we are ever swift to vindicate the liberties of all men and are little given to flatter tyrants whether in Jamaica, or elsewhere! On the contrary, our witness is very loud and clear that there is one Lord who will execute righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

We hate the treading down of the needy and we abhor wholesale butchery quite as much when perpetrated by Englishmen as when laid to the door of Turks or Russians. And however unfashionable it may be, we maintain the opinion that liberty is the birthright of every man, not only the liberty which permits his neck to go free from a chain, but the liberty which allows the exercise of the rights of manhood. Suffering humanity is to be aided even when it wears the ebony hue, and high-handed wrong is to be impeached even when the much despised Negro is its victim! It can never be too much lamented that the terrible passions excited by years of wrong should have led to a riot so fierce and cruel.

But we must remember that oppression makes even wise men mad, and in justice we must lay the onus of the outbreak not alone at the door of those unhappy and uneducated men who were goaded to this

passionate display of wrath, but we must give the greatest measure of blame to the men of standing, wealth and education who have laid grievous burdens upon these people and refused to hear their earnest cries and grant their justifiable demands. The infernal revenge taken by their enemies almost exonerates me from even this word of apology, for it alone is sufficient proof of the spirit which has dominated over the Black race and compelled the unhappy victims to rise against it.

But of course it will still be insisted that the Baptists are at the bottom of the outbreak and so God’s Church will be the scapegoat for offenders. We are the friends of liberty, but we never taught rebellion. We endeavor to implant manly principles of independence and freedom, but we put side-by-side the gentle precepts of the loving Jesus! Yet scandals of every sort we expect to receive and we count them no strange thing when they happen to us.

Secondly, there is a furnace which Satan blows with three great bellows—some of you have been in it. It is hard to bear, for the Prince of the power of the air has great mastery over human spirits. He knows our weak places and can strike so as to cut us to the very quick. He fans the fire with the blast of temptation. The Evil One knows our besetting sins, our infirmities of temper, and how we can be most readily provoked. He understands how to suit his bait to his fish and his trap to his bird.

At times the most earnest Christian will be compelled to cry out, “My steps had well near gone! My feet had well near slipped!” The Savior went through this furnace in the wilderness and was thrice tempted of the devil. And in the wilderness of this life God’s people frequently experience temptations of the most horrible kind. Then he works the second bellows of accusation. He hisses into the ear, “Your sins have destroyed you! The Lord has quite forsaken you! Your God will be gracious no more!” He tells us that we are hypocrites, that our experience has been fancy, that our faith is mere presumption. He tells us that our glorying has been a boast and the very sins which, as a tempter, he himself incited us to commit, he brings against us when he assumes his favorite character of “the accuser of the brethren.” Unless we are graciously comforted under the attacks of the roaring lion, we shall be almost ready to give up all hope.

Then he will beset us with suggestions of blasphemy. While tormenting us with insinuations, he has a way of uttering foul things against God and then casting them into our hearts as if they were our own. He can sow the infernal seed of blasphemy in our souls and then tell us that these are the native plants of our own hearts! He lays his black offspring at our door as if they were our own home-born children. And this sometimes is very hard to bear, when curses against God and His Christ will come across our soul. And though we hate them with perfect hatred, yet we cannot be rid of them.

And thirdly, there is a furnace which God Himself prepares for His people. There is the furnace of physical pain. How soon is the strong man brought low! We who rejoiced in health are in a few moments made to mourn and moan, not in weakness merely, but in pain and anguish. He only thinks little of pain who is a stranger to it. A furnace still worse, perhaps, is that of bereavement. The child sickens, the wife is gradually declining, the husband is struck down with a stroke. Friend after friend departs as star by star grows dim. We bitterly cry with Job, “Lover and friend have You put far from me and my acquaintance unto darkness.”

Then added to this there will crowd in upon us temporal losses and sufferings. The business which we thought would enrich, impoverishes. We build the house, but Providence plucks it down with both its hands. We hoist the sail and seek to make headway but we are driven far from the desired haven by a back wind. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” I cannot multiply the description of these crosses which our heavenly Father, in His mysterious Providence lays upon His beloved ones. Certain is it that like the waves of the sea, the drops of rain, the sands of the wilderness, and the leaves of the forest the griefs of the Lord’s people are innumerable. Into the central heat of the fire does the Lord cast His saints, and mark this, He casts them there because they are His own beloved and dearly loved people.

I do not see the goldsmith putting dross into the furnace—what would be the good of it? It would be a waste of fuel and labor. But he thrusts the crucible full of gold into the hottest part of the fire and heaps on coals till the heat is terrible. Some of you have no crosses—you are like Moab, “settled on your lees”—“you are not emptied from vessel to vessel” because you are reprobate and God cares not for you! But the pure gold is put into the furnace to make it purer, still. As silver is purified in a furnace of earth seven times, simply because it is silver, so are saints afflicted because of their preciousness in the sight of the Lord. Men will not be at such pains to purify iron as they will with silver, for when iron is brought to a tolerable degree of purity it works well. But silver must be doubly refined, till no dross is left.

Men do not cut common pebbles on the lapidary’s wheel, but the diamond must be vexed again and again and again with sharp cuttings and even so must the Believer. The context reminds us that sometimes the Christian is exposed to very peculiar trials. The furnace was heated seven times hotter—it was hot enough when heated once—but I suppose that Nebuchadnezzar had pitch and tar and all kinds of combustibles thrown in to make it flame out with greater vehemence. Truly, at times the Lord appears to deal thus with His people. It is a peculiarly fierce heat which surrounds them and they cry out, “Surely I am the man that has seen affliction—I may take precedence of all others in the realm of sorrow.”

This is not so, remember, for princes have sat in the king’s gate with their heads covered with ashes and the best of men who eat bread at Jehovah’s table this day, have had to say, “You have filled me with wormwood and broken my teeth with gravel.” The path of sorrow is well frequented, beaten down and trod by hosts of the chosen ones of God who have found that the path of sorrow, and that path, alone, leads to the

place where sorrow is unknown!

I do not want to leave this point without observing, too, that these holy champions were helpless when thrown into the furnace. They were cast in bound. And many of us have been cast in bound, too, so that we could not lift hand or foot to help ourselves. They fell down, it is said, into the midst of the furnace. And often a sort of fainting fit overtakes the saints of God at the beginning of their trouble—the very trouble in which afterwards they can rejoice—for the present fills them with heaviness and they fall down bound into the midst of the furnace.

Pretty plight to be in! Who does not shudder at it? Certainly none of us would choose it. But we have not the choice and as we have said with David, “You shall choose my inheritance for me.” If the Lord determines to choose it for us among the coals of fire—it is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him. Where Jehovah places His saints they are safe in reality, although exposed to destruction in appearance. That is the first point then—where God’s people often are.

II. We proceed to the second—WHAT THEY LOSE THERE. Look at the text and it will be clear to you that they lost something. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego lost something in the fire—not their turbans, nor their coats, nor their shoes, nor one hair of their heads or beards—no, what then? Why, they lost their bonds there! Observe, “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.”

The fire did not hurt them, but it snapped their bonds. Blessed loss, this! A true Christian’s losses are gains in another shape. Now, Beloved, observe this carefully—that many of God’s servants never know the fullness of spiritual liberty till they are cast into the midst of the furnace. Many of them are bound and fettered till they get into the flame and the flame consumes the bonds in which they had been willing to be held captives. Like the pure gold which loses nothing but its dross in the fire! Like the iron which loses nothing but its rust under the file, so is the Christian—he loses what he is glad to lose and his loss is blessed gain.

Shall I show you some of the bonds which God looses for His people when they are in the fire of human hatred? Sometimes He bursts the cords of fear of man and desire to please man. Martin Luther, I dare say, like other men, had some respect for his own character and some reverence for public opinion. He might have been willing to pay some deference to the learning and authority of the age—both of which lent their aid to the ancient system of Rome—but in a happy hour the Pope excommunicated the German troublemaker. All is well for Luther now! His course is clear and plain before his face! He must therefore never conciliate or dream of peace.

Now his bonds are broken! He burns the Pope’s bull and thunders out, “The Pope of Rome excommunicates Martin Luther and I, Martin Luther, excommunicate the Pope of Rome! The world hates me and there is no love lost between us, for I esteem it as much as it esteems me. War to the knife,” says he! The man was never clear till the world thrust him out. It is a splendid thing to run the gauntlet of so much contempt that the soul is hardened to it under a strong consciousness that the right is none the more contemptible because its friend may be despised. “Why,” you say, “is this how I am treated for the statement of truth? I was inclined to conciliate and yield, but after this, never! You have loosed my bonds.”

When man has done his worst, as Nebuchadnezzar did in this case, why then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, could say, “What more could he do? He has thrown us into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter. He has done his worst and now what have we to fear?” When persecution rages, it is wonderful what liberty it gives to the child of God! Never a more free tongue than Luther’s! Never a braver mouth than that of John Knox! Never bolder speech than that of John Calvin! Never a braver heart than that which throbbed beneath the ribs of Wickliffe! Never a man who could more boldly confront popery than John Bradford or Hugh Latimer! But under God these men owed their liberty of speech and liberty of conscience to the fact that the world thrust them out from all hope of its favor and so loosed their bonds!

Again, when Satan puts us in the furnace, he is often the means of breaking bonds. How many Christians are bound by the bonds of frames and feelings—by the bonds of dependence upon something within— instead of resting upon Christ the great Sacrifice? When the devil comes with his sharp temptations, he roars out, “You are not children of God.” Why, what then? Why, then we go straight to Christ to look at and view the flowing of His precious blood and trust Him just as we did at first! And now what about frames and feelings? What about emotions within? Why, we are so satisfied with that finished work upon the Cross that we feel the bonds of doubt and fear no more! Now we are free, because we have come to live on Christ and not on self!

Fierce temptations may be like waves that wash the mariner on a rock—they may drive us nearer to Christ. It is an ill wind which blows no one any good. But the worst wind that Satan can send blows the Christian good because it hurries him nearer to his Lord! Temptation is a great blessing when it looses our bonds of self-confidence and reliance upon frames and feelings. As for the afflictions which God sends, do they not loose our bonds? Dear Brethren, doubts and fears are far more common to us in the midst of work and business than when laid aside by sickness. I do not know how you have found it, but so it is, “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

Many Believers sing most sweetly when Providence clips their wings, or puts them in a cage. They are very mute and their heart towards the Lord is very heavy till they are involved in trouble. And then their faith revives! Their hope returns! Their love glows and they sing God’s praises in the fire! Have not you, dear Friends, frequently experienced trouble cuts the cords which bind us to earth? When the Lord takes away a child, there is one tie less to fasten to the world and one band more to draw towards

Heaven. God has loosed you from the bonds of idolatry by removing your darling. You cannot idolize your little one any more, for it is taken away.

When money vanishes and business all goes wrong, we frequent the Prayer Meeting more and the closet more and read the Bible more—we are driven by all tribulation away from earth. If everything went well with us, we should begin to say, “Soul, take your ease.” But when things go amiss with us, then we want to be gone. When the tree shakes, the bird will not stop in the nest, but takes to its wings and mount. Happy trouble that looses our care of earth! Give you a few days of sharp pain on a bed of sickness and you will not love life so much as you now do! You will begin to say, “Let me be gone.”

Why, even selfishness makes you wish for that. Then you can understand what David meant when he said his heart and his flesh cried out after God. It is hard to make the flesh cry out after God—but if you nip it well, turn the screw a little further, just stretch it on the rack a little more—the dumb, earth-born flesh will begin to cry out that it may be gone and leave the pain and sickness behind it! Thus, I think, I have shown you, though very briefly, for time fails us, that the saints lose something in the furnace which they are glad to lose—they are cast in bound, but amid the glowing coals they are set at liberty!

III. In the third place, WHAT SAINTS DO THERE. “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire.” Walking! See those gardens so delightfully laid out with varying landscape? They have rippling fountains, blushing flowers and odoriferous herbs. There are quiet arbors here and there and soft reclining seats—and there with the voice of glee—young men and maidens walk. See that fair prospect! Turn here—a blazing furnace, so fiercely heated that the eyes feel as if scorched from their sockets as they look upon it. And the fervent heat comes pouring forth as though old Sol had found a house on earth! Yet there are four men walking in that furnace—walking in their ease!

And there is greater joy as they walk among those sulfuric flames, greater mirth in their spirits than in those young men and maidens who walk among the flowers! They are walking—a symbol of joy, of ease, of peace, of rest—not flitting like unquiet ghosts, as if they were disembodied spirits traversing the flame. No, they are walking with real footsteps, treading on hot coals as though they were roses and smelling the sulfuric flames as though they yielded nothing but aromatic perfume! Enoch “walked with God.” It is the Christian’s pace, it is his general pace—he does sometimes run—but his general pace is walking with God, walking in the Spirit.

And you notice that these good men did not quicken their pace and they did not slacken it—they continued to walk as they usually did. They had the same holy calm and peace of mind which they enjoyed elsewhere. Their walking shows not only their liberty and their ease and their pleasure and their calm, but it shows their strength! Their sinews were not snapped, they were walking. Sometimes God’s people, as Jacob at the brook Jabbok, halt on their thigh—but I think it is only a small trouble that lames Believers—a greater trial will set them right again. A stream of trouble may almost overturn a Believer—but a flood of trials will make him rise as the ark rose, nearer to Heaven. These men had no limping gait—they were walking—walking in the midst of the fire!

Now, for the explanation of all this, turn to the biographies of any of God’s saints. There is an old Scotch volume entitled “Napthali”—it is the lives of those people of God who hazarded their lives unto death in the high places of the field. Now, if you read “Napthali,” you will find that the greatest joy that ever could have been known in this mortal life was enjoyed by Covenanters among the mosses and banks and on the hillsides of Scotland. There is another blessed old book which used to be chained in the churches side by side with the Bible—I mean “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.” Every family ought to have a copy of it, illustrated with pictures for the children to look at. And if you read “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs,” you will see clearly that there was more joy in old Bonner’s coal-hole and in the Lollard’s tower, than palaces kings have known!

The martyrs felt a Heaven of joy while they were suffering a Hell of pain! One Samuel was kept starving for weeks, having bread and water given him alternately—three or four mouthfuls of bread one day and no water. And the next day a few spoonfuls of water and no bread. After he had been a little time in such a state as that, he fell into a perfect Elysium of delight! He thought he heard an angel say to him, “Samuel, you have suffered thus painfully, and fasted for the sake of your Lord. You shall soon feast with Him above—meanwhile you shall feast with Him below in your soul.” Many and many a child of God has had an experience manifesting as clearly the loving-kindness of the Lord! Yes, they were walking in the midst of the furnace!

See Paul and Silas with their feet in the stocks and their poor bleeding backs on the stone damp floor of the Roman dungeon at Philippi, and yet they sing and the prisoners hear them! Why, I think I would as soon have been with Paul and Silas as with Peter when he was on the mountain. At any rate, the three holy children might have said to the fourth, who was their Comforter and Companion, what Peter said to his Lord—“Lord, it is good to be here! Let us build three tabernacles and dwell under the fiery roof of these boughs of flame, for it is happy to be where You are, though it be in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace.”

IV. In the fourth place, WHAT THEY DID NOT LOSE THERE? The text says, “And they have no hurt.” They did not lose anything there. But we may say of them, first, their bodies were not hurt. The child of God loses in the furnace nothing of himself that is worth keeping. He does not lose his spiritual life—that is immortal. He does not lose his Divine Graces—he gets them refined and multiplied and the glitter of them is best seen by furnace light. The gifts to the Christian of God the Holy Spirit are not taken away by the fiery hands of flame. The Christian does not lose his garments there. You see their hats and their shoes and their coats were not singed, nor was there the smell of fire upon them.  
And so with the Christian—his garment is the beauteous dress which

Christ Himself worked out in His life and which He dyed in the purple of His own blood. This is wrapped about the Christian as his imperishable mantle of glory and of beauty—

*“This sacred robe the same endures  
When ruined nature sinks in years.  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new.”*

As it is not hurt by age, nor moth, nor worm, nor mildew, so neither can it be touched by fire. When the saint shall come up to Heaven, wearing Christ’s righteousness and the question is asked, “Who are these?” as the spirits gather round them, there shall be no traces upon them whatever of any of the persecution or suffering through which they have been made to pass. The Christian never loses a grain of his treasure when he passes through the furnace—in fact, to sum up in a word—he loses nothing.

The empress threatened to banish Chrysostom. “That you can not do,” said he, “for my country is in every clime.” “But I will take away your goods.” “No,” said he, “that you can not do, for I am a poor minister of Christ, and I have none.” “Then,” said she, “I will take away your liberty.” “That you cannot do, for iron bars cannot confine a free spirit.” “I will take away your life,” said she. “That you may do,” said he, “in one sense, but I have a life eternal which you cannot touch.” The empress thought she had better leave the man alone—she could do him no harm! So is it better for the enemy to leave the child of God alone, for he that kicks against God’s people, only kicks with naked feet against the pricks. And as the ox smitten with the goad only hurts himself when he kicks against it, so shall it be with all who touch the saints of the living God. They are not hurt and they never shall be.

Now, it is hard for some of you to think that this will be the case, but thus it will be with all of you who truly put your trust in Jesus Christ. My Brethren, I know you dread that furnace—who would not? But courage, courage, courage! The Lord, who permits that furnace to be heated, will preserve you in it, therefore be not dismayed! You would wish so to live as to have some tale to tell when you shall mount to Heaven—you would not be silent there! Coming to Glory without any adventure to narrate before the throne? Now, you cannot be illustrious without conflict—you cannot be a conqueror without fighting! You cannot by any possibility have anything to witness to the Glory of God unless you test and try the promises and the faithfulness of the Most High. And where can you do this except in the furnace of woe? Be of good courage, then—

*“The flames shall not hurt you,  
I only design your dross to consume  
And your gold to refine.”*

V. The last, and perhaps the most pleasing part of the text is, WHO WAS WITH THEM IN THE FURNACE? There was a fourth and He was so bright and glorious that even the heathen eyes of Nebuchadnezzar could discern a supernatural luster about Him! “The fourth,” he said, “is like the Son of God.” What appearance Christ had put on which was recognizable by that heathen monarch, I cannot tell, but I suppose that He appeared in a degree of that Glory in which He showed Himself to His servant John in the Apocalypse. Such was the excessive splendor and brightness—the God-like air that was about Him, the flash of His eyes and the splendor of His gait as He walked the fire with the other three—that even Nebuchadnezzar could not help saying He was like the Son of God!

Beloved, you must go into the furnace if you would have the nearest and dearest dealings with Christ Jesus! Whenever the Lord appears, it is to His people when they are in a militant posture. Moses saw God at Horeb, but it was in a burning bush. Joshua saw Him, but it was with a drawn sword in his hand, to show that His people are still a militant people. And here where the saints saw their Savior, it was as Himself in the furnace. The richest thought that a Christian, perhaps, can live upon is this—Christ is in the furnace with him! When you suffer, Christ suffers. No member of the body can be pained without the head enduring its portion.

And so you, a member of Christ’s body, in every pain you feel, pain the head Christ Jesus. As Baxter says, “Christ takes us through no darker rooms than He went through before.” And one could improve upon it and say, “He takes us through no rooms so dark but what He is, Himself, there in the darkness and makes that darkness by His Presence light, cheering and gladdening our hearts.” I know that to the worldling this seems a very poor comfort, but then if you have never drank this wine you cannot judge its flavor. If the King has never taken you into His banqueting house and His banner over you has never been love. If He has never kissed you with the kisses of His mouth. If He has never said unto you, “I am yours and you are Mine,” why, you cannot be expected to know what you have not experienced!

But he who has once drunk of the well of Bethlehem would hazard his life that he might get a draught of it again! He would be willing to go through the furnace though it were heated seventy thousand times hotter, that he might be able once more to see that Son of God, the fourth bright One who trod the glowing coals! The Presence of Christ is the brightest joy beneath the stars! Oh, Christian, seek it! Do not be content without it and you shall have it!

A very unhappy thought starts up and claims expression before we close our discourse. I do not like to close with it and yet faithfulness requires me to utter it—what must it be to be cast into that fiery furnace without Christ in it! What must it be to dwell with everlasting burnings! One’s heart beats high at the thought of the three poor men being thrown into that furnace of Nebuchadnezzar’s, with its flaming pitch and flames reaching upwards as though it would set the heavens on a blaze! Yet that fire could not touch the three children—it was not a consuming fire. But, my Hearers, be warned, there is One who is “a consuming fire,” and once let Him flame forth in anger and none can deliver you!

“Our God,” we are told, “our God is a consuming fire.” The day comes which shall burn as an oven and the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble and every soul on earth that believes not in Christ

Jesus shall be cast into that furnace of fire—this is the second death. Beware, you that forget God, lest the eternal fires of Tophet kindle upon you—for their flame searches the joints and marrow and sets the soul upon a blaze with torment! For you, my Hearers, who have listened to the Gospel often, but heard it in vain—for you the furnace of Divine wrath shall be heated seven times hotter and you shall fall down bound into the midst of it, never to be loosed.

And instead of having Christ, then, to be with you and to comfort you, you shall see Him sitting on His Throne and His glance of lightning shall perpetually make that flame burn more terrible and yet more terrible! If you were thrown into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, it would be all over in a moment, not even your bones would be found! But the soul never dies. The punishment of the wicked is of the same duration as the reward of the righteous. Justice will ever exist in the Divine mind and will ever have objects upon which to display itself. If the soul died, Hell would not be Hell, for there would then be hope. And so the most terrible element of hopelessness would be removed.

Sinner, dream not of being annihilated, but dread the fire which never shall be quenched, the worm which never dies! It is written in God’s Word that He “is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell,” a destruction which amounts not to annihilation, a destruction of everything that is true life, but which leaves existence still untouched—

*“What? To be banished for my life,  
To linger in eternal pain  
And yet forbid to die—  
And yet forever die!”*

Dreadful, indeed, is such a doom! There is a second death which will pass on all the ungodly, but it is not annihilation! As death does not annihilate the body so does not the spiritual death annihilate the soul— you shall lose life but never existence! You shall linger in perpetual death!

But there stands the Savior and as He was with His people in the furnace, so He is near you this day in mercy, to deliver you from your sins! He calls to you to leave your sins and look to Him and then you shall never die and neither upon you shall the flame of wrath kindle because its power was spent on Him! He felt the furnace of Divine wrath and trod the glowing coals for every soul that believes in Him. God give His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 3.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #949 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE UNCONQUERABLE KING  
NO. 949

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto Heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the**

**Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say**

**unto Him, What do You?”  
Daniel 4:34, 35.**

NO one has ever numbered Nebuchadnezzar with the Prophets, or believed his language to be inspired. We have before us simply a statement made by an uninspired man, after passing through the most extraordinary experience. He had been among the greatest and proudest of men— he suddenly fell into the condition of a grass-eating ox, by losing his reason. And upon being restored, he acknowledged publicly the hand of the Most High. I should not have taken his language as my text if it had not happened to be, as it is, a most correct and vigorous statement of sublime doctrines which are clearly stated by the Holy Spirit in different parts of Scripture.

It is a singular instance of how, when God comes to deal with men in afflicting Providences, He can make them clearly see many great Truths concerning Himself, and can constrain them to express their convictions in identically the same way as they would have done if His own Spirit had dictated the terms. There are certain parts of the Divine Character which even the unspiritual man cannot avoid seeing. And after passing through certain processes of suffering and humiliation, the man is compelled to add his witness to the testimony of God’s Spirit with regard to the Divine Character.

Every single word that Nebuchadnezzar here utters can be backed up and supported by undoubtedly inspired words of men sent of God to proclaim infallible Truth. We shall not, therefore, need to answer the objection that our text is simply the statement of Nebuchadnezzar—we grant that it is so—but we shall show as we proceed that Babylon’s humbled monarch herein has spoken most correctly and accurately—and in full accordance with the testimony of other parts of Scripture.

Before I conduct your minds to a close consideration of the text, I must make one remark. Many of you will very naturally suppose that the chapter read during this service, the hymns and the sermon, were all intended to have reference to a certain great political event reported in the papers of last night [the surrender of Napoleon to the King of Prussia]. But please observe that your supposition will be unfounded, for my text was fixed upon yesterday morning, before any sort of news had reached me, and the service would have been the same if that event had not occurred. So that

anything strikingly suggestive in the choice of the passage may be looked upon, if you will, as denoting the guidance of God’s Spirit, but must not be imputed to any intentional reference on my part.

We will now come first to consider the doctrinal instruction of the text. Secondly, we would learn the practical teaching of it. And thirdly, we would exhibit the spirit suitable after the contemplation of such a subject.

I. First, then, let us turn to the text, and consider THE DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION here given to us. We have here plainly stated the doctrine of the eternal Self-Existence of God. “I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever.” If this word needed to be confirmed we would refer you to the language of John in the Book of the Revelation where we find him describing, in the fourth chapter, at the ninth and tenth verses, the living creatures and the four and twenty elders as giving glory and honor and thanks, “to Him that sat on the Throne, who lives forever and forever.”

Better still, let us hear the witness of our own Redeemer, in the fifth of John’s Gospel, at the twenty-sixth verse, where He declares that, “the Father has life in Himself.” My Brethren, you need not that I marshal in array a host of confirmative passages, for the eternal Self-Existence of God is taught throughout the Scriptures, and is implied in that name which belongs only to the true God, Jehovah, “I Am that I Am,” where, note that it is not “I was,” which would imply that in some measure or respect He had ceased to be.

Nor is it “I will be,” which would intimate that He is not now what He will be, but I AM, the only Being, the root of Existence, the Immutable, and Eternal One. “We,” as a venerable Puritan observes, “have more of nothing than of being,” but it is God’s prerogative to BE. He alone can say, “I am God, and beside Me there is none else.” He declares, “I lift up My hands to Heaven, and say I live forever.” He is the One only underived, Self-Existent, Self-Sustained Being. Let us know of a surety that the Lord God whom we worship is the only Being who necessarily and from His own Nature, Exists.

No other being could have been but for His Sovereign will, nor could it continue were that will suspended. He is the only light of life, all others are reflections of His beams. There must be God, but there was no such necessity that there should be any other intelligences. In all the future God must Be, but the necessity for the continuance of other spirits lies in His will and not in the very nature of things. There was a time when the creatures were not. They came from Him as vessels from the potter’s wheel. They all depend upon Him for continuance, as the streamlet on the fountain from where it flows.

And if it were His will, they all would melt away as the foam upon the water. That immortality of spirits implied in such passages as Matthew 25:46, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal,” is the result of His own resolve to make spirits whose duration should be eternal. And though He will never withdraw the endowment of immortality which He has bestowed, yet the reason for eternal existence is not in the beings, but entirely in Himself, for essentially, “He only has immortality”—

*“He can create and He destroy.”*

All that is, whether material or intellectual, if so it had pleased God to ordain, might have been as transient as a sunbeam and have vanished as speedily as the rainbow from the cloud. If anything now exists of necessity, that necessity sprang from God, and still depends upon the necessity of Divine Decree.

God is independent—the only being who is so. We must find food with which to repair the daily wastes of the body. We are dependent upon light and heat, and innumerable external agencies—and above all we are primarily dependent upon the outgoings of the Divine power towards us. But the I AM is Self-Sufficient and All-Sufficient—

*“He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

He was as glorious before He made the world as He is now. He was as great, as blessed, as Divine in all His attributes before sun and moon and stars leaped into existence as He is now. And if He should blot all out as a man erases the writing of his pen, or as a potter breaks the vessel he has made, He would be none the less the supreme and ever-blessed God.

Nothing of God’s Being is derived from another, but all that exists is derived from Him. You hills and mountains, you seas and stars, you men and angels, you heavens and you Heaven of heavens—you minister nothing to Him who made you—you all stand up together in existence flowing from your Creator. God ever lives in this respect, that He undergoes no sort of change. All His creatures must, from their constitution, undergo more or less of mutation. Of them all it is decreed, “They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment. As a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end.”

Our life is made up of changes. From childhood we hasten to youth, from youth we leap to manhood, from manhood we fade into old age. Our changes are as many as our days. “The creature” is, indeed, in our case, “made subject to vanity.” Lighter than a feather, more frail than the flower of the field, brittle as glass, fleeting as a meteor, tossed to and fro like a ball, and quenched as a spark—“Lord, what is man?” There comes to us all in the time appointed the great and ultimate change when the spirit is separated from the body—to be followed by another in which the divided manhood shall be re-united. But with God there are no changes of this or any other kind. Has He not declared, “I am God, I change not”?

God is essentially and evermore pure Spirit, and consequently undergoes no variableness nor shadow of a turning. Of none of the creatures can this be said. Immutability is an attribute of God only. The things created were once new—they are waxing old—they will become older still. But the Lord has no time, He dwells in eternity. There is no moment of beginning with the Eternal, no starting point from which to calculate age. From of old He was the Ancient of Days, “from everlasting to everlasting You are God.”

Let your mind retreat as far as its capacities will allow into the remote past of old eternity, and there it finds Jehovah alone in the fullness of His glory. Then let the same thought flash forward into the far off future, as far as imagination can bear it, and there it beholds the Eternal, unchanged, unchangeable. He works changes and effects changes, but He Himself abides the same. Brethren, let us worship Him with words like

these— *“Your throne eternal ages stood,  
Before seas or stars were made.  
You are the Ever-Living God.  
Were all the nations dead.  
Eternity with all its years,  
Stands present in Your view  
To You there’s nothing old appears  
Great God! There’s nothing new.  
Our lives through various scenes are drawn, And vexed with trifling cares,  
While Your eternal thought moves on  
Your undisturbed affairs.”*

That He lives forever is the result, not only of His essential and necessary Self-Existence, of His independence, and of His unchangeableness, but of the fact that there is no conceivable force that can ever wound, injure, or destroy Him. If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord to be vulnerable, yet where is the bow and where the arrow that could reach Him on His Throne? What javelin shall pierce Jehovah’s buckler? Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage against God, how shall they reach His Throne? They cannot even shake His footstool.

If all the angels of Heaven should rebel against the Great King, and their squadrons should advance in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most High, He has but to will it, and they would wither as autumn leaves, or consume as the fat upon the altar. Reserved in chains of darkness, the opponents of His power would forever become mementos of His wrath. None can touch Him. He is the God that ever lives. Let us who delight in the living God bow down before Him, and humbly worship Him as the God in whom we live and move, and have our being.

In our text we next find Nebuchadnezzar asserting the everlasting dominion of God. He says, “Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation.” The God whom we serve not only exists, but reigns. No other position would become Him but that of unlimited Sovereign over all His creatures. “The most high God, possessor of Heaven and earth has prepared His Throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.” As David said so, we say also, “Yours O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all.” “The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.”

The Lord is naturally the Ruler of all, but who shall pretend to rule over Him? He is not to be judged of man’s finite reason for He does great things which we cannot comprehend. Amazing is the impertinence of man, when the creature dares to sit in judgment on the Creator! His Character is not to be impugned or called into question. Only the boundless arrogance of our pride would so dare to insult the thrice holy God. “Be still, and know that I am God,” is a sufficient reply to such madness. The Lord’s place is on the Throne, and our place is to obey. It is His to govern, ours to serve— His to do as He wills, and ours, without questioning, to make that will our constant delight. Remember, then, that in the universe God is actually reigning.

Never let us conceive of God as being infinitely great, but not exerting His greatness—infinitely able to reign—but as yet a mere spectator of events. It is not so. The Lord reigns even now. Though in one sense we pray, “Your kingdom come,” yet in another we say, “Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.” The Throne of the universe is not vacant, nor its power in abeyance. God does not hold a bare title to kingship—He is actually King. The government is upon His shoulders, the reins of management are in His hands. Even at this hour He speaks to the sons of men, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.”

Before your very eyes He has fulfilled His word. (Luke 1:51, 52.) Events appear to fly at random like the dust in the whirlwind, but it is not so. The rule of the Omnipotent extends over all things at all times. Nothing is left to its own chance happening, but in wisdom all things are governed. Glory be unto the Omnipresent and Invisible Lord of All!

This Divine kingdom appeared very plainly to the once proud monarch of Babylon, to be an everlasting one. The reign of the Ever-Living extends as other kingdoms cannot, “from generation to generation.” The mightiest king inherits power and soon yields his scepter to his successor. The Lord has no beginning of days nor end of years—predecessor or successor are words inapplicable to Him. Other monarchies stand while their power is not subdued, but in an evil hour a greater power may crush them down. There is no greater power than God—there is no other power but that which proceeds from God, for, “God has spoken once; twice have I heard this. That power belongs unto God.” Therefore His monarchy cannot be subdued, and must be everlasting.

Dynasties have passed away, dying out for lack of heirs, but God the Ever-Living asks none to succeed Him and to perpetuate His name. Internal corruptions have often blasted empires which stood aloft like forest trees, defiant of the storm—at the core the tree was rotten, and before long, weakened by decay—it tottered to its fall. But the infinitely Holy God has no injustice, error, partiality, or evil motive in the government of His affairs—everything is arranged with spotless holiness, unimpeachable justice, unvarying fidelity, untarnished truth, amazing mercy, and overflowing love. All the elements of His kingdom are most conservative, because radically right. There is no evil leaven in the council chamber of Omniscience, no corruption on the Judgment Seat of Heaven. Therefore, “His Throne is established in righteousness.” Because His Throne is holy we rejoice that it can never be moved.

Pause here, dear Hearer, and let your soul’s eye behold again this view of things. God has reigned from the first day, God shall reign when days are gone. Everywhere He is the reigning God—reigning when Pharaoh said, “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?” as much as when Miriam took her timbrel, and said, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” He was reigning when Scribe and Pharisee, Jew and Roman, nailed His Only Begotten Son to the Cross, as much as when the angelic cohorts shouted in triumph, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.”

He is reigning amid all the calamities which sweep the globe as much as He shall be in the halcyon days of peace. Never is the Throne vacant, never is the scepter laid aside. Jehovah is always King, and shall be King forever and forever. Oh, happy subjects, who have such a Throne to look to! Oh, blessed children, who have such a King to be your Father! You, as a royal priesthood, may feel your royalties and your priesthoods both secure for this unconquerable King sits securely on His Throne. Your monarch has not yielded up His sword to a superior foe. You have not to search for another leader. In the Person of His dear Son He walks among our golden candlesticks, and holds our stars in His right hand. He keeps Israel, and never slumbers nor sleeps.

But we must hasten on. Nebuchadnezzar, humbled before God, uses, in the third place, extraordinary language with regard to the nothingness of mankind. “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.” This is Nebuchadnezzar, but his words are confirmed by Isaiah, “Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket,” the unnoticed drop which remains in the bucket after it has been emptied into the trough, or the drip which falls from it as it is uplifted from the well—a thing too inconsiderable to be worthy of notice. “And are counted as the small dust of the balance.” As the dust which falls upon scales, but is not sufficient to affect the balance in any degree whatever.

“Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” Whole archipelagos He uplifts as unconsidered trifles. This triple kingdom of ours He reckons not only to be little, but “a very little thing.” The vast island of Australia, the gems of the Pacific, the nations of the Southern Ocean, all these He handles as children lift their toys. “All nations before Him are as nothing. And they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.” So if Nebuchadnezzar goes far, Isaiah, inspired of the Spirit, goes farther. The one calls the nations “nothing,” and the other “less than nothing,” and “vanity.”

You will find the passage in the fortieth of Isaiah, at the fifteenth and seventeenth verses. Now mark the force of each word, “all the inhabitants of the earth,” not some of them only, not the poor ones among them, but the rich, the kings, the wise, the philosophers, the priests—all put together—“are as nothing.” What an assembly would there be if all the nations could be gathered together! An impressive spectacle rises before my vision! One had need possess an eagle’s wing merely to pass over the mighty congregation. Where could a plain be found which could contain them all? Yet all of them, says the text, are, “as nothing.”

Now, observe they are so in themselves, for concerning all of us who are gathered here it is certain that there was a time when we were not—we were then in very deed “nothing.” At this very moment, also, if God wills it, we may cease to be, and so in a step return to nothing. We are nothing in ourselves, we are only what He chooses to allow us to be, and when the time comes and it will be a very short time, so far as this world is concerned, we shall be nothing. All that will remain of us among the sons of men will be some little hillock in a cemetery or a country Churchyard, for we shall have no part in anything which is done under the sun.

Of what account at this day, my Brethren, are all the antediluvian millions? What are the hosts of Nimrod, of Shishak, of Sennacherib, of Cyrus? What reeks the world of the myriads who followed the march of Nebuchadnezzar, who obeyed the beck of Cyrus, who passed away before the eye of Xerxes? Where are the generations which owned the sovereignty of Alexander, or the legions which followed and almost adored the eagles of the Caesars? Alas, even our grandsires, where are they? Our sons forewarn us that we must die. Have they not been born to bury us? So pass the generations like the successive series of forest leaves. And what are they but at their best estate, “altogether vanity?”

The nations are nothing in comparison with God. As you may place as many ciphers as you like together, and they all make nothing, so you may add up as many men, with all their supposed force and wisdom, as you please, and they are all nothing in comparison with God. He is the Unit. He stands for All in All, and comprehends all. And all the rest are but so many valueless ciphers till His Unity makes them of account. Here let me remind you that every man who is spiritually taught of God is made to feel experimentally on his own account his own utter nothingness. When his inner eye, like that of Job, beholds the Lord, he abhors himself, he shrinks into the earth, he feels he cannot contrast or compare himself with the Most High even for a single second.

*“Great God, how infinite are You!*

*What worthless worms are we!”*  
is the verse which naturally leaps to the lip of any man who knows himself and knows his God.

Spiritually, our nothingness is very conspicuous. We were nothing in our election—“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls.” “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” We were nothing in our redemption. We contributed nothing to that price which Jesus paid—“I have trod the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me.” We are nothing in our regeneration—can the spiritually dead help the blessed God to quicken them? “It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing.” “We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus.” We shall, when we get to Heaven, make it part of our adoration to confess that we are less than nothing and vanity, but that God is All in All. Therefore shall we cast our crowns at His feet, and give Him all the praise forever and ever.

“The inhabitants of the earth are as nothing.” It is a wonderful expression, and you see I do not attempt to expound it or any part of the text. I rather repeat words of the same meaning with the text by way of illustration. Before me is a great deep, and who shall fathom it? I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. If there were an ant’s nest somewhere in a farmer’s estate and suppose he had ten thousand acres of land. That ant’s nest would bear some portion, though a very small one, to the ten thousand acres of land. It could not be so strictly said to be as nothing as the whole world can when compared with God.

This round earth bears a very insignificant proportion to the vast creation of God, even to that which is revealed to us by the telescope. And we have reason to believe that all which can be seen with the telescope—if indeed it is a mass of worlds, and all inhabited—is but as a pin’s prick compared with the city of London, to the far-reaching universe. If it is so, and your mind were capable of compassing the entire creation of God, yet

it would be only as a drop of a bucket compared with God Himself who made it all, and could make ten thousand times ten thousand as much, and then be but at the beginning of His power.

This world, then, bears no such proportion to the Lord as an ant’s nest to the estate of ten thousand acres. Now if the farmer wishes to till the soil, it is not at all probable that he will take any cognizance whatever of that ant’s nest in the arrangement of his affairs. And in all probability will overturn and destroy it. This proves the insignificance of the ant and the greatness of man as compared with ants. But as it involves a degree of forgetfulness or overlooking on the farmer’s part, the ants are great enough to be forgotten—but the nations are not great enough even for that. If it were possible for the farmer to arrange without difficulty all his plans so that without disturbing his proceedings, every bird, ant and worm should be cared for in his scheme, how great then would he be compared with the ants!

And this is just the case with the Lord—He so arranges all things that apparently without effort the government of Providence embraces all interests, wrongs none, but yields justice to all. Men are so little in the way of God that He never finds it necessary to perpetrate an injustice even on a single man, and He has never caused one solitary creature to suffer one unnecessary pang. Herein is His greatness, that it comprehends all littleness without a strain—the glory of His wisdom is as astonishing as the majesty of His power, and the splendors of His love and of His Grace are as amazing as the terror of His Sovereignty. He may do what He wills, for none can stop Him. But He never wills to do in any case anything that is unjust, unholy, unmerciful, or in any way inconsistent with the perfection of His matchless Character. Here let us pause, and worship. I at least must do so. For my soul’s eyes ache, as though I had been gazing at the sun.

We turn now to the next sentence, which reveals the Divine power at work sovereignly. “He does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” This is easy to understand in reference to the celestial host, for we know that God’s will is done in Heaven—we devoutly pray that it may yet be done on earth after the same fashion. The angels find it their Heaven to be obedient to the God of Heaven. Under the term, “army of Heaven,” is comprehended fallen angels who were once numbered with that band, but were expelled from Heaven for their rebellion.

Devils unwillingly, but yet of necessity, fulfill the will of God. “Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in Heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” When we read in the text that on earth God’s will is done, we see that it is so in a measure among the righteous whose renewed hearts seek after God’s glory. But the Truth goes further, for that will is also accomplished in the unrighteous, and by those who know Him not. Yes, in those whose will is determined to oppose Him—but in some way unknown to us the will of God is still achieved (Prov. 19:21; Acts 4:27, 28).

I can understand a man taking so many pieces of wood and arranging them just as he pleases, nor can I see any very remarkable skill in so doing. But the miracle of Divine Glory lies in this—that He has made men free agents, has endowed them with a will with which He never interferes except according to the laws of mind. That He leaves them absolutely free to do what they will, and they will universally of themselves to do contrary to His will. And yet, such is the magnificent strategy of Heaven, such is the marvelous force of the Divine mind, that despite everything, the will of God is done!

Some have supposed that when we believe with David, in Psalm 65, that God has done whatever He has pleased, we deny free agency, and of necessity moral responsibility also. No, but we declare that those who would do so are tinctured with the old captious spirit of him who said, “Why does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?” And our only answer is that of Paul, “No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?” Can you understand it, for I cannot—how man is a free agent, a responsible agent, so that his sin is his own willful sin and lies with him and never with God—and yet at the same time God’s purposes are fulfilled, and His will is done even by demons and corrupt men?

I cannot comprehend it, but without hesitation I believe it, and rejoice to do so. I never hope to comprehend it. I worship a God I never expect to comprehend. If I could grasp Him in the hollow of my hand, I could not call Him my God. And if I could understand His dealings so that I could read them as a child reads his spelling book, I could not worship Him. But because He is so infinitely great I find Truth here, Truth there, Truth multiform. And if I cannot compress it into one system-I know it is all clear to Him—and I am content that He should know what I know not.

It is mine today to adore and obey—by-and-by when He sees fit I shall know more and adore better. It is my firm belief that everything in Heaven, and earth, and Hell will be seen to be, in the long run, parts of the Divine Plan. Yet never is God the Author or the accomplice of sin— never is He otherwise than the Hater of sin and the Avenger of unrighteousness. Sin rests with man, wholly with man, and yet by some strange overruling force, Godlike and mysterious, like the existence of God, His supreme will is accomplished. Observe how the two truths combine in practice, and are stated in the same verse in reference to our Lord’s crucifixion, in Acts 2:23—“Him, being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Now, to deny this Truth because we cannot understand it, were to shut ourselves out of a great deal of important knowledge. Brethren, if God does not rule everywhere, then something rules where He does not, and so He is not Omnipresent supreme. If God does not have His will, someone else does, and so far that someone is a rival to God. I never deny the free agency of man, or diminish his responsibility, but I dare never invest the free will of man with Omnipotence, for this were to make man into a sort of God, an idolatry to be loathed.

Moreover, admit chance anywhere, and you have admitted chance everywhere, for all events are related and act on one another. One cog of the wheel of Providence disarranged or left to Satan, or man’s absolute freedom apart from God, would spoil the whole machinery. I dare not believe even sin itself to be exempt from the control of Providence, or from the overruling dominion of the Judge of all the earth. Without Providence we

were unhappy beings. Without the universality of the Divine power, Providence would be imperfect, and in some points we might be left unprotected and exposed to those evils which are, by this theory, supposed to be beyond Divine control. Happy are we that it is true, “the Lord does as He wills in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.”

Let us now consider the fifth part of the text—“None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What do you?” I gather from this that God’s fiat is irresistible and unimpeachable. We are told by some annotators that the original has in it an allusion to a blow given to a child’s hand to make him cease from some forbidden action. None can treat the Lord in that manner. None can hinder Him, or cause Him to pause. He has might to do what He wills. So also says Isaiah—“Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What make you? 0r your work, He has no hands?”

Man is powerless, then, to resist the fiat of God. Usually he does not know God’s design, although he blunderingly thinks he does—often in opposing that apparent design he fulfils the secret design of God against his will. If man did know God’s design, and should set himself with all his might against it, yet as the chaff cannot resist the wind, as it is not possible for the wax to resist the fire, so neither can man effectually resist the absolute will and Sovereign good pleasure of the Most High. Only here is our comfort—it is right that God should have this might, because He always uses His might with strictest rectitude. God cannot will to do anything unjust, ungenerous, unkind, ungod-like.

No laws bind Him as they bind us, but He is a Law to Himself. There is, “You shall,” and, “You shall not,” for me, for you—but who shall put, “You shall,” to God, or who shall say, “You shall not”? Who shall attempt to be legislator for the King of kings? God is Love. God is Holiness. God is the Law. God is Love, and doing as He wills, He wills to love. God is Holy, and doing as He wills, He wills holiness, He wills Justice, He wills Truth. And though there were raised a thousand questions as to how is this just? How is that loving? How is that wise? The one sufficient answer is—

*“God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain.”*

O sons of men, it is not for me to solve the enigmas of the Infinite, he shall explain Himself. I am not so impertinent as to be His apologist, He shall clear Himself. I am not called to vindicate His Character. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” What folly to hold up a candle to show the brightness of the sun! How much more foolish to attempt to defend the thrice holy Jehovah! Let Him speak for Himself if He will deign to contend with you. If you do but hear His thunders, how you tremble! When His lightning sets the heavens on fire, how amazed you are! Stand forth, then, and question Him if you dare.

If you are at sea in a storm, when every timber of your vessel creaks, when the mast is broken, when the mariners stagger like drunken men, when overhead is the horrible tempest, and the thundering voice of God in the tempest, and all around you the howling winds, then cease your caviling, and cry unto Him in your trouble. Act, then, this day as you would do in such a case, for you are equally in His hands. (Psalm 99:1, 5; 100:3, 4). Thus have I tried to set forth the doctrine of the text.

II. Now, very briefly, consider its PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. I think the first lesson is how wise to be at one with Him! As I bowed before the majesty of this text in my study, I felt within my soul, “Oh, how I long to be perfectly at one with this infinitely mighty, glorious and holy God. How can I dare to be His enemy?” I felt then if I had not yielded before, I must yield now, subdued before Him. I would that any of you who are not doing His will would give up your hopeless rebellion. He invites you to come. He might have commanded you to depart. In His infinite Sovereignty He has appointed Christ Jesus to be the Savior of men. Come and accept that Savior by faith.

How encouraging this is to those who are at one with God! If He is on our side, who shall be against us? “The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” We ought to be of the same mind as that believing woman who, during an earthquake, was observed to be very happy. Everybody else was afraid—houses were falling, towers were rocking, but she smiled. And when they asked her why, she replied, “I am so glad to find that my God can shake the world. I believed He could, and now I see that He can.”

Be glad that you have One to trust in to whom nothing is impossible, who can and will achieve His purposes. My heart feels that she would give Him the power if He had it not, and if it were all mine. I would leave all power in His hands even if I could remove it. “Great God, reign You supremely, for there is none like unto You.” “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.” How joyful this thought ought to be to all holy workers! You and I have enlisted on the side of God and of His Christ, and, though the powers against us seem very strong, yet the invincible King will surely put them to rout before long.

Romanism, idolatry, infidelity—these all appear mighty things. And so seem those pots fresh from the potter—a child thinks them to be stone. But when the Lord Jesus smites them with the rod of iron, see how the potsherds fly! This shall He do before long. He will lift the might of His terrible arm and bring down His iron rod! Then shall it be seen that the Truth of God as it is in Jesus must and shall prevail.

How this should help you that suffer! If God does it all, and nothing happens apart from God, even the wickedness and cruelty of man being still overruled by Him, you readily may submit. How graciously and with what good face can you kiss the hand which smites you! The husband is gone to Heaven, God took him. The property has melted, God has permitted it. You were robbed, you say—well, think not so much of the second cause, look to the great first cause. You strike a dog, he bites the stick. If he were wise, he would look at you who use it.

Do not look at the second cause of the afflictions, look to the great first cause. It is your God who is in it all, your Father God, the Infinitely good. Which would you desire to have done on earth, your will or God’s will? If you are wise, you say, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” Then accept the ways of Providence. Since God appoints them, accept them with grateful praise. Herein is true sacrifice to God when we can say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” We have received good at His hands, and we have blessed Him—heathen men and publicans might have done that.

But if we receive evil and still bless Him, this is Divine Grace, this is the work of His Holy Spirit!

If we can bow before His crushing strokes, and feel that if the crushing of us by the weight of His hand will bring Him honor, we are content. This is true faith. Give us Grace enough, O Lord, never to fail in our loyalty, but to be Your faithful servants even to sufferings’ bitterest end. Oh, to have the mind thus subjected to God! Some kick at the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, but I fear it is because they have a rebellious, unhumbled spirit. Those who feel obedient to God cannot have God cried up too much, cannot yield Him too absolute an authority. Only a rebellious child in a house wishes the father to be tied by rules and regulations. No, my Father must do right, let Him do what He wills!

III. What is THE RIGHT SPIRIT in which to contemplate all this? The first is humble adoration. We do not worship enough, my Brethren. Even in our public gatherings we do not have enough worship. O worship the King! Bow your heads now—bow your spirits, rather, and adore Him that lives forever and ever. Your thoughts, your emotions—these are better than bullocks and he-goats to be offered on the altar—God will accept them. Worship Him with lowliest reverence, for you are nothing, and He is All in All. Next let the spirit of your hearts be that of unquestioning acquiescence. He wills it! I will do it or I will bear it. God help you to live in perfect resignation.

Next to that, exercise the spirit of reverent love. Do I tremble before this God? Then I must seek more Grace that I may love Him as He is. Not love Him when my thoughts have diminished Him of His splendor, and robbed Him of His Glory, but love Him even as an absolute Sovereign, for I see that sovereignty exercised through Jesus Christ, my Shield and His Anointed. Let me love my God and King, and be a courtier, happy to be admitted near His Throne, to behold the light of the Infinite Majesty.

Lastly, let our spirit be that of profound delight. I believe there is no doctrine to the advanced Christian which contains such a deep sea of delight as this. The Lord reigns! The Lord is King forever and ever! Why, then all is well! When you get away from God, you get away from peace. When the soul dives into Him, and feels that all is in Him, then she feels a calm delight, a peace like a river, a joy unspeakable. Strive after that delight this morning, my Beloved, and then go and express it in your songs of praise.

If you are alone this afternoon, any of you, and not engaged in service, be sure to bless and magnify your God. Lift up your hearts in His praise, for “whoso offers praise glorifies God.” May the Lord bring us all, through faith in Jesus Christ, into harmony with this ever-blessed and ever-living God, and unto Him be praise and glory forever and forever. Amen.

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THE SCALES OF JUDGMENT  
NO. 257

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 12, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“TEKEL; You are weighed in the balances  
and are found wanting.”  
Daniel 5:27.**

There is a weighing time for kings and emperors and all the monarchs of earth, albeit some of them have exalted themselves to a position in which they appear to be irresponsible to man. Though they escape the scales on earth, they must surely be tried at the bar of God. For nations there is a weighing time. National sins demand national punishments. The whole history of God’s dealings with mankind proves that though a nation may go on in wickedness, it may multiply its oppressions, it may abound in bloodshed, tyranny and war—but an hour of retribution draws near—when it shall have filled up its measure of iniquity. Then shall the angel of vengeance execute its doom. There cannot be an eternal damnation for nations as nations. The destruction of men at last will be that of individuals and at the bar of God each man must be tried for himself. The punishment, therefore, of nations, is national. The guilt they incur must receive its awful recompense in this present time state.

It was so with the great nation of the Chaldeans. They had been guilty of blood. The monuments which still remain and which we have lately explored, prove them to have been a cruel and ferocious race. A people of a strange language they were and stranger than their language were their deeds. God allowed that nation for a certain period to grow and thrive, till it became God’s hammer, breaking in pieces many nations. It was the axe of the Almighty—His battle axe and His weapon of war. By it He smote the loins of kings, yes, and slew mighty kings. But its time came at last. She sat alone as a queen and said, “I shall see no sorrow,” nevertheless, the Lord brought her low and made her grind in the dust of captivity and gave her riches to the spoiler and her pomp to the destroyer.

Even so must it be with every nation of the earth that is guilty of oppression. Humbling itself before God, when His wrath is kindled but a little, it may for awhile arrest its fate. But if it still continues in its bold unrighteousness, it shall certainly reap the harvest of its own sowing. So likewise shall it be with the nations that now abide on the face of the earth. There is no God in Heaven if the iniquity of slavery goes unpunished. There is no God existing in Heaven above if the cry of the Negro does not bring down a red hail of blood upon the nation that still holds the black man in slavery. Nor is there a God anywhere if the nations of Europe that still oppress each other and are oppressed by tyrants do not find out to their dismay that He executes vengeance. The Lord God is the

avenger of everyone that is oppressed and the executor of everyone that oppresses.

I see, this very moment, glancing at the page of the world’s present history, a marvelous proof that God will take vengeance. Piedmont, the land which is at this time soaked with blood, is only at this hour suffering the vengeance that has long been hanging over it. The snows of its mountains were once red with the blood of martyrs. It is not yet forgotten how there the children of God were hunted like partridges on the mountains. And so has God directed it—that the nations that performed that frightful act upon His children—shall there meet, rend and devour each other in the slaughter. And both sides shall be almost equal, so nothing shall be seen but that God will punish those who lift their hands against His anointed.

There has never been a deed of persecution—there has never been a drop of martyr’s blood shed yet, but shall be avenged and every land guilty of it shall yet drink the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. And especially certain is there gathering an awful storm over the head of the empire of Rome—that spiritual despotism of the firstborn of Hell. All the clouds of God’s vengeance are gathering into one—the firmament is big with thunder, God’s right arm is lifted up even now and before long the nations of the earth shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. They that have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication shall soon also have to drink with her of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And they shall reel to and fro, their loins shall be loose, their knees shall smite together when God fulfils the old handwriting on the rock of Patmos.

Our duty at this time is to take heed to ourselves as a nation that we purge ourselves of our great sins. Although God has given so much light and kindly favored us with the dew of His Spirit, yet England is a hoary sinner. Favorably with mercy does God regard her then let each Christian try to shake off the sins of his nation from his own skirt and let each one to the utmost of his ability labor and strive to purify this land of blood and oppression and of everything evil that still clings to her. So may God preserve this land. And may its monarchy endure till He shall come, before whom both kings and princes shall lose their power right cheerfully even as the stars fade when the King of light—the Son—lifts up His golden head.

With this brief preface, I will leave nations and kings all to themselves and consider the text principally as it has relation to each one of us. And may God grant that when we go out of this hall most of us may be able to say, “I thank God I have a good hope that when weighed in the scales at last I shall not be found wanting.” Or, if that is too much to expect, may I yet trust some will go away convicted of sin, crying in their own spirits, “I am wanting now, but if God in His mercy meets with me, I shall not be wanting long.”

I shall notice, first, that there is certain preliminary weighing which God would have us put ourselves to in this world and which indeed He has set up as kind of tests whereby we may be able to discover what shall be the result of the last decisive weighing. After I have mentioned these, I shall then come to speak of the last tremendous weighing of the Judgment Day.

I. LET US JUDGE OURSELVES THAT WE MAY NOT BE JUDGED. It is for us now to put ourselves through the various tests by which we may be able to discover whether we are, at this present time, short weight or not.

The first test I would suggest is that of human opinion. Now understand me. I believe that the opinion of man is utterly valueless when that opinion is based upon false premises and, therefore, draws wrong conclusions. I would not trust the world to judge God’s servants and it is a mercy to know that the world shall not have the judging of the Church, but rather, the saints shall judge the world. There is a sense in which I would say with the Apostle, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment—yes, I judge not myself.” Human opinion is not to be put in competition with Divine Revelation. But I speak now of judging ourselves and I do not think it safe, when weighing our own character, to prefer our own and exclude our neighbor’s judgment.

The esteem or contempt of honest men, which is instinctively shown without reference to party or prejudice, is not by any means to be despised. When a man knows that he is right he may snap his fingers in the face of all men but when a man’s conscience tells him that he is wrong—if at the judgment bar of men he is found guilty, he must not despise it, he must rather look on the judgment of men as being the first intimation of what shall be the judgment of God. Are you, my Hearer, at this time in the estimation of all your fellow creatures condemned as one who should be avoided? Do you clearly perceive that the righteous shun you because your example would contaminate them? Have you discovered that your character is not held to be estimable among honest and respectable men?

Let me assure you that you have good reason to be afraid, for if you cannot stand the trial of an honest fellow creature—if the laws of your country condemn you—if the very laws of society exclude you—if the imperfect judgments of earth pronounce you too vile for its association, how fearful must be your condemnation when you are put into the far more rigid scale of God’s justice! And how terrible must be your fate when the perfect community of the first-born in Heaven shall rise as one man and demand that you shall never behold their society! When a man is so bad that his fellow creatures themselves, imperfect though they be, are able to see in him not the mere seeds, but the very flower, the full bloom of iniquity, he should tremble. If you cannot pass that test, if human opinion condemns—if your own conscience declares that opinion to be just, you have good need to tremble, indeed, for you are put into the balances and are found wanting.

I have thought it right to mention this balance. There may be some present to whom it may he pertinent, but at the same time, there are far better tests for men, tests which are not so easily to be misunderstood. And I would go through some of these. One of the scales into which I would have every man put himself, at least once in his life—I say at least once, because, if not, Heaven is to him a place the gates of which are shut forever—I would have every man put himself into the scales of the Divine Law. There stands the Law of God. This Law is a balance which will turn, even were there but a grain of sand in it. It is true to a hair. It moves upon the diamond of God’s eternal immutable Truth. I put but one weight into the scale. It is this—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength,” and I invite any man who thinks himself to be of the right stamp and flatters himself that he has no need of mercy—no need of washing in the blood of Jesus Christ—no need of any atonement—I invite him to put himself into the scales and see whether he is full weight, when there is but so much as this one commandment in the other scale.

Oh, my Friends, if we did but try ourselves by the very first commandment of the Law, we must acknowledge that we are guilty. But when we drop in weight after weight, till the whole sacred ten are there, there is not a man under the scope of Heaven who has one grain of wit left, but must confess that he is short of the mark—that he falls below the standard which the Law of God requires. Mrs. Too-Good has often declared that she herself has done all her duty and perhaps a little more. That she has been even more kind to the poor than there was any occasion for. That she has gone to Church more frequently than even her religion requires. That she has been more attentive to the sacraments then the best of her neighbors and if she does not enter Heaven she does not know who will. “If I have not a portion among the saints, who can possibly hope to see God’s face in light?”

No, Madam, but I am sorry for you. You are light as a feather when you go into the scales. In these wooden balances of your own ceremonies you may, perhaps, be found right enough, but in those eternal scales, with those tremendous weights—the Ten Commandments of the Law—the declaration is suspended over your poor, foolish head. “You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting,”

There may, perhaps, in congregations like this, be some extremely respectable body who has from his youth up, as he imagines, kept God’s Law. His country, family, or associates can bring no charge against him and so he wraps himself up and considers that really he is the man and that when he appears at the gates of Heaven, he will be received as a rightful owner and proprietor of the reward of the righteous. Ah, my Friend, if you would take the trouble just to sit down and weigh yourself in the scales of the Law. If you would take but one command, the one in which you think yourself least guilty, the one that you imagine you have kept best and really look at its intent and spirit and view it in all its length and breadth in the Truth of God I know you would step out of the scale and say, “Alas, when I hoped to have gone down with a sound of congratulation, I find myself hurled up, light as the dust of the balance, while the tremendous Law of God comes sounding down and shakes the house.” Let each man do this and everyone of us must retire from this place saying, “I am weighed in the balances and I am found wanting.”

And now the true Believer comes forward and he claims to be weighed in another balance, for says he, according to this balance, if I am what I profess to be, I am not found wanting, for I can bring with me the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. And that is full weight, even though the Ten Commandments of the Law are weighed against it. I bring with me the full atonement, the perfect satisfaction of Jesus’ blood and the perfect righteousness of a Divine Being, the spotless righteousness of Jesus the Son of God. I can be weighed against the Law and yet sit securely, knowing that now and forever, I am equal to the Law. It has nothing against me since Christ is mine. Its terrors have no power to frighten me and as for its demands they can exact nothing of me for they are fulfilled to the utmost in Christ. Well, I propose now to take professors and put them into the scales and try them. Let each one of us put ourselves into the scale of conscience. Many make a profession of religion in this age. It is the time of shams. There were never so many liars in the world since the days of Adam, as there are now. The Father of Lies has been more prolific of children at this than at any other period. There is such an abundance of newspapers and of talkers and of readers—and consequently flying reports. Wrong news and evil tales are far more numerous than ever. So, too, there is a great deal of vain show with religion. I sometimes fear we have not a grain more religion in England now than we had in the time of the Puritans. Then, though the stream in which it ran was narrow—it did run very deep, indeed.

Now, the banks have been burst. A great extent of country is covered with religious profession. But I tremble lest we should find at last that the flood was not deep enough to float our souls to Heaven. Will each one now in this congregation put himself into the scale of conscience, sit down and ask, “Is my profession true? Do I feel that before God I am an heir of the promises? When I sit at my Savior’s table, have I any right to be a guest? Can I truly say that when I profess to be converted, I only profess what I have actually proved? When I talk experimentally about the things of the kingdom of God, is that experience a borrowed tale, or have I felt what I say in my own breast? When I stand up to preach, do I preach that which I have really tasted and handled, or do I only repeat that which I have learned to utter with the lips, though it has never been fused in the crucible of my own heart?”

Conscience is not very readily cheated. There are some men whose consciences are not a safe balance. They have by degrees become so hardened in sin that conscience refuses to work. But still I will hope that most of us may abide by the test of our own conscience, if we let it freely work. Dear friends, I would that you would often retire to your chambers alone— shut the door and shut out all the world and then sit and review your past life. Scan carefully your present character and your present position. And do, I beseech you, try to get an honest answer from your own conscience. Bring up everything that you can think of that might lead you to doubt. You need be under no difficulty here. For are there not enough sins committed by us every day to warrant our suspicions that we are not God’s

children?  
Well, let all these black accusers for death, let them all have their say.  
Do not cloak your sins. Head your diary through, let all your iniquities  
come up before you—(this is the pith of confession)—and then ask conscience whether you can truly say, “I have repented of all these. God is my  
witness, I hate these things with a perfect hatred. God also hears my witness that my trust is fixed alone in Him who is the Savior of sinners for  
salvation and justification. If I am not awfully deceived, I am a partaker of  
Divine Grace, having been regenerated and begotten again unto a lively  
hope.” Oh that conscience may help each of us to say, “I am not a mere  
painted image of life, but I trust I have the life of Jesus made manifest in  
my body. My profession is not the pompous pageantry with which dead  
souls are carried respectably to perdition. It is the joy, the hope, the confidence of one who is being borne along in the chariot of mercy to his Father’s home above.”  
Ah, how many people are really afraid to look their religion in the face!  
They know it to be so bad they dare not examine it. They are like bankrupts that keep no books. They would be very glad for a fire to consume  
their books, if they ever kept any, for they know the balance is all on the  
wrong side. They are losing, breaking up and they would not wish to keep  
an account of their losses or villainies. A man who is afraid to examine  
himself may rest assured that his ship is rotten and that it will not be  
long before it founders in the sea, to his eternal shipwreck. Call up conscience—put yourself in the scale and God help you, that the verdict may  
not be against you—that it may not be said of you, “You are weighed in  
the balances and are found wanting.”  
I would have every man also weigh himself in the scales of God’s  
Word—not merely in that part of it which we call legal and which has respect to us in our fallen state. But let us weigh ourselves in the scale of  
the Gospel. You will find it sometimes a holy exercise, to read some Psalm  
of David, when his soul was most full of grace. And if you were to put  
questions as you read each verse, saying to yourself, “Can I say this? Have  
I felt as David felt? Have my bones ever been broken with sin as his were  
when he penned his penitential Psalms? Has my soul ever been full of  
true confidence in the hour of difficulty, as his was when he sang of God’s  
mercies in the cave of Adullam, or the holds of Engedi? Can I take the cup  
of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord? Can I pay my vows now  
unto the Lord, in the courts of His house, in the presence of all His people?”  
I am afraid that the book of Psalms itself would be enough to convince  
some of you that your religion is but superficial, that it is but a vain show  
and not a vital reality. God help you often to try yourselves in that scale.  
Then read over the life of Christ and as you read, ask yourselves whether  
you are conformed to Him, such as He describes a true disciple. Endeavor  
to see whether you have any of the meekness, any of the humility, any of  
the lovely spirit which He constantly inculcated and displayed. Try yourselves by the Sermon on the Mount—you will find it a good scale in which  
to weigh your spirits. Take, then, the Epistles and see whether you can go  
with the Apostle in what he said of his experience. Have you ever cried out  
like he—“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body  
of this death?” Have you ever felt like he, “That this is a faithful saying  
and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to  
save sinners”?”  
Have you ever known his self-abasement? Could you say that you  
seemed to yourself the chief of sinners and always accounted yourself less  
than the least of all saints? And have you known anything of his devotion?  
Could you join with him and say, “For me to live is Christ and to die is  
gain”? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, the best of us—if we put the Bible into  
the scales for the proof of our state, if we read God’s Word as a test of our  
spiritual condition—the very best of us has cause to tremble! Before Almighty God, on our bended knees, with our Bible before us, we have good  
reason to stop many a time and say, “Lord, I feel I have never yet been  
here, oh, bring me here! Give me true penitence, such as this I read of.  
Give me real faith, oh, let me not have a counterfeit religion! Give me that  
which is the current coin of the realm of Heaven—Your own sterling  
Grace, which shall pass in the great day, when the gates of Heaven shall  
be opened and alas, the gates of Hell wide open, too.” Try yourselves by  
God’s Word and I fear there are some who will have to rise from it and  
say, “I am weighed in the balances and found wanting.”  
Yet again, God has been pleased to set another means of trial before us.  
When God puts us into the scales I am about to mention, namely, the  
scales of Providence it behooves us very carefully to watch ourselves and  
see whether or not we are found wanting. Some men are tried in the  
scales of adversity. Some of you, my dear Friends, may have come here  
very sorrowful. Your business fails, your earthly prospects are growing  
dark. It is midnight with you in this world. You have sickness in the  
house. The wife of your bosom languishes before your weeping eyes. Your  
children perhaps, by their ingratitude, have wounded your spirits. But  
you are a professor of religion, you know that God is dealing with you  
now. He is testing and trying you. He knows you and He would have you  
know that a summer-time religion is not sufficient. He would have you see  
whether your faith can stand the test of trial and trouble.  
Remember Job. What a scale was that in which he was put! What  
weights of affliction were those cast in one after another, very mountains  
of sore trouble. And yet he could bear them all, by His grace, and he came  
out of the scales proof against all the weight that even Satanic strength  
could hurl into the scale. And is it so with you? Can you now say—“The  
Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord”?  
Can you submit to His will without murmuring? Or if you cannot master  
such a phase of religion as this, are you able still to feel that you cannot  
complain against God? Do you still say, “Though He slay me, yet will I  
trust in Him”? Oh, my Friends, remember that if your religion will not  
stand the day of adversity, if it affords you no comfort in the time of storms, you would be better in that case without it than with it. For with it you are deceived, but without it you might discover your true condition and seek the Lord as a penitent sinner. If you are now broken in pieces by a little adversity, what will become of you in the day when all the tempests  
of God shall be let loose on your soul?  
If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, what will  
you do in the swellings of Jordan? If you cannot endure the open grave,  
how can you endure the trump of the archangel and the terrific thunders  
of the Last Great Day? If your burning house is too much for you, what  
will you do in a burning world? If thunder and lightning alarm you, what  
will you do when the world is in a blaze and when all the thunders of God  
leave their hiding places and rush screaming through the world? If mere  
trials distress you and grieve you, oh, what will you do when all the hurricanes of Divine vengeance shall sweep across the earth and shake its very  
pillars till they reel and reel again? Yes, friends, I would have you, as often  
as you are tried and troubled, see how you bear it—whether your faith  
then stands and whether you could see God’s right hand, even when it is  
wrapped in clouds. Whether you can discover the silver lining to the black  
clouds of tribulation. God help you to come out of the scales, for many are  
weighed in them and have been found wanting.  
Another set of scales there is, too, of an opposite color. Those I have described are painted black. These are of golden hue. They are the scales of  
prosperity. Many a man has endured the chills of poverty who could not  
endure sunny weather. Some men’s religion is very much like the palace  
of the queen of Russia which had been built out of solid slabs of ice. It  
could stand the frost—the roughest breeze could not destroy it. The sharp  
touch of winter could not devour it. They but strengthened and made it  
more lasting. But summer melted it all away and where once were the  
halls of revelry, nothing remained but the black rolling river. How many  
have been destroyed by prosperity? The fumes of popularity have turned  
the brains of many a man. The adulation of multitudes has laid thousands low. Popular applause has its foot in the sand, even when it has its  
head among the stars.  
Many have I known who in a cottage seemed to fear God, but in a mansion have forgotten Him. When their daily bread was earned with the  
sweat of their brow, then it was they served the Lord and went up to His  
house with gladness. But their seeming religion all departed when their  
flocks and herds increased and their gold and silver was multiplied. It is  
no easy thing to stand the trial of prosperity. You know the old fable—I  
will just put it in a Christian light. When the winds of affliction blow on a  
Christian’s head, he just pulls around him the cloak of heavenly consolation and girds his religion about him all the tighter for the fury of the  
storm. But when the sun of prosperity shines on him, the traveler grows  
warm and full of delight and pleasure—he ungirds his cloak and lays it  
aside—so that what the storms of affliction never could accomplish, the  
soft hand and the witchery of prosperity has been able to perform. It has loosed the loins of many a mighty man. It has been the Delilah  
that has shorn the locks and taken away the strength of many a Samson.  
This rock has witnessed the most fatal wrecks—  
*“More the treacherous calm I dread,  
Than tempests rolling over head.”*  
But shall we be able to say, after passing through prosperity, “this is  
not my rest, this is not my God. Let Him give me what He may, I will  
thank Him for it, yet will I rejoice in the Giver rather than the gift. I will  
say unto the Lord, You only are my rest.” It is well if you can come out of  
these scales enabled honestly to hope that you are not found wanting. There are again the scales of temptation. Many and many a man seems  
for a time to run well. But it is temptation that tries the Christian. In your  
business you are now honest and upright, but suppose a speculation  
crosses your path which involve but a very slight departure from the high  
standard of Christianity and, indeed, would not involve any departure  
from the low standard which your fellow tradesmen follow? Do you think  
you would be able to say, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin  
against God?” Could you say, “Should such a man as I do this? Shall I  
hasten to be rich, for if I do I shall not be innocent?” How has it been with  
you? You have had your trials. There has been an opportunity of making a  
little—have you taken it? Has God enabled you to endure when tempted,  
whether to unlawful gain, or to lustful pleasure, or to pride and vanity?  
Have you been enabled to stand against all these and to say, “Get you behind me Satan for you savor not the things which be of God, but those  
which be of man and of sin”?  
How have you stood the test of temptation? If you have never been  
tempted you know nothing about this. How can we tell the worthiness of  
the ship till she has been at sea in the storm? You cannot know

what you  
are till you have been through the practical test of everyday life. How,  
then, has it been with you? Have you been weighed in the balance and  
have you been enabled to say, “I know through grace I have been kept in  
the hour of temptation and with the temptation the Lord has always sent  
a way of escape. And here I am glorying in His Grace. I cannot rest in myself, but still I can say, ‘I am truly His.’ The work within me is not of man,  
neither by man—it is the work of the Spirit. I have found succor and support when my heart and my flesh have failed me”?  
It is probable, my Hearers, that most of you are professors of religion.  
Let me ask you again, very earnestly, to test and try yourselves—whether  
your religion is real or not. If there are many false prophets in the world  
and those prophets have followers, must there not be many false men who  
are fatally deceived? Do not suppose, I beseech you, because you are a  
deacon, or have been baptized, or are a member of the Church, or are professors, you are therefore safe. The bleaching bones of the skeletons of  
self-deceived ones should warn you. On the rock of presumption thousands have been split that once sailed merrily enough. Take care, O Mariner! Though your boat may be gaily trimmed and may be brightly painted,  
yet it is none the surer after all. Take heed, lest the rocks be seen beneath the keel, lest they pierce you through and lest the waters of destruction overwhelm you. Oh, do not, I entreat you, say, “Why make this stir? I dare say I shall be all right at last.” Do not let your eternal state be a matter of suspicion or doubt. Decide now, I beseech you, decide now in your conscience whether you are Christ’s or not. Of all the most miserable men in the world and the most hopeless, I think those are most to be pitied who are in  
different and careless about religion.  
There are some men whose feelings never run deeper than their skin.  
They either have no heart, or else it is so set round with fatness that you can  
never touch them. I like to see a man either desponding or rejoicing—  
anxious about his eternal state, or else confident about it. But you who  
never will question yourselves—you are just like the bullock going to the  
slaughter, or like the sheep that will enter the very slaughter-house and lick  
the knife that is about to take its blood. I wish I could speak this morning  
more earnestly. Oh, if some sparks from the Divine fire would now light up  
my soul, then, by His grace, I could speak to you like some of the Prophets of  
old—when they stood in the midst of a professing generation—to warn them.  
Oh that the very voice of God would speak to each heart this morning! While  
God is thundering on high may He thunder below in your souls! Be warned,  
my Hearers, against self deception. Be true to yourselves. If God is God,  
serve Him and do it truly. If the devil is God, serve him and serve him honestly and serve him faithfully. But do not pretend to be serving God while  
you are really indifferent and careless about it.  
II. I must now close by endeavoring to speak of THE LAST GREAT BALANCE. And here would I speak very solemnly and may the Spirit of God be  
with us. Time shall soon be over. Eternity must soon begin. Death is hurrying onward. The pale horse at his utmost speed is coming to every inhabitant  
of this earth. The arrow of death is fitted to the string and soon it shall be  
sent home. Man’s heart is the target. Then, after death, comes the judgment.  
The dread assize shall soon commence. The trump of the archangel shall  
awake the sleeping myriads and, standing on their feet, they shall confront  
the God against whom they have sinned. Methinks I see the scales hanging  
in Heaven—so massive that none but the hand of Deity can uphold them. Let  
me cast my eye upward and think of that hour when I must myself enter  
those scales and be weighed once and for all.  
Come, let me speak for each man present. Those scales yonder are exact. I  
may deceive my fellows here, but deceive God I cannot. I may be weighed in  
the balances of earth which shall give but a partial verdict and so commit  
myself to a false idea that I am what I am not—that I am hopeful when I am  
hopeless. But those scales are true. There are no means, whatever, of flattering them into a false declaration. They will cry aloud and spare not. When I  
get there, the voice of flattery shall be changed into the voice of honesty.  
Here I may go daily crying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” But there  
the naked Truth of God shall startle me and not a single word of consolation  
shall be given me that is not true.  
Let me, therefore, ponder the fact that those scales are exactly true and  
cannot be deceived. Let me remember, also, that whether I will or not, into  
those scales I must go. God will not take me on my profession. I may bring my witnesses with me—I may bring my minister and the deacons of the Church to give me a character, which might be thought all-sufficient among men, but God will tolerate no subterfuge. Into the scales He will put me do, what I may—whatever the opinion of others may be of me and whatever my own profession. And let me remember, too, that I must be altogether weighed in the scales. I cannot hope that God will weigh my head and pass over my heart—that because I have correct notions of doctrine, therefore He will forget that my heart is impure, or my hands guilty of iniquity. My all must be  
cast into the scales.  
Come, let me stretch my imagination and picture myself about to be put  
into those scales. Shall I be able to walk boldly up and enter them, knowing  
whom I have believed and being persuaded that the blood of Christ and His  
perfect righteousness shall bear me harmless through it all? Or shall I be  
dragged with terror and dismay? When the angel comes and says, “You must  
enter.” Shall I bend my knee and cry, “Oh, it is all right,” or shall I seek to  
escape? Now, thrust into the scale, do I see myself waiting for one solemn  
moment? My feet have touched the bottom of the scales and there stand  
those everlasting weights and now which way are they turned? Which way  
shall it be? Do I descend in the scale with joy and delight, being found  
through Jesus’ righteousness to be full weight and so accepted? Or must I  
rise, light, frivolous, unsound in all my fancied hopes—and kick the beam?  
Oh, shall it be, that I must go where the rough hand of vengeance shall seize  
and drag me downward, into fell despair?  
Can you picture the moments of suspense? I can see a poor man standing  
on the drop with the rope round his neck and oh, what an instant of apprehension must that be! What thoughts of horror must float through his soul!  
How must a world of misery be compressed into a second? But O, my Hearers, there is a far more terrible moment still for you that are Godless, Christless, careless—that have made a profession of religion and yet have it not in  
your hearts. I see you in the scales, but what shall we say? The wailings of  
Hell seem not sufficient to express your misery. In the scales without Christ!  
Not long before you shall be in the jaws of Hell, without pity and without  
compassion. O, my dear Hearers, if you could hope to get to Heaven without  
being weighed—if God would believe what you say without testing you—I  
would not dare admit asking you this morning to ascertain the state of your  
own hearts. But if God will try you, try yourselves. If He will judge you, judge  
your own hearts.  
Don’t say that because you profess to be religious therefore you are  
right—that because others imagine you to be safe that therefore you are.  
Weigh yourselves—put your hearts into the balance. Do not be deceived. Pull  
the bandage from your eyes, that your blindness may be removed and that  
you may pass a just opinion upon yourselves as to what you are. I would  
have you not only see yourselves as others see you, but I would have you see  
yourselves as God sees you. For that, after all, is your real state. His eye is  
not to be mistaken. He is the God of Truth and just and right He is. How  
fearful a thing will it be, if any of us who are members of Christ’s Church  
shall be cast into Hell at last! The higher we ascend, the greater will be our fall—like Icarius in the old parable who flew aloft with wax wings—till the  
sun did melt them and he fell.  
And some of you are flying like that—you are flying up with wax wings.  
What if the terrible heat of the Judgment Day should melt them! I sometimes  
try to picture how terrible the reverse to be if found to be rejected at last. Let  
what I shall say for myself suit us all. No, and must it be, if I live in this  
world and think I am a Christian and am not—must it be that I must go from  
the songs of the sanctuary to the curses of the synagogue of Satan? Must I  
go from the cup of the Eucharist to the cup of devils? Must I go from the table of the Lord to the feast of fiends? Shall these lips that now proclaim the  
word of Jesus one day utter the wailings of perdition? Shall this tongue that  
has sung the praises of the Redeemer be moved with blasphemy? Shall it be  
that this body which has been the receptacle of so many a mercy—shall it  
become the very house and home of every misery that vengeance can invent?  
Shall these eyes that now look on God’s people, one day behold the frightful  
sights of spirits destroyed in that all-consuming fire?  
And must it be that the ears that have heard the hallelujahs of this morning shall one day hear the shrieks and groans and howls, of the lost and  
damned spirits? It must be so if we are not Christ’s. Oh, how frightful will it  
be! Methinks I see some grave professor at last condemned to Hell. There are  
multitudes of sinners, lying in their irons and tossing on their beds of  
flame—lifting themselves upon their elbows for a moment, they seem to forget their tortures as they see the professor come in and they cry—“Are you  
become like one of us? Is the preacher himself damned? What? Is the deacon  
of the Church come to sit with drunkards and with swearers? “Ah,” they cry,  
“aha, aha, are you bound up in the same bundle with us, after all?” Surely  
the mockery of Hell must be itself a most fearful torture—professing sinners  
mocked by those who never professed religion.  
But mortal fire can never describe the miseries of a disappointed hope,  
when that hope is lost—it involves the loss of mercy, the loss of Christ, the  
loss of life—and it involves moreover, the terrible destruction and the awful  
vengeance of Almighty God. Let us one and all go home this day, when yet  
God’s sky is heavy, and let us bend ourselves at His altar and cry for mercy.  
Every man apart—husband apart from wife. Apart, let us seek our chambers—praying again and again, “Lord renew me—Lord forgive me—Lord accept me.” And while, perhaps, the tempest which is now lowering over the  
sky and before another tempest direr still shall fall on us with its fearful terrors, may you find peace. May we not, then, find ourselves lost, lost forever,  
where hope can never come! It shall be my duty to search myself. I hope I  
shall be enabled to put myself into the scale—promise me, my Hearers, that  
each of you will do the same.  
I was told one day this week by someone, that having preached for several  
Sabbaths lately upon the comforting doctrines of God’s Word, he was afraid  
that some of you would begin to console yourselves with the idea that you  
were God’s elect when perhaps you were not. Well, at least, such a thing  
shall not happen, if I have done what I hoped to do this morning. God bless  
you, for Jesus’ sake.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1154 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DANIEL FACING THE LIONS’ DEN  
NO. 1154

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

**“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before” Daniel 6:10.**

Daniel was of royal race, and, what is far better, he was of royal character. He is depicted on the pages of Scriptural history as one of the greatest and most faultless of men. How grand and impressive his first appearance as a young man, when he was introduced to Nebuchadnezzar! The Chaldeans and magicians and astrologers had all failed to discover the secret which perplexed the king and troubled his spirit—till at length there stood up before him this young prince of the house of Judah to tell his dream and the interpretation. No wonder that the excellent spirit which shone in him led to his being made a great man, procured for him rich gifts and led to his promotion among the governor of Babylon.

In later days he showed his dauntless courage when he interpreted the memorable dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which the king’s pride was threatened with a terrible judgment. It needed that he should be a lionlike man to say to the king, “You, O king, shall be driven from among men, and eat grass as oxen, and your body shall be wet with the dew of Heaven, till your hairs are grown like eagles’ feathers, and your nails like birds’ claws.” Yet what he told him came true, for all this came upon the king, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel discharged his duty to his conscience, so there was nothing to disquiet him. Well might he have said—

*“I feel within me  
A peace above all earthly dignities,  
A still and quiet conscience.”*

In ghastly light, in terrible grandeur, Daniel comes forth again, on the last night of Belshazzar’s reign, when the power of Babylon was broken forever. Persians had dried up the river and were already at the palace doors. “You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting,” said the Prophet, as he pointed to the mysterious handwriting on the wall. After this he appears again, and this time in a personal dilemma of his own. Great as he was in the palace, and great in the midst of that night’s carousel, he appears, if possible, greater, because the faith that animates

him shines more radiantly when he is upon his knees.

The princes have conspired against him. They have, by fraud, perverted the king’s mind so that he has passed an edict. Though Daniel knows that it is contrary to the law of the realm for him to pray or ask a petition of any god or man save of king Darius, yet he does pray and give thanks before his God. He believes in the higher sovereignty of the King of kings— and to the edicts of His everlasting kingdom he yields fearless and unqualified obedience. The sequel shows that the Most High God delivers him. Of this Daniel we are about to speak to you.

I. Our first point will be that DANIEL’S PRAYERFULNESS WAS THE SECRET OF HIS POWER. Daniel was always a man of prayer. If you saw him great before the people, the reason was because he was great before his God. He knew how to lay hold of Divine strength and he became strong. He knew how to study Divine wisdom and he became wise. We are told that he went to his house to pray. He was a great man—the highest in the land—consequently he had great public duties. He would sit as a judge probably a large part of the day. Life would be engaged in the various state offices distributing the favors of the king—but he did not pray in his office, except, of course, when his heart would go up in adoration of his God all day long.

He was in the habit of going to his house to pray. This showed that he made a business of prayer. And finding it neither convenient to his circumstances nor congenial to his mind to pray in the midst of idolaters, he had chosen to set apart a chamber in his own house for prayer. I don’t know how you find it, but there are some of us who never pray so well as by the old arm-chair in that very room where many a time we have told the Lord our griefs, and have poured out before Him our transgressions. It is well to have, if we can have, a little room, no matter how humble, where we can shut the door and pray to our Father who is in Heaven, who will hear and answer.

He was in the habit of praying three times a day . He had not only his appointed seasons of morning prayer and of evening prayer, as most Believers have, but he had his noon-day retirement for prayer, as perhaps only a few have. He was an old man, over 80 years of age at this time, but he did not mind taking three journeys to his house to pray. He was a very busy man. Probably no one here has half so much important business to transact daily as Daniel had, for he was set over all the empire—and yet he found time regularly to devote three stated intervals for prayer. Perhaps he thought that this was prudent economy, for, if he had so much to do, he must pray the more. As Martin Luther said, “I have got so much to do today that I cannot possibly get through it with less than three hours of prayer.”

So, perhaps, Daniel felt that the extraordinary pressure of his engagements demanded a proportionate measure of prayer to enable him to accomplish the weighty matters he had on hand. He saluted his God and sought counsel of Him when the curtains of the night were drawn, when his eyelids opened at the dawn of day and when the full sunlight was poured out from the windows of Heaven. Blessing the Lord of the Darkness, who was also the Lord of the Light, Daniel thrice a day worshipped his God.

A singularity in his manner is noticeable here. He had been in the habit of praying with his windows open towards Jerusalem. This had been his habit—by long use it had become natural to him—so he continues the practice as before. Though it was not essential to prayer, he scorns to make any alteration, even in the least point. Now that the decree had been signed that he must not pray, he would not only pray, but he would pray just as often as he had done—in the same place and the same attitude— and the same indifference to publicity, with the windows open. Thus openly did he ignore the decree! With such a royal courage did he lift his heart above the fear of man and raise his conscience above the suspicion of compromise. He would not shut the window because he had been accustomed to pray with it open. He prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem—the reason being that the temple was being built—and if he could not go, himself, at any rate he would look that way.

This showed that he loved his native land. Great man as he was, he did not scorn to be called a Jew, and everybody might know it. He was “that Daniel of the children of the captivity of Judah.” He was not ashamed to be accounted one of the despised and captive race. He loved Jerusalem and his prayers were for it. Hence he looked that way in his prayer. And I think, also, he had an eye to the altar. It was the day of symbols. That day is now past. We have no altar save Christ our Lord, but, Beloved, we turn our eyes to Him when we pray. Our window is open to Jerusalem that is above and towards that Altar where they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle with outward religiousness. We worship with our eyes to Christ.

And during that age of symbols, Daniel saw by faith the realities that were foreshadowed. His eyes were turned towards Jerusalem, which was the type and symbol of the one Lord Jesus Christ! So he prayed with his window open. I cannot help admiring the open window, because it would admit plenty of fresh air. There is much good in fresh air—the more the better. We do not want our bodies to be sleepy, or our senses sluggish, for if they are, we cannot keep our souls awake and our spirits lively.

And it would appear that whenever Daniel prayed he mingled his supplication with thanksgiving. He “prayed and gave thanks.” I wonder if he sang a Psalm? Perhaps he did. At any rate, prayer and praise—prayer and Psalms—sweetly blend in his worship. He could not ask for more Grace without gratefully acknowledging what he had already received. Oh, mix up thanks with your prayers, Beloved! I am afraid we do not thank God enough. It ought to be as habitual to us to thank as to ask. Prayer and praise should always go up to Heaven, arm in arm, like twin angels walking up Jacob’s ladder, or like kindred aspirations soaring up to the Most High. I will not say more of this feature of Daniel’s character. Oh, that we might all emulate it more than we have ever done!

How few of us fully appreciate and fondly cultivate that communion with God to which secret prayer, continuously, earnestly offered, is the key and the clue! Could we not, all of us, devote more time to seeking the Lord in the stillness of the closet greatly to our advantage? Have not all of us who have tried it found an ample recompense? Should we not be stronger and better men if we were more upon our knees? As to those of you who never seek the Eternal King, how can you expect to find Him? How can you look for a blessing which you never ask for? How can you hope that God will save you, when the blessings He does give you, you never thank Him for, but receive them with cold ingratitude, casting His Word behind your backs? Oh, for Daniel’s prayerful spirit!

II. We pass on to DANIEL’S DIFFICULTIES, OR THE PRIVILEGES OF PRAYER. Daniel had always been a man of prayer, but now there is a law passed that he must not pray for 30 days—for a whole calendar month. I think I see Daniel as he reads the edict. Not proud and haughty in his demeanor, for, as a man used to governing, it was not likely that he would needlessly rebel. But as he read it, he must have felt a blush upon his cheek for the foolish king who had become the blind dupe of the wily courtiers who had framed a decree so monstrous! Only one course was open to him. He knew what he meant to do—he should do what he always had done.

Still, let us face the difficulty with a touch of sympathy. He must not pray? Suppose we were under a like restriction? I will put a supposition for a minute. Suppose the law of the land were proclaimed, “No man shall pray during the remainder of this month on pain of being cast into a den of lions”—how many of you would pray? I think there would be rather a scanty number at the Prayer Meeting! Not but what the attendance at Prayer Meetings is scanty enough now! But if there were the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, I am afraid the Prayer Meeting would be postponed for a month—owing to pressing business and manifold engagements of one kind and another. That it would be so, not here only, but in many other places, I should be prone to anticipate.

And how about private prayer? If there were informers about and a heavy reward was offered to tell of anybody who bowed the knee night or morning, or at any time during the day, for the next 30 days, what would you do? Why, some persons would say, “I will give it up.” Ah, and there are some who would boastfully say, “I will not give it up,” whose bold resolve would soon falter, for a lion’s den is not a comfortable place. Many thought they could burn in Queen Mary’s days that did not dare to confront the fire, though I think it almost always happened that whenever any man through fear turned back, he nevertheless met with a desperate death at last. There was one who could not burn for Christ, but about a month afterwards he was burnt to death in bed in his own house.

Who has forgotten Francis Spira, that dreadful apostate, whose dying bed was a foretaste of Hell? It is left on record, as a well-authenticated narrative of the miseries of despair, though it is scarcely ever read nowadays, for it is far too dreadful for one to think upon. If we quail at suffering for Christ and evade His Cross, we may have to encounter a fiercer doom than the terror from which, in our cowardly panic, we shrunk. Men have declined to carry a light burden and been forced to bear a far heavier one. They have fled from the bear and the lion has met them! They have sought to escape from the serpent, but the dragon has devoured them.

To shrink from duty is always perilous. To demoralize yourselves in demoralized times is a desperate alternative. Better to go forward, better to go forward! Better, I say, even though you may have no armor. The safest thing is to go on. Even if there are lions in front, it is better to go ahead, for if you turn your back, the stars in their courses will fight against you. “Remember Lot’s wife!” She looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt. The apostate is of all creatures the most terrible delinquent—his crime is akin to that of Satan—and the apostate’s doom is the most dreadful that can be conceived. Master Bunyan pictures—(what was the man’s name? I forget for the moment)—one Turnaway (was it not?) who was bound by seven devils, and he saw him taken by the back way to Hell, for he had been a damnable apostate from the faith as it is in Jesus. It may be hard going forward, but it is worse going back!

Now it is a great privilege that we enjoy civil and religions liberty in our favored land. We are not under such cruel laws, that, as in other times or in other countries, laid restrictions upon conscience. We are allowed to pray according to the conviction of our judgment and the desire of our heart. But as I want you to value the privilege very much, I will put a supposition to you. Suppose there was only one place in the world where a man might pray and offer his supplications unto God? Well, I think there is not a man among us that would not like to get there at some time or

other, or at least to die there. Oh, what pains we should take to reach the locality! And what pressure we would endure to enter the edifice!

If there were only one House of Prayer in all the world, and prayer could be heard nowhere else, oh, what tugging and squeezing and toiling there would be to get into that one place! But now that people may pray anywhere, how they slight the exercise and neglect the privilege!—

*“Where’er we seek Him He is found,*

*And every place is hallowed ground.”*  
Yet it would argue sad ingratitude if seeking were, therefore, less earnest or prayer less frequent! And suppose there was only one man in the world who might pray and that one man was the only person who might be heard? Oh, if there were to be an election for that man, surely the stir to get votes for that man would be far more exciting than for your School Boards or your representatives in Parliament! Oh, to get to that man and ask him to pray for us—what overwhelming anxiety it would cause!

When the promoters and directors of railways had shares to dispose of during the old mania, how they were stopped in the streets by others who wished to get them and secure the premiums they carried in the market! But the man who was entrusted with the sole power of prayer in the world would surely have no rest day or night—we would besiege his house with petitions and ask him to pray for us. But now that we may each pray for ourselves, and the Lord Jesus waits to hear those who seek Him, how little is prayer regarded! And suppose nobody could pray unless he paid for the privilege? What “rumblings” there would be from the poor! What meetings of the working men, because they could not pray without so many pounds of money! And what a spending of money there would be! What laying out of gold and silver to have the privilege of speaking to God in prayer!

But now that prayer is free, without money and without price, and the poorest need not bring a farthing when he comes to have audience with God, oh, how prayer is neglected! Perhaps it would not be a bad thing, on some accounts, if there could be a law to prevent men from praying— because some would say, “We will pray.” They would pray! They would get over the shock and stoutly protest, “We are not to be kept down, we must pray.” Suppose I were bound to tell you, now, that God would not hear your prayers all next week? You would be afraid to abide in your houses and you would be equally afraid to leave them. You would be scared with terrors in your bed and you would be afraid to get up and face the perils of moving about. You would say, “Whatever happens, I cannot ask God for His blessing. Whatever I do, I cannot expect His blessing on it, for I must not pray.”

Then, perhaps you would begin to wish that you could pray! Oh, dear Soul, do not live this night through without prayer! Get to the Mercy Seat! Let sin be confessed to God. Let pardon be sought and all the blessings of Divine Grace. Do not despise or turn away from that blessed Mercy Seat which stands open to every soul that desires to draw near unto God.

III. Having thus dwelt upon Daniel’s difficulty, I now want to draw your attention to DANIEL’S DECISION. The king says he must not pray. Daniel did not deliberate for a single minute. When we know our duty, first thoughts are the best. If the thing is obviously right, never think about it a second time, but straightway go and do it. Daniel did not deliberate. He went to his house and prayed in the morning. He went to his house and prayed at noon. And he retired to his house and prayed at eventide. “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before.”

I greatly admire one feature in Daniel’s decision. He did not alter his accustomed habit in any single particular. Without disguise and without parade he pursued the even tenor of his way. As we have already said, the time was the same, the attitude was the same, the open window was the same. There was no precaution, whatever, to conceal the fact that he was going to pray, or to equivocate in the act when he was praying. He does not appear to have taken counsel of his friends, or to have summoned his servants and charged them not to let any intruder come in. Neither did he adopt any measure to escape his enemies. Not one jot of anxiety did he betray. His faith was steadfast, his composure unruffled, his conduct simple and artless.

Doubtless, Daniel felt that as he was the greatest man in Persia, if he, a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, failed in any degree, he would set a bad example to others and greatly discourage any poor Jew who might have Divine Grace enough to stand out, provided his example led the way. Persons who occupy high positions should know that God expects more of them than of other people. England expects every man to do his duty, but especially the men that are put to the front. If the standard-bearer falls, how is the battle to hold? Now, Daniel, you are much looked at and watched. God has put you in an eminent place, therefore take care that you do not flinch one solitary jot—go and do as you have been accustomed—though the sky looks overcast with clouds of evil omen.

It would have been foolish daring rather than self-possessed courage in Daniel had he been accustomed, ordinarily, to shut his window, should he have selected this crisis to open it. If he had been accustomed to pray twice a day, I do not see why he should go, now, and pray three times. But he did as before. It was his habit and he would not be put out of it. He would show that his conscience was obedient to God and owed no allegiance to man. He could not and would not yield anything through menace. What a despot might lay down as law, a degraded sycophant might accept as equity. But a just man is proof against the corruption of an unjust judge. It might be asked, perhaps, “Should not Daniel obey the king? “Certainly, kings’ laws are to be respected. But any law of man that infringes the Law of God is, ipso facto, null and void at once! It is the duty of every citizen to disregard every law of earth which is contrary to the law of Heaven!

So Daniel felt that whatever he owed to his temporal sovereign, he owed to his God a vast deal more. “But should not a man take care of his life? Life is valuable! Should he run such a risk?” Remember that if a man were to lose his soul in order to save his life, he would make a wretched bargain. If a man lost his life to save his coat he would be a fool. And a man who loses his soul to save his life is equally a fool—and more so still! So Daniel felt that the risk of being put into a den with lions was nothing to the risk of being put into Hell—and so he chose the smaller risk—and in the name of God he went straight on.

And I will tell you what Daniel would not have said if he lived in these days and had he been like some of my Brothers—I mean like some of my Brothers in the ministry—clergymen of a political Church, established by law. He would not have said, “This is not quite right! The decree of his Majesty’s Privy Council is utterly at variance with my creed. But you see I occupy a position of great usefulness—and would you have me give up that position of usefulness that I hold—to let these governors and counselors, that are all such bad fellows, have the entire management of the realm? Everything will go wrong if I do not compromise my profession! Although it, perhaps, may not be quite consistent with conscience, it is pardonable in the light of policy. And besides, 30 days will soon pass away. And we must remember my usefulness.”

Oh, I have heard men who teach little children to repeat the words, “In my baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven,” and they know that it is a lie! And yet they stick in their un-protestant Church, and say, “I remain here because of my usefulness”—my precious usefulness!—“for if I were to go out of the Church I should be leaving it to those bad persons who are in it.” They know that as long as they are there, they are in complicity with men who are dragging back the Church to Romanism, as fast as ever they can, and yet they say, “I am so useful, and I should injure my usefulness”!

In the name of Almighty God, are we to do evil that good may come? If I thought I could save every soul in this place, or do any other stupendous thing by making the slightest compromise with my conscience, I dare not, in the sight of the living God do it, for so I have not been taught by the Spirit of God! Consequences and usefulness are nothing to us! Duty and right—these are to be our guides! These were Daniel’s guides. The empire of Persia might go wrong—Daniel could not help that—but, by the Grace of God, he would not go wrong himself. It might be that these villainous courtiers and lords of the council might have the sway. Be it so. Leave God to manage them. It was not for Daniel, even for 30 days, to give up prayer.

“Ah, but,” they would say, “you can pray in your heart. You need not bend the knee—you can pray in your soul.” But it will not do to sell principle, or to bide with strict integrity and sterling truth in the smallest degree. Every jot and tittle has its intrinsic value. Our bold Protestant forefathers were of a different breed from the present race of temporizing professors. Talk of Apostolic succession! By what strange process do you suppose that Fuller, Ridley, Latimer, Donue and the like worthies did transmit their miters and their benefices to the cowardly seed who now hold their titles and enjoy their livings? We are at a loss to understand! The identification baffles us! Do they inherit the same spirit, defend the same doctrines, or observe uncompromising allegiance to the same Gospel? We know they do not!

It seems to us that progenitors and progeny are wide apart as the poles. If Jesus Christ were here today, there are plenty of people who would sell Him for eight pence—they would not need 30 pieces of silver, but would sell Him for a smile of patronage or a nod of approbation! Oh that we had back the old Covenanters who would not swerve an inch! Look at John Bunyan when they bring him up before the magistrates and tell him he must not preach! “But I will preach,” he said, “I will preach tomorrow by the help of God.” “But you will be put in prison again.” “Never mind, I will preach as soon as I get out.” “But you will be hanged, or kept in prison all your life.” “If I lie in prison,” he said, “till the moss grows upon my eyelids, I can say nothing more than this, that with God’s help, I will preach whenever I get a chance.”

Do not tell me that these are non-essentials! To men that will follow the Lamb where ever He goes, even the opening or the shutting of a window, if need be, is essential! Be jealous over what are called “trifles.” They may be mere straws, but they show which way the wind blows. We need the race of grand old bigots back again! We have been howling at bigots these many years and praising up universal “charity,” which means nothing else than denying that there are any Truths of God in the world to defend, or any army of saints in which to enlist! A Protestant, on one occasion, was bid to bow down before the cross when he was about to be knighted, and many others did so. “It is only a form, you know,” they said. “But,” said he, “by God, I won’t.” And they called him, “By God,” and afterwards others who stood out boldly in the same way were called, “By Gods,” or, “Bigots.” So that tone of refusal has become a term of reproach. Here is a grandest bigot of all! Daniel is his name! He will pray! They will throw him into a lions’ den! “The bigoted fool!”

Ah, yes, but God did not discountenance his unswerving uprightness. He had said before his God that he would do the right, and the right thing he did, whatever might happen. Young men and young women, I would like you to go to school before Daniel and learn to say, “Whatever happens, we cannot lie, cannot do the wrong thing. We cannot believe what men teach us, when contrary to God’s teaching. We cannot give up prayer and personal holiness, whether there is a lions’ den or no lions’ den. We will stand fast by that for God’s own sake.” May that same spirit come back to Englishmen, and if it ever does, then I guarantee you the shavelings of Rome will need to pack up and get straight away, for it is the bending men, the willow men, that will sell truth at any price. Oh that we may learn to sell it at no price, but to stand fast like pillars of iron for God, for Christ, for the Truth of God, for every holy thing!

Now I fear I ought to say, before I leave this series of reflections, that there are some who have no decision of character at all because they are not Christians. Some men are Christians, perhaps, though they have not decision enough to avow it—sneaking Christians! They have, they say, with their heart, but never with their mouth, confessed Christ. They have never been baptized as He bids them, and as they ought to be, according to His Word. And there are some that have made a profession, but it is a smuggled profession. Their friends at home hardly know it and they do not want them to know it. Oh, if I enlisted in Her Majesty’s service and had my regimentals given me to wear, I would wear them! I should not like to have them packed away and go about in other clothes, for I should be afraid of being taken up as a deserter.

There are others who dishonor their profession and do not live as they should. And there are those who, if they were persecuted, would speedily throw off their profession. They can go with Christ with silken slippers over smooth-shaven lawns—but as to walking through mire and mud with Him—that they cannot do. Oh for the heart of a Daniel, every one of us, to follow Christ at all hazards.

IV. Our last point is DANIEL’S DELIVERANCE. With that we will conclude. The evil that threatened Daniel did come. He was to be put into a lions’ den and into a lions’ den he was put. So, young man, you say, “I will not do wrong.” You hope to escape unscathed. Yet it may be that you will be discarded by your friends and discountenanced by your associates. Expect it and go through it. If you are a tradesman and by saying you will not submit to an evil custom of the trade you will become a loser, be willing to be a loser—expect that the lions’ den will be there—and that you will be put into it.

Daniel came there, but there was not a scratch upon him when he came out of it! What a splendid night he must have spent with those lions! I do not wonder that in later days he saw visions of lions and wild beasts. It seems most natural that he should—and he must have been allowed, as that night passed among these grim monsters, to see grand sights! In any case he must have had a glorious night. What with the lions and with angels all night to keep him company, he was spending the night-watches in grander style than Darius! And when he came out the next morning, so far from being a loser, he was a gainer!

The king approved him, admired him, loved him. Everybody in the city had heard that Daniel had been put into the lions’ den. He was a great man and it was like putting the Prime Minister into the lions’ den. And when he came out—with what awe they looked upon him! The king was not regarded half as much a god as Daniel. Daniel had a smooth time of it afterwards. The counselors never troubled him again—the lions had taken care of them. There would be no more plotting against him. Now he would mount to the highest place in the empire and no man would dare to oppose him for very dread of the same fate that had fallen upon his enemies and accusers. So Daniel had, to the end of his days, smooth sailing to the port of peace.

Now, believe me, to be decided for the right is not only the right thing but the easiest thing. It is wise policy as well as true policy. If you will not yield an inch, then somebody else must move out of the way. If you cannot comply with their proposals, then other people will have to rescind their resolutions. So you will find that, if you suffer, and perhaps suffer severely at first, for decision of character, you will get speedy recompense for all you endure and a grand immunity in the future. There will be an end to the indignities that are offered you. If it is not obstinacy, but real conscience that prompts you, you will rise to a position which otherwise you could not have attained. The opposition, so strong against you at first, will very likely lead to your enemies endorsing your views—and the dishonor you have meekly to bear will be followed by a deference flattering to your vanity—if not perilous to your future consistency.

Only put your foot down now. Be firm and unfaltering now. If you yield today, you will have to yield more tomorrow. Give the world an inch and it will take many a yard. Be resolved, therefore, that you will give no inch, that to the lions’ den you would sooner go than there should be equivocation, prevarication, or anything approaching falsehood. However great the difficulty may be at the outset, yet do it and you will be unhurt—you will be an immediate gainer by it—and, to the rest of your days, God will give

you a better and happier life than you have ever had before. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

You Christian soldiers in the barracks, be decided. Stand up for Jesus! You will be ridiculed at first, but you will live that down before long. But if you are cowardly, the ridicule will last many and many a day, and your fellow soldiers will take delight in laughing at you. If any of you are in a workshop, take courage, do not yield! Why should we not have our way, as they have theirs? Young men in business, take care you begin your business in an honest, straightforward manner, for, if you begin it with tricks and crooked stratagem, it will go on crooked. And then, if you try to get straight, you will find it very difficult. Begin as straight as a line, never swerve from it. Act on the outset as a Christian should.

What if employers should frown, or customers be vexed, or friends fail? Bear it! It will be the best policy in the long run. That, however, is not for you to consider. Do the right thing, whatever happens. Let us be as Daniel. Oh that the young among us would emulate the purpose of heart with which Daniel began life! Oh that the active and vigorous among us would seek, with Daniel’s constant prayerfulness, for that high gift of wisdom equal to all emergencies with which God so richly endowed him!

And, oh, that the harassed, tempted and persecuted among you would learn to keep a clean conscience in the midst of impurities, as Daniel did—to preserve, like he, faith and fellowship with the faithful and true God! Though you are living among strangers and foreigners, profane in all their thoughts and habits, may God give you the Grace to hold the statutes and commandments of the Lord as more to be desired than wealth or honor! Yes, dearer to you, as Daniel accounted them, than even life itself!

So shall you honor God, glorify Christ and bless and praise His precious name in a way in which nothing else but decision of character can possibly lead you to do. God grant us all to have Christ for a Savior and to live to His praise. Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 6.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #815 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DANIEL’S UNDAUNTED COURAGE  
NO. 815

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 14, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber  
towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before.” Daniel 6:10.**

Daniel had been exalted to very great worldly prosperity but his soul had prospered, too. Oftentimes outward advancement means inward decline. Tens of thousands have been intoxicated by success. Though they bade fair in starting in the race of life to win the prize, they were tempted to turn aside to gather the golden apples and so they missed the crown. It was not so with Daniel—he was as perfect before God in his high estate as in his lowlier days—and this is to be accounted for by the fact that he sustained the energy of his outward profession by constant secret communion with God.

He was, we are told, a man of an excellent spirit and a man abundant in prayer—his head was not turned by his elevation. And the Lord fulfilled in him His promise to “make His servant’s feet like hinds’ feet, that they may stand upon their high places.” Yet, although Daniel preserved his integrity he did not find a position of greatness to be one of rest. As the birds peck at the ripest fruit, so his envious enemies assailed him. And as the most conspicuous warriors most attract the arrows of the foe, so the honors of Daniel brought upon him the enmities of many.

Seek not then, Beloved, seek not then with an excess of desire, or an unrest of ambition to be great among the great ones of the earth! There are more precious things than honor and wealth. A Persian king, wishing to give two of his courtiers a token of his regard, gave to one of them a golden cup and to the other a kiss. He who had obtained the golden cup considered that he was hardly done by, and envied the courtier who received the kiss from the monarch’s own mouth! And let me say, let who will receive the wealth and honors of the world which make up her golden cup, if you receive a kiss of favor from the lips of God and feel the sweetness of it in your inmost soul, you have received more than they!

You have no reason whatever to repine though that kiss should come to you in poverty and sickness, but rather to rejoice that God has counted you worthy, in His infinite Grace, to receive the more of spirituals though

you have the less of temporals. Luther declared that all the greatness of the world was but a bone which God threw to a dog, “For,” says he, “he gives more to the Pope and to the Turk than to all His saints put together,” and so verily it is. To be great, distinguished and wealthy may be the lot of a Haman who shall be hanged upon a gallows, while God’s true servant may sit at the gate and bear contempt as did Mordecai.

Better to pine with Lazarus than feast with Dives for the love of God more than compensates for temporary disadvantages. Better an ounce of Divine Grace than a ton of worldly goods. Though the good things come not as the left-handed blessings of outward prosperity, be you more than content if you win the right-handed benediction of spiritual joy.

I present to you the example of Daniel for your observation, today, believing that these are times when we need to be as firm and resolute as he, and that, at any rate occasions will come to every one of us before we win our crown, when we shall need to put our foot down firmly and be steadfast and unflinching for the Lord and His Truth. First, let me invite your attention to Daniel’s habitual devotion—it is worthy of our study. We might never have known of it if he had not been so sorely tried—but fire reveals the hidden gold.

Daniel’s habitual devotion. We are told that before, before the trial, he had been in the constant habit of prayer. He prayed much. There are some forms of spiritual life which are not absolutely essential, but prayer is of the very essence of spirituality. He that has no prayer lacks the very breath of the life of God in the soul. I will not say that every man who prays is a Christian, but I will say that every man who prays sincerely is so. Remember, men may pray after a fashion and even practice private prayer, too, and yet may be deceiving themselves. As the frogs of Egypt came up into the bedchambers, so does hypocrisy intrude itself even into the private places where men pretend to worship God!

But I do say that a cheerful constancy in sincere private devotion is such a mark of Divine Grace that he who has it may fairly conclude himself to be one of the Lord’s family. Daniel always had subjects for prayer and reasons for prayer. He prayed for himself that in his eminent position he might not be uplifted with pride, might not be taken in the snares of those who envied him, might not be permitted to fall into the usual oppressions and dishonesties of Eastern rulers. He prayed for his people. He saw many of the house of Judah who were not in such prosperous circumstances as himself. He remembered those who were in bonds, as being bound with them. Those who were bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh he brought in the arms of faith before his God.

He interceded for Jerusalem. It grieved him that the city was laid waste—that still the brand of the Chaldean destroyer was upon Mount Zion, so beautiful—and once the joy of the whole earth. He pleaded for the return from the captivity which he knew was ordained of his God. He prayed for the glory of His God, that the day might come when the idols should be utterly abolished and when the whole earth should know that Jehovah rules in Heaven and among the sons of men. It would have been a delightful thing to have listened at the keyhole of Daniel’s closet and to have heard the mighty intercessions which went up to the Lord God of Hosts!

We read next that with all his prayers he mingled thanksgiving. Do observe it, for so many forget this, “He prayed and gave thanks to God.” Surely, it is poor devotion which is always asking and never returning its gratitude! Am I to live upon the bounty of God and never to thank Him for what I receive? Surely prayers in which there is no thanksgiving are selfish things—they rob God, and will a man rob God—rob God even in his prayers? Rob God and yet expect that his prayers should be successful?

Have I not often said in this place that prayer and praise resemble the process by which we live? We breathe in the atmospheric air and then breathe it out again—prayer takes in deep drafts of the love and Grace of God, and then praise breathes it out again—

“*Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,*

*Bring down to earth the bliss of Heaven.”*  
Good Daniel had learned to praise as well as to pray, and to offer to God that sweet incense which was made of diverse spices, of earnest desires and longings mingled with thanksgivings and adorations. It is worthy of notice that the text says, “Daniel prayed and gave thanks before his God.”

This enters into the very soul of prayer—this getting before God. O Brothers and Sisters, do you not often catch yourselves praying to the wind, and in private uttering words as though you were only to be heard by the four walls which bound your little room? But prayer, when it is right, comes before God in realizing the majesty of the Throne of His Grace and seeing the blood of the Eternal Covenant sprinkled on it! Right prayer is discerning that God is gazing right through you, reading every thought and interpreting every desire. It is feeling that you, yourself, are speaking into the ear of God, and are now, as it were—

*“Plunged in the Godhead’s deepest sea,  
And lost in His immensity.”*

This is praying, when we draw near to God. I shall not care if you do not use a single word, if you feel the majesty of God to be so overwhelming that words are out of place—and silence becomes far more expressive when you bow with sobs, and tears and groans that cannot be uttered. That is the prayer which wins its suit of God and is dear to the majesty of

Heaven. Thus Daniel prayed and gave thanks—not before men to be seen of them, nor yet in private before himself to satisfy his conscience, but “before God”—of whom he had an audience thrice each day.

That little word, “his,” I must not let slip, however. He prayed and gave thanks before his God. He spoke not to God merely as God who might belong to any man and every man, but unto his God whom he had espoused by a solemn determination that he would not turn aside from His service—that determination having resulted from God’s having determined to select him and to make him His own man—peculiarly set apart unto His own praise. “His God.” Why, it seems to me to bring up that word “covenant”—his “covenant God”—as though he had entered into covenant with God according to the language of the Most High, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

True son of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob was this Daniel when he looked upon God as being his own, his property, could claim Him, could say, as we sometimes sing in that sweet Psalm, “Yes, my own God is He!” Oh, to feel that the Lord belongs wholly to me! My God, my God—as if no other man can claim Him! My Father, my Shepherd, my Friend, my Lord, and my God! Yes, here lies power in prayer—when a man can talk with God as his covenant God. That man cannot miss! Every arrow sticks in the center of the target when he pleads “before his God.” That man must conquer the angel at Jabbok’s brook who grips Him with both hands by a faith which knows its Heaven-worked claims!

It is not winning mercies from another’s God, nor pleading outside the Covenant, but the Believer feels that he is asking of his own God mercies already promised and made sure to him by oaths, and Covenant and blood. Some other particulars in the text are not quite so important, nevertheless, observe that he prayed three times a day. That does not tell you how often he prayed, but how often he was in the posture of prayer. Doubtless he prayed 300 times a day if necessary—his heart was always having commerce with the skies. But thrice a day he formally prayed.

It has been well said that we usually take three meals in the day, and that it is well to give the soul as many meals as the body. We need the morning’s guidance. We need the eventide’s forgiveness. Do we not also require the noontide’s refreshment? Might we not well say at noontide, “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon.”

If you find from morn till eve too long an interval between prayer, put in another golden link at midday. There is no rule in Scripture as to how often you should pray and there is no rule as to when you should pray. It is left to the man’s own gracious spirit to suggest a season. We need not come back to the bondage of the Mosaic Covenant—to be under rule and rubric. We are left to that free Spirit who leads His saints aright. Yet, three times a day is a commendable number. Notice, also, the posture. That, also, is of little consequence since we read in Scripture of men who prayed on the bed, with their face to the wall.

We read of David sitting before the Lord. How very common and acceptable a posture was that of standing before God in prayer! Yet there is a peculiar appropriateness, especially in private prayer, in the posture of kneeling. It seems to say, “I cannot stand upright before Your majesty. I am a beggar and I put myself in the position of a beggar. I ask of You, great God, on bended knee, in the posture of one who admits that he deserves nothing, but humbles himself before Your gracious majesty.”

The reason why he kneeled on the particular occasion mentioned in the text was, no doubt, because he always had kneeled and therefore always would kneel—he would not be driven from the posture, little as that might be, at a tyrant’s word! No, if all earth and Hell should be against him, if he had found it more to God’s honor to kneel then kneel still, he would, even though he should be cast into the lions’ den for it! One more observation. We are told that Daniel kneeled upon his knees with his window open towards Jerusalem. This was not done with any view to publicity. It may be that nobody could see him, even when his window was open, except the servants in the court.

I suppose the house to have been erected as most Eastern houses were, with an open square in the center, and though he would be looking towards Jerusalem, the windows would be looking into the court where he could only be observed by those who might be residents in the house or visitors on business. Probably his fellow counselors knew the hour which he usually set apart for devotion and therefore called in so as to find him in the act. Besides, you must remember that though it would be strange, here, for a man to pray with his windows open where he could be heard, it was not at all strange among the Orientals. You will find the Pharisees and others not at all slow to perform their devotions in any place when the hour of prayer comes, and therefore it would not be regarded at all as being of a Pharisaic nature that he should pray with his window open.

The window being open towards Jerusalem may have been suggested by the prayer of Solomon, when he asked that if the Lord’s people were banished at any time, when they sought the Lord with their faces towards that holy place God would hear them. It may have helped him, also, to remember that dear city towards which every Jew’s heart turns with affection, even as the needle trembles towards its pole. The thought of its ruin assisted his earnestness. The recollection of its sin humbled him and the promises concerning it comforted him. He turned towards Jerusalem.

And what does this say to us? Brothers and Sisters, it tells us that we ought to take care when we pray, to have our window open towards Calvary! Neither turn you to the East, nor to the West, but let your spirits turn towards the Cross of Christ. That is the great point towards which all the faces of the faithful must continually be turned—where Jesus died, where Jesus rose, where Jesus intercedes before the Throne of Mercy! There it is that the eyes of faith must look. Always pray with your windows open towards Calvary! Look upon the precious blood! Gaze steadfastly upon the risen Lord! Behold the authority of His plea as before His Father He wins His suit for His people, and you will grow strong to wrestle until you prevail!

We must now turn to a second consideration, Daniel’s action under trial. There is nothing that kings and queens are much fonder of than meddling with religion. Though the Prussian king tried to make a number of watches all tick together and could not do it, yet notwithstanding the experiment and its failure, there are always evil counselors who would force men’s consciences to keep stroke. Folly is in the throne when monarchs patronize or oppress religion. Caesar always muddles when he meddles with the things of God.

In Daniel’s day there was an act of uniformity passed in some respects similar to the famous act which was thrust upon this land. Darius ordained that no man should pray for 30 days. The other Act of Uniformity commanded that no man should pray at any time in public without his book. There is not very much to prefer between the two. When this act of uniformity was passed, several courses were open to Daniel. He might, for instance, have said, “This does not answer my purpose. I have a high position in society. I am chief president over all these dominions and though I am willing to suffer something for my religion, yet gold may be bought too dear, and therefore I shall cease to pray.”

He might have found many precedents and many companions. What crowds, when it has come to a question between life and truth, between honor and Christ, have made the evil choice and perished infamously? Daniel does not seem to have raised that question. Yet he might have said, “Well, well, we must be prudent. God must be worshiped, certainly, but there is no particular reason for my worshiping Him in the usual room, nor even in the city where I live. I can retire in the evening or find some more secret spot in my own house—and especially there is no occasion to open the window. I can pray with the window shut and I shall be just as acceptable before God. I think, therefore, I shall keep my conscience clear, but not thrust out my religion in these evil days.”

Daniel did not so reason. He was a lion-like man and scorned to lower his standard in the presence of the foe—for see, in his position, if he had not prayed as before it would have been a scandal to the weak and a scorn to the wicked! The weak would have said, “See, Daniel is cowed by the decree.” Then every poor Jew throughout the realm would have found an excuse for forsaking his principles. And the wicked would have said, “Note, he serves his God when all goes well, but see where he drifts when trouble comes!” Daniel would not seek the secrecy which prudence might have suggested.

Still, it might have suggested to him that he could pray inwardly. Prayers without words are just as acceptable to God. Could he not do this? He felt he could not, inasmuch as the decree was not inward and the king’s opposition to religion was not inward. He did not believe in opposing outward falsehood by an inward truth. He did, in the language of the hymn we were singing, “strength to strength oppose.” He would give distinct outward avowal of his own convictions in opposition to the outward persecuting edict. As Daniel did not happen to have one of those rotating, double-acting consciences, he did not try to import a new meaning into the terms of the decree or invent a compromise between it and his own convictions—he went straightforward in the plain path.

He knew what the edict meant and therefore down on his knees he went before his God in direct defiance of it! Whether the edict might be read in a milder sense or not did not trouble Daniel. He knew what Darius meant by it and what the captains and the counselors meant by it—and he knew, also, what he himself intended to do—and therefore he did the right thing! Before his God he dared the lions rather than soil his conscience with anything of evil. Observe with care what Daniel did. He made up his mind to act as he had done before. Note how quietly he acted. He did not say to any of his enemies, “I mean to carry out my convictions.” Not at all! He knew that talk was lost upon them, so he resorted to actions instead of words.

He quietly went home when he found the law was passed—though grieved that such a thing was done—and without a single word of repining or caviling he sought his chamber. I do not find that he was at all distracted or disturbed. The words, “As he had done before,” seem to imply that he went upstairs as calmly as he had been accustomed to do. His servants would not have known, from his behavior, that any law had been made! He always had gone at that hour to pray, and they could hear him pray just as earnestly as he ever had done. He was focused on God and therefore continued at perfect peace.

Note again how he acted unhesitatingly—immediately! He did not pause. He did not ask for time to consider what he should do. In matters of perilous duty our first thoughts are best. When there is anything to be lost by religion, follow out the first thought of conscience, namely, “Do the right.” Who needs to question where duty points the way? Where God

commands there is no room for reason to raise doubts. Yet I have no doubt if the devil could have whispered into the Prophet’s ear, he would have said, “Now, Daniel, you had better consider a little while. You are in a position where you can materially help your friends. You are of very great authority in this court—you may be of assistance to the true religion. You do not know how many may be converted by your example. You ought not lightly to give up a position where you can do so much good.”

That argument I have heard hundreds of times when people have been urged to come out of false positions and do the right. But what have you and I to do with maintaining our influence and position at the expense of the Truth of God? It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good. Your duty is to do the right! Consequences are with God! And, after all, it never can be, in the long run, a good thing either for you or for others to do wrong. You will observe, also, that Daniel did not act under excitement, but with a full knowledge of the result. The record expressly has it—“When Daniel knew that the writing was signed.”

Many people will do right in a hurry and under strong excitement will go further than they would have done in cold blood. But Daniel, probably shut out from the council by some crafty device of the counselors, no sooner heard that the statute stood good than, without parley, his resolution was formed and his mind made up. It was not for him to delay and to hesitate—he had all the data before him and obedience made her determination known. Count the cost, young man, before you profess to be a Christian! Do not espouse, upon a sudden, an enterprise for which you will be unequal. Devote yourselves to the Lord your God by His Grace, but let it be according to the command of Christ after having first made an estimate of that which will be required of you—and seek Grace from on high that you may accomplish what otherwise will be impossible.

I like those words, and must go back to them again, “as he had done before.” Here he makes no alteration! He takes not the slightest possible notice of the king’s decree. At the same place, at the same hour, in the same posture, and in the same spirit the Prophet is found. This indicates to us the Christian’s duty under persecution—he should act under persecution as he would have done if none had arisen! If you have worshiped God under the smile of your Christian friends, worship Him under the crown of the ungodly. If you have, as a tradesman, pursued a course of honest action in more prosperous times, do not, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, tamper with that honest course because the times have changed.

What has been right is right, and therefore abide by it. What you have done sincerely, still do and God will give you a blessing in it. Daniel could not have performed that act of praying, when the lions’ den was to be the penalty, if he had not fallen into the habit of constant prayer beforehand. It was his secret communion with God which gave him strength and vigor to push on. Because he was right he found it easier to keep right whatever the penalty might be. I dare say I address some young man who has come from the country from a godly family where true religion has been daily set before him. But now he is placed in a workshop where he is startled to find that Jesus is ridiculed and religion is a by-word. Now, Friend, so as you used to do at home—make no difference to please vain men—take care that you begin as you mean to go on.

I would not say merely, “Do not give up the spirit of religion,” but, “Do not even yield the form.” The devil never gives up on us—do not quit fighting him. He takes care to fight us with all his might—let us do the same to him. I believe hundreds of Christian men make a hard lot to themselves by little yielding at first, for generally is it so in this world that if a man is determined and makes up his mind, after a while the world will let him alone. In the barracks when the soldier kneels to pray, how often has he been the subject of a thousand ribald jests and so has given up all thought of bowing the knee? Yet we have heard of a real convert, who, when he came into the regiment, having been converted, knelt down to pray and as he persisted in so doing, his comrades said, “Ah, he’s one of the plucky ones! He’s a genuine fellow.” And they left him alone, whereas, if he had once sneaked into his bed without prayer he would never after that have dared to kneel.

There is nothing like following Daniel’s example by never giving in, for thus you will win the respect of those who otherwise would have sneered at you. How soon the world will find out our real meaning! We may think we are playing our game so prettily that they cannot make us out, and that we shall be pleasing the world and pleasing God, too, but it always comes to a dead failure. And then, while the world despises, we have not the comfort of our conscience to sustain us. Oh, if our fathers, the Puritans, would but have yielded a little—if they could have made but a nick in their consciences, as some are now doing—then, instead of being cast out of house and home and prevented from opening their mouths to preach Christ, their yielding and consenting would have kept them in ease and honor! But where, then, would have been that Gospel light which gladdens the nations? Where those pure and sacred institutions which they have handed down to us?

Now, at this hour, through their intrepid resolution they remain among the blessed, and men honor them. Let us not, the sons of brave fathers— let us not be cowards! Remember the days of Cromwell, and the times when the godless Cavaliers felt the edge of the Roundheads’ sword—and though we take not carnal weapons, but eschew them utterly—let us

show our foemen that the manhood of England is in us still and we are of the same metal as our sires!

Let us turn to the third point, with which we conclude—the secret support of Daniel. There was something in the man which gave him this backbone. There was a secret something which made him so magnanimous. What was it? It resulted from several things. It sprang from the fact that Daniel’s religion was not the offspring of passion, but of deep-seated principle. There are some men whose religion is like the flower which lives upon the surface—they soon dry up when the sun of persecution burns. But there are others who, like the forest trees, send down their roots into the deep soil of principle—who know what they know, have learned thoroughly what they have learned—and hold fast what they have received. And these, in the time of trial, are sustained by springs of secret Grace, and their leaf is not withered.

Because the Holy Spirit had inwrought into Daniel’s spirit the principles of faith, he was sustained in the time of trial. But I doubt not that Daniel was also supported by what he had read of the works of God in the olden times. He was a great searcher of books and he had found that in olden times Jehovah was always victorious. The Prophet’s eyes gleamed as he thought of Pharaoh and the Red Sea, as he remembered Og, king of Bashan, and the books of Arnon. And as his mind flew on to Sennacherib and the hook put into leviathan’s jaws to turn him back by the way which he came, he was strengthened.

Remembering the works of the Lord, for which his spirit made diligent search, he felt quite certain that the living God would prove Himself true to His own. Besides, the Prophet’s spirit was sustained by what he had himself seen. He had been brought in close contact with the three holy children who were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. Where Daniel was at that time we do not precisely know, but he must have been well aware of that heroic deed. He had seen king Nebuchadnezzar defied, had beheld the Son of God walking in the furnace with the three heroes, and had seen them come forth with not so much as the smell of fire passed upon them! Here was grand encouragement.

Daniel also had personal experience of his God. He stood before Nebuchadnezzar to tell him the dream, and the interpretation thereof. And yes, on a yet more dread occasion, without fear and trembling, he had faced the king Belshazzar when the thousands of his guests were shouting to their gods and the king and his wives and concubines in gorgeous state were drinking wine out of the bowls consecrated to Jehovah. That lone man stood erect amid the ribald crew, and pointing to the mysterious letters, read the terrible sentence, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,” a monarch’s doom proclaimed in his presence by an unarmed man! Was such a one likely now to be afraid!

He that trembled not before tens of thousands of fierce soldiery, shall he fear now, when nothing but lions are in his way? Not he! He had looked into the face of his God and would not fear the face of a lion! Jehovah had overshadowed him and the den into which he would be cast had nothing in it terrible to him. His own experience helped to strengthen him! He had this conviction that God could deliver him, and that if God did not deliver him, yet still such was his love to the God of Israel that he would be content to give himself to die.

It is blessed to have such a confidence as this! You good people who are tried and who may expect to be tried yet more, you will never stand unless you come to this—“God can deliver me. But if He does not deliver me, still I am well content to be a sacrifice for Jesus’ sake.” Ah, some of you would gladly be Christians, but in the time of trial you give it up! Like the freshwater sailor, who, seeing the ship decked with all her colors and her fair white sails bellying to the wind, thinks it must be a fine thing to be a mariner! But he is not far out to sea before qualms have come upon him—he dreads the storm, and vows—“If I can but once get safe to shore, I had done with sailoring forever.”

Many have said, “We will follow the Lord with Daniel.” Yes, and wellcontent they are to be with Daniel at Shushan in the king’s palace! But when it comes to the lions’ den, then, “Daniel, good-bye.” Take heed to yourselves that you are not deceived with a fair profession which shall afterwards fail you! Daniel failed not because his love to his God rested deep in his inmost heart—it had become part and parcel of himself and sustained by the two hands of love and faith—he was graciously lifted over the rough and thorny places.

Remember that Daniel is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had enemies who sought to destroy Him. They could find nothing against Him except, “touching His God.” They accused Him of blasphemy, and then afterwards, as they did Daniel, they brought a charge of sedition. He was cast into the den—into the grave. His soul was among the lions. They sealed His tomb with their signet, lest any should steal Him by night, but He arose as Daniel did, alive and unhurt, and His enemies were destroyed.

Now, if Daniel is a type of Christ, and the Lord Jesus is the great representative Man for all who are in Him, you, Believer, must expect that there will be those who will attack you. You must expect there will be those who will assail you especially in your religion. You must expect, too, that they will prevail against you for a time so that you may be cast into the den— that they will seek to fasten you in as though you were destroyed forever.

But there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but of reputations, and you shall arise. When the trumpet shall sound, not merely the corporeal particles, which make the man, but the man’s memory shall rise! His good name, which has been buried beneath the clods of slander, shall rise to life! While as for His enemies, they and their reputations shall find devouring destruction from the Presence of the Lord.

Oh, to be a follower of Jesus, the great Daniel! To tread in His footsteps wherever He goes! To be much with Him, whether in private or public! This is a thing to be desired and though I exhort you to it, I do not expect you to attain to it in your own strength! I point you to the Holy Spirit who can work this in you, and make you to be greatly beloved as was this Prophet of old.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2859 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE LIONS’ DEN  
NO. 2859

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1903. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?”  
Daniel 6:20.**

THE empire of Babylonia and Chaldea passed into the hands of a new dynasty and king Belshazzar was slain in a night-assault upon his capital. On that very night, he had clothed Daniel in scarlet and made him the third ruler in the Kingdom. This was Providential, for, had Daniel been in obscurity, he would have been little likely to attract the notice of Darius. But, observing him in the palace, clothed in scarlet, Darius would naturally ask who he was and enquire into his antecedents. The fame of his wisdom would be quickly told and the fact of his having twice interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, in former times, and of his having just then, with startling precision, foretold the downfall of Belshazzar and the capture of the city by the Medes and Persians, would be eagerly related. Hence it was not at all surprising that Darius took great notice of Daniel, weighed his character, observed his conduct and, after a while, exalted him to be prime minister of his realm.

Daniel’s prosperity and honors excited the envy of the courtiers. Full of sullen spite and brimming over with jealousy, presidents and princes conspired together to cast him down with calumnious accusations. We are known to say that “any stick will do to beat a dog,” so they looked about for any charge with which they might assail him. I have no doubt they watched him constantly, waited eagerly for his halting—all the while basely flattering the man they wanted to trip up. Can they discover a flaw in his accounts? Can they question the impartiality of his judgment? Can they detect a lack of loyalty in the administration of his government? Can they find fault with his private life? No, but is there nothing against him? Is Daniel such a four-square man that he is more than a match for them? I can well believe that they hunted him here and there till their haughty faces grew haggard in the sin effort to find a cause of complaint—and that they set spies to skulk about his house and mark his movements. And, in fact, they stooped to the meanest stratagems, little heeding how much they compromised themselves if they might but compass his downfall. But his integrity was proof against all their devices. The more closely they observed him, the more clearly they discerned that he was always diligent, discreet and devout. So conscientious and so uniformly consistent was Daniel, both in his character and his conduct, that every effort to entangle him in the meshes of their conspiracy proved to be vain.

At length the devil, who does not often run short of devices, puts them up to a fresh plot. O Satan, you are full of all subtlety! “Let us contrive a new law,” they say, “that shall bring his piety and his patriotism into conflict. He is a Hebrew by birth and he believes, with all his heart, in only one God. Our divinities he despises. Towards our temples he shows a silent scorn. He sets no value on the magnificent statues that we venerate. Three times in the day he has been accustomed to offer prayer to an invisible Protector whom he calls, ‘the living God, Jehovah’—surely these peculiarities will supply us with a pretext and so we shall entrap him.” So they laid their evil heads together and devised as cunning a snare as they could possibly invent. And yet, clever as they were, they perished in the trap they had prepared! They managed to involve the king, himself, in their iniquitous device and to entangle him in such a way that he must either sacrifice his favorite courtier, or compromise his own truthfulness and violate the sacred traditions of the empire! A royal statute was framed and a decree published forbidding any petition to be asked of God or man for 30 days. How preposterous!

But when was there ever a despot who was not, sooner or later, deserted of his wits? The passion for power, when indulged without restraint, will lead a man to the utmost foolishness and urge him to a madness of vanity. In such a false position stood the monarch who was easily persuaded to issue the infamous edict desired. In this strait, how will Daniel acquit himself? Will he count it prudent to desert his post and get out of the way? No. Daniel had a soul above such policy. Yet you might imagine that if he must pray, he would go down into the cellar, or offer his supplications to God in some retired place where he need not challenge notice. His petitions will be heard in Heaven without respect to the place from which they are presented. Or it might have been expedient to suspend the vocal utterance of prayer and offer his supplications silently. Daniel, however was a servant of the living God and, therefore, he scorned thus to compromise and play the coward. Well does one of the old writers call him, Coeur de Lion, for he had the heart of a lion! Into that den of lions he went, a lion-like man, not cruel, like the beasts of the forest, but far more courageous! His conscience towards God was clean and the course he pursued before his fellow creatures was clear. His sense of the Truth of God would not suffer him to be a trimmer. He does not change his habit, but goes upstairs, though he might have known that it was like climbing the gallows. He drops upon his knees, puts his hands together, with his windows open toward Jerusalem in the presence of all his adversaries—and there he prays three times a day as he had done before. He prays openly, not ostentatiously. He prays in the spirit of a Protestant rather than in the fashion of a Pharisee. He sought no honor, but he shunned no danger. To encounter shame, or to endure reproach, if necessary, for the cause of righteousness, had long been his fixed habit—and now that it threatens to bring on him swift death, he swerves not!

Hear those quick feet as they patter along the streets of Shushan! All the presidents and princes are coming together! There is mischief brewing, for they are going to seek an interview with the king. They are anxious to inform his majesty that they have caught Daniel committing the horrible crime of prayer! Was not this a new offense? Oh, no! The first man that ever died fell a victim to his religion and so, I suppose, for many and many a century, this was one of the foulest offenses a man could commit against society! Those who serve the living and the true God are sure to challenge the sneers of the time-servers in any age. There are many, nowadays, who hate nothing as much as a religious man! All the epithets in the catalog of scandal are too good for the man who offers homage to God in everything. An infidel may be reputed honest, intelligent and worthy of respect—but a genuine Christian is at once denounced as a hypocrite! Away with such a fellow—his conscience is as offensive as his creed! There is toleration for everybody who conforms to the fashion of the day, but no toleration for anyone who believes that the laws of Heaven should regulate life on earth.

So they told the king that the laws of his empire must be kept inviolate. Good, loyal souls as they were, they would not have a statute broken for the world! There is an end to your monarchy if your royal proclamations are not to be respected! They are so jealous for the common law and so earnest for the king’s honor that they must, at all hazards, even if it is at the risk of seeing their dear friend, Daniel, put into the lions’ den, maintain the dignity of the king and assert the majesty of his imperial edict! The king perceives that he is caught, but thinks the matter over and, finding no alternative, gives Daniel up to the conspirators.

Alas! I see the godly man flung in among the lions, but what do I hear? Do I hear his bones cracking? Can I hear a shriek from the Prophet? Is there a noise of the howling of those savage beasts of prey? There is an awful hush while the king puts his seal upon the stone—shall we step down and peer into the den to see what is going on there? No sooner had Daniel arrived at his destination than an angel of God encamped in that dungeon. Stretching his broad wings, he seems to have fixed his station in front of those fierce beasts. The safety of Daniel was secured! The mouths of the lions were shut and they lay down like lambs. Perhaps Daniel found a comfortable pillow for his night’s rest upon the shaggy body of one of those monsters that would have devoured him had not the heavenly visitant hushed them into silence by his presence! Or perhaps the appearance of the angel was as a flame of fire and worked an illusion before the lions’ eyes, so that Daniel seemed to them to be surrounded with flame, or robed with fire. At any rate, that night the prophecy of the latter days—that the lamb shall lie down with the lion, was fulfilled to the letter! God, in His Providence and Grace, preserved His servant!

We can easily imagine that, like Paul and Silas, when Daniel did not sleep, he made the lions’ den vocal with his songs and that the lions growled the bass while God’s angel stood there listening to such music as he had never heard before! And when the morning dawned he then sped his way up to Heaven as the king came to fetch Daniel out of his prison house. So Daniel was delivered and his foes were confounded. There is the story. Now, what lessons are we to learn from it?

I. First, I want to set before you DANIEL’S EARLY AND ENTIRE CONSECRATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.  
The king said, “Your God, whom you serve continually.” This was no empty compliment. His scrupulous uprightness had become so habitual that it was like an instinct of his nature. Daniel began to serve God in his youth. There are no saints to be compared with those whose childish minds were imbued with heavenly Truths as soon as their infant lips began to lisp them. Just as there are no sinners so inured to wickedness as those who are bred and trained in haunts of vice, tutored from their cradle to utter profane words and prone to act as they think, bravely, in defiance of every precept of the Decalogue till they become proficient in every kind of profligacy. They, who give their morning to God, shall find that, in beginning early, they can keep pace with their work all day. Happy Daniel, thus continually to serve his God from his youth up! Yet it was not the good fortune of his birth that gilded his name with glory. Far from that—it was his sad lot to be carried away captive from his native land while but a stripling! Alienated from the home of his ancestors, he was taken to the palace of Nebuchadnezzar and there, with three other youths, he was entered as a bursar in a heathen school to be instructed in the strange literature of a strange nation and so to become one of the king’s learned men!  
His loyalty to the faith of his forefathers was at once put to the test. Certain food that was repugnant to his conscience, was served up every day. Probably it had been offered in sacrifice to a false god. Daniel feels that he would be polluted by partaking of it. He, therefore, with his companions, refuses either to eat the king’s meat or to drink the king’s wine. As a total abstainer, he drank nothing but water and, as a vegetarian, he ate nothing but simple plants. With no desire to please his palate, it was his delight to serve his God continually. Another man might have thought it mattered little what he ate and drank, but, for Daniel, the jots and tittles of Divine Revelation had a meaning. He dared not go contrary to the Law of his God, even with regard to meats and drinks. Though far from the land that Jehovah cared for, he longed to live in the Light of God’s Countenance. Strict obedience to God has a swift reward. His face soon became fairer than the faces of those who fed on the royal diet!  
At length, the time arrives when Daniel is to be brought from private tuition into public notice. Nebuchadnezzar has been distressed by a dream which his astrologers cannot comprehend and his soothsayers try in vain to search out. To Daniel, alone, who served his God continually, the secret is revealed. Of that vision I do not now attempt to speak—but with what nobility of heart does Daniel stand before the king! He does not tremble before the earthly potentate, nor does he conceal the name of the God in Heaven who inspires him with wisdom. He recalls the forgotten dream and forthwith he is made a great man in the realm—yet he still goes on to serve his God continually! Obscurity could not hinder him, publicity could not mislead him. Again the king dreams. again Daniel boldly explains, though that explanation is to the effect that the haughty monarch shall be driven as a lunatic from the abodes of men!  
For a while, Daniel retires into the shade. You hear nothing of him till Belshazzar ascends the throne, but he is still serving his God. I doubt not, sometimes ministering to his poorer brethren and visiting the sick, but often in his chamber, by prayer, and by study of the Scriptures, seeking and finding communion with the Most High. All of a sudden Belshazzar summons him to his presence. There is a mysterious writing on the wall which can be read by no eyes and interpreted by no lips but his. He is not disconcerted, but, at the call of royalty, to court he goes. Oh, with what simple dignity, with what sublime composure, with what heroic courage does the man of God tell the proud monarch, who might cut him in pieces if he willed, of his immediate doom—“You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting”! If you want to find a counterpart of John Knox in the Bible, I do not know, leaving out Elijah, where you will find a rival to Daniel. How confidently he speaks, “This is the writing”! And again, “This is the interpretation.” His word commends itself to the conscience—no man dares to gainsay it.  
He is promoted to the highest honor in the realm—now what will he do? There has been a change of monarchs, but there is no change in Daniel. No time-server, he stands to his principles at all times. “Servant of the living God,” is still his title! He had taken for his motto, when he began life, “I serve God,” and he retains the motto to his life’s close. The glory of his God was his one objective throughout all his days—and he never swerved. He is now lifted to a higher post of dignity than he had ever been raised to before. He is prime minister of the greatest monarch of the age, yet he abhors the idolatry of the heathen and maintains his allegiance to him who rules in the heavens. They can find no flaw in him, though the eyes of envy watch him from early morn to dewy eve! O my Brothers and Sisters, it is a hard thing to serve God in high places! Many a man seems to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior when humbly earning his livelihood by the toil of his hands, and eating his bread in the sweat of his face, but, afterwards, when advanced to ease and opulence, he has turned his back upon his friends and forsook the Lord. Be very jealous of yourselves if you are rising in the world. Riches are deceitful. It is not easy to walk on a high rope—what lamentable Providences have befallen those who have thus risked their lives! Let us be the more circumspect when we are called to walk in high places. Popularity and fame, riches and honor are among the sharpest trials of integrity that mortal man can pass through. But Daniel could endure them all without his head growing giddy, for he served his God continually.  
Now note the effect of what Daniel did. It is comparatively easy to follow the Lord in bright days, but the sun of prosperity suddenly darkens and the man of God is encompassed with perils. If he continues in his holy course, he will forfeit the king’s favor and lose his life in the most dreadful manner. What will Daniel’s determination be? Oh, the true grit is in him! He is a blade of the true Jerusalem manufacture and is not to be broken. He will do just as he did before! He opens his window and in the same posture, down on his knees, he prays as he did before! Glory be unto the God of Daniel, who made and who kept such a man with his head clear in the crisis, with his heart pure in the midst of persecution and his feet steadfast to the end!  
Ah, dear Friends, some of us little know what these pinches mean. There are a few of you who do—you have endured torture without accepting deliverance. I have felt a holy pride in some of you when I have seen how you have borne trial. Witness the man who has a shop which brings him in more profit on a Sunday than it does all the rest of the days of the week, and who says, “It must be one thing or the other. I cannot go to the Tabernacle and keep my shop open, too—which shall it be?” His faith proves stronger than his fear! The shutters are closed on the first day of the week. His business goes—he loses everything and yet he does not regret it. He parts with ill-gotten gain without a grudge and goes back to hard manual labor with a moral satisfaction and a manifest ease of conscience that he never knew before! Dear souls, your pastor is proud of you! I feel that I can thank God and take courage since the Gospel of Christ educates and brings up such simple, honest servants of the living God! And when I have heard of young men serving in a shop, who, when asked to do something positively dishonest, have at first mildly answered that they could not—but when told that they must either comply or retire—have boldly said, “Then we will leave,” I have felt how highly honored I am of God to have such men in our ranks.  
My eminent predecessor, Dr. Gill, was told by a certain member of his congregation, who ought to have known better, that if he published his book, “The Cause of God and Truth,” he would lose some of his best friends and that his income would fall off. And the Doctor said, “I can afford to be poor, but I cannot afford to injure my conscience.” The devil and the deceit of your own heart will readily suggest that you must look after your family—and some good Christian people mistake prudence for piety. I daresay, had Daniel gone to consult Mr. Prudent Thrifty and asked his advice, he would have said. “Well, you see, it is a very important thing for us to have you at the head of affairs. I do not think you ought to throw away such an opportunity as you have of doing good. It is not absolutely necessary for you to pray for thirty days! Would it not be better for you to trim a little and yield a point or two? You do distinguished service to our cause and, by keeping your position, you will be putting your foes to a non-plus. By compromise you will obtain concessions. Worldly wisdom is worth your study.” This is the way that fools are beguiled and in this way many Christians, alas, drift from their moorings. To plead the present distress is, for the most part, a mere pretence. “Let us do evil that good may come,” never was in the code of Old Testament or New Testament Truth!  
I remember a notable instance, some years ago, of this fallacious reasoning. A reflection was cast on the career of a distinguished clergyman who resigned his connection with the Established Church and, after much consideration, allied himself with the Baptists. “Did he gain credit,” it was asked, “or increase his congregation by the change?” What of that? The answer is easy. Let conscience assert its supremacy, for circumstances do not weigh a feather in the scale. Long departed from among us, we may still speak of him as the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel— and he was right and righteous in his decision, as one who feared the Lord in the face of any loss. If, by stopping where he thought he ought not to stop, or by conforming to what he believed to be a corrupt corporation, he could have saved multitudes of souls, the good done to others would not have extenuated the guilt incurred by himself! You and I have nothing at all to do with consequences! Be it ours to hearken to the voice of the Lord and obey His high behests. When God prompts our conscience to a course of action, the slightest demur will recoil with a sense of intolerable guilt. Though the heavens should fall through our doing right, we are not to sin in order to keep them up! At the call of duty, never parley with danger. Should everything seem to go amiss with us after we have done the right thing, there is no cause for regret. Remember that our conduct is the maker of our character. You men of faith, hoist your colors! Leave to your God the providing! Stick to the obeying. Learn your duty and do it bravely. “Through floods and flames,” if Jesus leads, follow on, never dubious that your welfare is assured.  
Here, dear Friends, I would remark that the only service to God which is real, genuine, remunerative, is this continual service that sticks at nothing. Any hungry dog will follow you in the streets if you do but entice him with a piece of meat, or a bit of biscuit. How closely he keeps to your heels! But, after a while, the bait is gone and the dog retreats. That is like many a professor. There is some little pleasure in religion, or some advantage, and so he follows Christ, but, after a while, there is an attraction elsewhere and, impelled by greed rather than gratitude, he pursues it. Thus do false professors forsake Christ, whom they never did really follow. But I have seen a man on horseback, splashing the mud about and I have seen his dog keeping close at the horse’s heels, up and down hills, whether the roads were smooth or rough—what did it matter to the faithful hound? His master was before him, so on he went! That is the only kind of dog I would care to own and I believe this is the only sort of follower that our Lord Jesus Christ is willing to acknowledge. Oh, those time servers who look one way and pull the other, like the ferry-men upon the stream! As for Lord Fair-Speech, Lord Time-Server, Mr. Smooth-Man, Mr. Anything, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, Mr. Two-Tongues and all the members of their club, Mr. By-Ends included, the entire company of them will be swept away when the Judge comes with the besom of destruction!  
I know you feel the force of this Truth. How you loathe a friend who will not stick to you in dark times! Do you remember that companion of yours who used to call in the evening and sit and chat with you? What a dear fellow he seemed! You always thought he was a sincere friend. You liked him much and you confided in his judgment as you often took counsel together. And all went well till, one day when the dark clouds began to gather over your head. It made a serious change in your circumstances. What was it? A severe loss in business, or perhaps a bankruptcy—now you cannot keep such a well-spread table, or wear as good a hat as you used to—there is not so much nap on your Sunday coat. You look rather less thriving than in days of yore. What has become of your friend? Ah, never mind, let him stay where he is for you have not suffered much loss by getting rid of him. He was never worth knowing, before, but you have found out his worthlessness, now, and I advise you to have nothing more to do with him. Do you not despise the character of such a man? Do you not feel in your heart, “Well, I can forgive him, but I will have nothing more to do with such a fellow”?  
This is but a picture of yourselves if you try to follow Jesus Christ only when you are in the society of His people and as easily lend yourselves to sing a frivolous or lewd song when you are with the ungodly. What is that man’s profession worth who lets his tongue run loose with flippant speech and vain conversation when he gets into the company of such friends as are known to be sons of Belial?

Oh, that we had more Daniels who would serve the Lord continually! The only way to build up a character which will be proof against the temptations of the age and of your own immediate surroundings is to commit your cause to God, as Daniel did. Be much in prayer! Prayer keeps the Christian steadfast. You may make a loud profession, but it will not last without prayer. Amidst work and worry, heavy responsibilities and incessant anxiety, you had need often renew the confession of sin and weakness on your bended knees. Then, again, you must have a lively faith in the living and true God, as the Prophet had, for only this can sustain you in such a warfare. Is your faith genuine, of the right metal? Spurious faith soon loses its edge.  
The Christian is in hard straits if he finds that when he needs courage and comfort most, all his strength and joy have departed! Prove your faith in the petty skirmishes of the passing hour, if you would have it endure the perilous conflicts of an evil day. Have you a religion that did not begin with rigorous self-denial. Then, get rid of it! If you have a religion that suits your constitutional fondness for ceremonies, your aesthetic taste for culture, your habitual passion for music, beware of it! The root of all real religion is simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Away with every counterfeit. That faith which lives only on Jesus, rests solely on Jesus, builds wholly on Jesus and shows itself in earnest prayer will give you a consistency and decision of character that will make you like Daniel all your days!  
II. Now, secondly who WAS THIS GOD WHOM DANIEL SERVED CONTINUALLY?  
Let me ask—Is Daniel’s God worthy of our worship? I ask the question in all earnestness because I feel positive that multitudes of men have a religion that, in their own judgment, is hardly worth debating about, far less worth dying for. It must have been a sorry spectacle to watch a Papist going to the stake or the scaffold as many Protestants have gone, for the maintenance of a fiction or a lie! I should be surprised to see an Agnostic lay down his life for the defense of nothing. But what shall we say of the living and true God whom Daniel delighted to honor? Is He worth living for, worth serving, worth dying for? Doubtless the Prophet’s devotion grew stronger with the proof he made of the Lord’s goodness and greatness. With childlike faith he clung, at first, to simple precepts that he would not transgress. The Revelations he afterwards received seem like rewards for his unfaltering integrity. In his direst emergencies, God manifestly delivered him. He had no other longing for life than communion with the Lord of All the Earth! From the Christian point of view, he was a “man greatly beloved.” To the outside heathen, he was “a servant of the living God.” But let us repeat the question, that we may have the pleasure of answering it for ourselves. Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of our love and our life? Words are lacking to tell the gratitude and joy that we cherish towards God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins!  
By faith I understand that the blessed Son of God redeemed my soul with His own heart’s blood and, by sweet experience, I know that He raised me up from the pit of dark despair and set my feet on the rock. He died for me—this is the root of every satisfaction I have! He put all my transgressions away. He cleansed me with His precious blood. He covered me with His perfect righteousness. He wrapped me up in His own virtues. He has promised to keep me, while I abide in this world, from its temptations and snares! And when I depart this life, He has already prepared for me a mansion in the Heaven of unfading bliss and a crown of everlasting joy that shall never fade away! To me, then, the days or years of my mortal sojourn on this earth are of little concern, nor is the manner of my decease of much consequence. What more can I wish than that while my brief term on earth shall last, I should be the servant of Him who became the Servant of servants for me?  
You, dear Friends, must be the best judges of your own religion, whether or not it is worth suffering for. If it is not full of immortality, I would not advise you to risk your reputation on retaining it. If it is only a fair profession, you may well blush for it as a foul delusion. The fleeting fashion of the time has its market value, but the sterling Truth of God is a commodity that never fluctuates. Have you found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth? Your religion is genuine if Christ Himself is the All-in-All of it. Is He your own dear Savior? Then you have pardon and peace, happiness in this present time and Heaven in prospect—happier lot no heart can wish for!  
Then there comes another question—Is Daniel’s God able to deliver us from the lions? My dear Friends, you who are suffering just now for the Cross of Christ, you who know what it is to be losers for Jesus, to stand out and to endure pains and penalties as Daniel did—you are well aware that the lions are fierce and furious creatures. They are not stuffed animals, having the name without the nature of those beasts of prey! So, the sufferings of a Christian are not sentimental—they are real! Those lions had not their teeth knocked out, they were not transformed into lambs. They could have devoured Daniel if they had been permitted to do so. It would be foolish to talk of your troubles as trifles, but for the Grace of God they might have been enough to drive you back into the world and to reduce you to despair! Full often, your steps have well-nigh slipped. The lions have sharp teeth and they would have devoured you—only Divine Grace has found a means of delivering you out of their mouths.  
I ask the man who has given up a profitable appointment because he would not be false to his convictions, whether, on shorter commons he has not found the sweeter luxury of contentment? I ask him whether he has not enjoyed, on a harder pillow, more refreshing sleep? I appeal to you, one and all, if a sense of rectitude has not invariably a soothing effect and a gentle stimulus? I know, Brothers and Sisters, that those of you who have passed through such trials will bear me witness that there is a sustaining influence vouchsafed to you while you are cast, as it were, into the lions’ den. Some of you are enduring the ordeal, now, but others, who have got farther on, have been rescued from dire peril. In most cases that have come under my notice, when anyone has ventured loss for Christ, he has presently reaped some substantial advantage—and his loss has, in the end, proved to be his gain.  
Many a man has, in this manner, proved God’s Providence. For an honest scruple, he has been put out of a position that supplied him with a scant livelihood. Contentment, with a bare pittance, was his only outlook. Loosed from his moorings, he feared lest he should be lost—yet he afterwards traced his enlarged prosperity to that very date! God, who is rich in mercy, has soon found for that man a far better position than he could have held had it not been for his forfeiting the other. And even if your deliverance is not thus speedy and sudden—if, like David, you should say, “My soul is among lions: I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword,” yet shall you sing, like David—“My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”  
But should we even dwell among lions till we die, what joy shall it be to leave the lions and be linked with saints and holy angels in the beatific hereafter! The higher reward is bestowed on the higher service and brighter crowns encircle their brows who have suffered most bitterly and most bravely. You and I have but few and slender opportunities, in this soft and silken age, of showing our love to our Lord by the surrender of liberty and life for His sake. There are no stocks or racks, no stakes or gallows for martyrs now. These are smooth and slippery time, yet, if we are so inclined, we can work with the will, with the self-denial and selfsacrifice of missionaries! For the love of Jesus, we can dare to die under a cloud with no hope of being canonized. Faith and patience are martial virtues which it may be quite within our province to illustrate in humble rather than heroic fashion.  
You may wonder why I keep on in this strain. I am aiming at instances which are much more common than some of you may imagine. There are many worshippers gathered within these walls whose constant attendance at what is sneeringly called “a conventicle,” exposes them to no reproach and, in some instances, would rather win them a measure of esteem. There are others, to my knowledge, who can never enjoy the privileges of the Lord’s people without encountering grievous provocations and bitter malice.  
In a congregation of this magnitude, the confidential words spoken to the pastor by the solitary ones would often startle those who sit in their family pews. Confession of Christ frequently causes division in a household. Husband and wife are, for His sake, in hostility. Mother and daughter cannot agree. Taunt and jibe are difficult to bear with equanimity. Perhaps it touches men in their trade and it goes hard with the breadwinner when faithfulness takes away his bread and cheese. My sympathy, however sincere, is of small account—would to God I could inspire you with more fortitude! Let me challenge you to quit yourselves like men! Let me exhort you to play the Daniel! Is your God the living God able to deliver you out of the den of lions? I hope you will be able to cheerfully respond, “I believe He can! I believe He will! But if not, though I abide in the den till I die, I will rest quietly there with the Angel of His Presence as my guardian for I know He will bring me, when I have suffered a while, to everlasting Glory!”  
“Is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?” Let me put this question in one or two lights and thus draw our reflections to a close. Leaning over, like that Persian king, I look down into a greater den of lions than he ever descried. It is dark. The stench is foul and ‘midst the dim shadows I discern struggling forms and figures. Tormentors, whose faces are hidden, stretching women upon racks and torturing men with switch and leather flogs. And, yonder, a spot where, on hundreds of stakes, martyrs have been burned to the death. In the far distance, a wild horse and a human victim tied to his heels to be dragged to death. Strange and horrible spectacle that, out yonder!—a long procession of men who were scourged, who were stoned, who were beheaded, who were sawn asunder—saintly men were they, of whom the world was not worthy! Leaning over the mouth of this great lion’s den, I ask the persecuted saints of all ages—Has your God been able to deliver you? And with a cheerful shout, loud as the voice of thunder, they cry, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!”  
I look down upon another lions’ den. It is still dark, but not so dreary. Night reigns in sacred shade and solitude. The stars are hid, but tapers burn in chambers dimly lit. There, sons and daughters of sorrow are tossed on beds of sickness. Thus they have lain for months, perhaps for years—all hope of health extinguished, all prospect of pleasure passed. Their limbs paralyzed, their sight failing, their hearing dull—calamities of every kind have befallen them. God has permitted the great lions of affliction to come howling round and to tear away all their comforts and their joys till they are left without any of that cheerful fellowship with nature which seasons mortal life with sweet relish.  
Some of you are robust in health—your head never throbs, your heart never aches, you are hardly conscious that you have any nerves. Small account do you take of the secret, silent, saintly heroism of sufferers whose pilgrimage on earth is blighted with pain. Oft have I been their companion in tribulation. I appeal to these tried and afflicted children of God. Tell me, you Daniels, has your God been able to deliver you out of the mouths of the lions? And I hear each one say, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!” And all join in chorus, saying, “Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord our God has promised! Our shoes have been iron and brass, and as our days, so has our strength been.”  
Will I strain my parable too far if I turn my eye upon another lions’ den? It lies in a deep valley. The night hangs heavy. The beasts of prey are diseases that skill and shrewdness, time and talent have striven in vain to tame. Like lions, strangely dissimilar in outward fashion, but strongly resembling them in instinct, they pounce on their victims and seal their doom. We call this place “the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” I think I am gazing, now, on the forms of shivering men and women as they are dragged down by the lions. One after another, my familiar friends descend into the grave and I ask them, in the hour of their departure, “Is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?” Calm is their countenance and clear their voice, as each one chants his solo, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” So, at length, this lions’ den, too, loses all its terror.  
Then I look into another den. It is almost empty. There is a lion in it, a grim old lion, but I do not see so much as a bone to tell the tale of its victims. No trace of its ravages is left behind. On this soil there once were countless thousands of the slain, but it is empty, now. All of a sudden I look up and, lo, I see myriads of immortal souls and they all tell me, “Our God delivered us from the grave, and rifled the tomb of its prey. By a glorious Resurrection, He has brought all His ransomed people forth to meet their Lord at the Great Day of His appearing. There shall they stand before the Throne of God, for He has broken the teeth of the lion and rescued all His children from the power of the adversary!”

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A SAFE PROSPECTIVE  
NO. 886

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 8, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“At the time appointed the end shall be.” Daniel 8:19.**

Human nature anxiously desires to know something of the future. If we were told tonight that we could repair to a certain spot where we might lift the veil of our own history and foresee the course of our own lives during the next few years, I am afraid very few of us could be trusted to absent ourselves from such a place, or miss such an opportunity. This anxiety to know the future and that strange credulity which gives heed to every species of so-called “prophets” and omens, has caused men and women to be the easy dupes of designing impostors in all ages—from the ignorance of the unlettered Egyptian, up to the cleverness of modern professors.

I might almost mention learned doctors who practice divinations, prophecy concerning things to come and bring in Holy Scripture to back up their prognostications. Everywhere that kind of spirit which leads men to amuse themselves with light literature leads them, also, to read the Bible with a view to espy the future and would lead them to resort to any kind of invention by which they might hope to have a glimpse of the unfolded scroll. Be persuaded, however, my Brothers and Sisters, that with the exception of some grand feature, some magnificent outline which God has revealed, the future is absolutely shut from human eye!

And as to the details which concern your life or mine, it is utterly impossible that we should ever become acquainted with them by any manner of horoscope, or soothsaying, or bibliomancy. We shall know them soon enough by the gradual development of experience, but it is idle and mischievous to attempt to know them till they transpire. Why is it that the future is thus shut out from our view? Is it not because the present is enough to occupy our talents? Rightly to serve our God in this present hour will take all the strength we have and all the strength we can obtain from Him. Sufficient unto the day is not only the evil thereof, but the service thereof.

Men who live too much in the past and go beyond that which is rightly conservative become of little service in the world. And men who are tempted to regulate their movements by forecasts of the future will always become abstracted, speculative, empirical—full of sentiment and void of diligence—but certainly of no service whatever in the stern battle of today. Believe me, Man, all your manhood is needed for the all-engrossing now! Use it. Your best way to ensure a happy, a holy and a glorious future is to mind the present and to keep your eye fast on your Master’s will concerning you in this, the hour which is flitting over your head, molding your character and working out your destiny.

God has concealed the future from us, probably, with a view to relieve our career through the world of dull monotony and infuse into it new phases of stirring interest. Life would not wear such a lively aspect if it were all spread out in a map before us on the day of the commencement of our pilgrimage. Much of the pleasantness of a journey lies in unexpected views and scenes which burst upon the traveler as he climbs a hill or descends into a dale. If he could see all at once—one long, unvarigated avenue—it would become weary walking for him. But the very freshness and novelty of the events—adventures and contingencies constantly occurring—help to make life exciting, if not happy.

I thank God for many a mercy which has come to me fresh from the mint of His Providence. I could not have imagined that such a well-timed godsend could have come to me in such an unexpected manner—it had all the marks of novelty about it—as if the Lord had been pleased to coin it and put it into my hand. Has not God also hid the future from us that we may not labor under the sense of being like “dumb driven cattle,” who have no will and no freedom, but both do and suffer what they are compelled by an irresistible agency?

Now, I believe in predestination, yes, even in its very jots and tittles. I believe that the path of a single grain of dust in the March wind is ordained and settled by a decree which cannot be violated. I believe that every word and thought of man, every flittering of a sparrow’s wing, every flight of a fly, the crawling of a beetle, the gliding of a fish in the depth of the sea—that everything, in fact—is foreknown and foreordained. But I do equally believe in the free agency of man, that man acts as he wills, especially in moral operations—choosing the evil with a will that is unbiased by anything that comes from God—biased only by his own depravity of heart and the perverseness of his habits.

I believe in man’s free agency in choosing the right, too, with perfect freedom—though sacredly guided and led by the Holy Spirit—but in such a way that his disposition is trained to choose and prefer the right and the true, not violently driven in the teeth of his own reluctance. He is free in his agency, for the Son of God has made him free. I believe that man is as free as if everything were left to chance and that he is as accountable as if there were no destiny whatever. Where the two Truths of God meet I do not know, nor do I want to know. They do not puzzle me, since I have given up my mind to believing them both.

They are thought by some to be antagonistic, the one contrary to the other. I believe them to be two parallel lines. They run side by side and perhaps even in eternity there is no point of contact between these two grand Truths. But if the predestination were a revealed thing and we could see it, it would then become utterly impossible for human nature to receive the idea of freedom, or to believe itself to be at all independent in its action. Man would, to repeat the line of Longfellow’s, feel himself to be but one of a herd of “dumb, driven cattle,” made to do, whether he willed or not, just what had been ordained.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, is it not to be counted for a thousand mercies in one that all the future is concealed from us, since that future is of a very checkered character, casting, as one has said, beams of hope and shadows of fear over the stage both of active and contemplative life? Some of it is bright with pleasure—much of it is dim with sorrow. What, then, if we knew the pleasure would come, should we not begin to reckon upon it? Surely the current of time would flow on heavily until the pleasant day arrived! Perhaps we would be really drawing bills at a very heavy discount upon the future if we knew it sufficiently to forestall the season of prosperity—so that when it did come we should be already satiated with it by foretaste and so fail to enjoy the good when present which we had gloated on in prospect.

And as for the troubles, the perils and the afflictions that await us—if we knew of them beforehand—we should be pretty sure, with our natural tendency to graceless unbelief and morbid anxiety, to begin to carry the burden before the day came for us to carry it. We should be crossing all the bridges between here and Heaven long before we came to them. We should be reefing all the sails before the storm came. We should be escaping indoors before the first drop of rain fell. We should be so constantly engaged in making anxious provision for the future that the comforts of today would glide away and the joys and opportunities of the present would be despised. We should foster the weakness we lament and cherish the cowardice we disdain. Our sinews would be slackened, our limbs disjointed, our hearts would be frightened with terror.

No, my Lord, it would be a fatal gift if You would bestow upon any one of us the power to know his own future. It were an unhappy thing for any one of us to be able to look beyond this present time. We need not distress ourselves, however, for we shall not receive such a gift of prophecy—we shall not be permitted to lift the veil that hides the morrow. We shall have to go on praying, “Give us this day our daily bread.” We shall have to continue living upon the manna that drops by the day and upon the strength which shall be sufficient for the daily need. It is as we often sing—

*“Day by day the manna fell;  
Oh, to learn this lesson well!  
Still by constant mercy fed,  
Give me, Lord, my daily bread.*

*‘Day by day,’ the promise reads—  
Daily strength for daily needs.  
Cast foreboding fears away—  
Take the manna of today.”*

It is, however, important for us to remember two or three things with regard to the future. First, that all in the future is appointed—that especially those desirable ends we are looking for are the subjects of appointment. And that in connection with those ends and those events, there are certain appointments of mercy which should, tonight, give us comfort.

I. First, then, dear Friends, it is well for us to remember that EVERYTHING IN THE FUTURE IS APPOINTED. Nothing shall happen to us which God has not foreseen. No unexpected event shall destroy His plans—no emergency shall transpire for which He has not provided. No peril shall occur against which He has not guarded. There shall come no remarkable need which shall take Him by surprise. He sees the end from the beginning and the things that are not as though they were.

To God’s eye there is no past and no future. He fills His own eternal now. He stands in a position from which He can look down upon the whole and see the past, the present and the future at a single glance. All, all, all of the future is foreseen by Him and fixed by Him. We may derive no small comfort from this fact, for, suppose one goes to sea under the most skillful captain—that captain cannot possibly know what may occur during the voyage and with the greatest foresight he can never promise an absolutely safe passage. There may be dangers which he has never yet encountered—Atlantic waves, tornadoes and hurricanes that may yet sweep the good ship away and they that sailed out of port merrily may never reach the haven.

But when you come into the ship of Providence, he who is at the helm is the Master of every wind that shall blow and of every wave that shall break its force upon that ship! And He foresees, as well, the events that shall happen at the harbor for which we make, as those that happen at the port from which we start. He knows in His own soul every wave with its height and breadth and force. He knows each wind. Though the winds seem to be left without control, He knows each wind in all its connections and the speed at which each shall travel. How safe we are, then, when embarked in the good ship of Providence, with such a Captain who has forearranged and foreordained all things from the beginning even unto the end!

And, furthermore, how much it becomes us to put implicit confidence in His guidance! Hold your peace, Man, even from counsel—for your thoughts are vain where your understanding is baffled—

*“When my dim reason would demand  
Why this or that You do ordain,  
By some vast deep I seem to stand,  
Whose secrets I must ask in vain.  
Be this my joy, that evermore  
You rule all things at Your will  
Your sovereign wisdom I adore,  
And calmly, sweetly, trust You still.”*

It should always be remembered in connection with this subject that we are no believers in fate—seeing that fate is a different doctrine altogether from predestination. Fate says the thing is and must be—so it is decreed. But the true doctrine is—God has appointed this and that, not because it must be, but because it is best that it should be. Fate is blind, but the destiny of Scripture is full of eyes. Fate is stern and adamantine and has no tears for human sorrow, but the arrangements of Providence are kind and good. The greatest good for the greatest number and the Glory of God above all, are the ends that are in it subserved.

Do not imagine that God has simply out of His own arbitrary will determined this and that. He does as He wills, but He always wills to do that which is in conformity with His high and glorious Nature. He never wills an unjust thing. He never wills a really unkind thing. All the appointments of His Providence, especially towards His people, are ruled in mercy, in tenderness, in love and in wisdom and all are conducive to their highest interest and their greatest happiness. Oh, but this is a blessed Truth of God!

Oh, it is sweet, to be able to say, “From this day forth, whatever happens to me, be it little or be it great, I am content. Though I am altogether unaware what it shall be, I am not sorry that I am unaware of it—for this one thing I know—there shall happen nothing but what God permits. I shall be left to no demon’s power. I shall not be cast away like an orphan. I shall not be beyond my Father’s eyes and my Father’s hands—all shall come and last and end as shall please Him—and it shall always please Him that everything that comes shall work for my good if I am one of His people. I may not see it at the time, but it will be so whether I see it or not! All shall happen, every event, in its proper place, every pain according to its proper measure. Everything that makes me sing, and cry and groan. Every loss and every cross. Every slander. Everything that seems to hinder me or to thwart my wishes—all shall come and be ruled and managed to make the end which God has promised to bring salvation to my soul and Glory to Himself.”

O Beloved, I do not know where those go for comfort who have not accepted this Truth, but I do know that after you have done all you can in toiling for your daily bread, or, as in my case, you have done all you can in the discharge of Christian service, it is a blessed thing, in times of serious difficulty and perplexing dilemma, to fall right back into the arms of the ever-ruling God, and say, “You do all things well. Though things go ill according to my judgment, yet Your judgment is better than mine and You do all things right and let Your name be glorified.” If one could think that there was somewhere one grain of dust floating in the atmosphere that was not under Divine superintendence, one might wish to escape from it as from a plague!

If one could believe that there was an hour of the night, or say a single second throughout the year in which the hand of God was withdrawn from Nature, or a single event in which God was not concerned, and His will was not consulted, one might tremble till that black storm had passed, or till that dread event, like a vial full of evil, had been effectually poured out and put away. But now each hour is safe, for God has made it so! Each place of difficulty and of danger shall still be secure to the faithful servants of the Lord. Each time of peril shall still be a time of blessed safety to the man that rests beneath the wings of the eternal God. He who learns to see God in calm and in storm, in either and both, cares not much which it is, but leaves it to his God to choose. He who sees the giving hand of God as well as the taking hand, will not repine at either, but will say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord.”

I would, with special earnestness, beg you to believe that God is in little things. It is the little troubles of life that annoy us the most. A man can put up with the loss of a dear friend, sometimes, better than he can with the burning of his fingers with a coal, or some little accident that may occur to him. The little stones in the sandal make the traveler limp, while great stones do him little hurt, for he soon leaps over them. Believe that God arranges the littles! Take the little troubles as they come—remember them to your God because they come from Him. Believe that nothing is little to God which concerns His people. To Him, indeed, your greatest concerns may be said to be little, and your little anxieties are not too mean for His notice.

The very hairs of your head are all numbered! You may, therefore, pray to Him about your smallest griefs. If not a sparrow lights upon the ground without your Father, you have reason to see that the smallest events in your career are arranged by Him and it should be your joy to accept them as they come and not make them causes of offense either to others or to yourselves. This is a Truth of God on which you may rely implicitly, and exercise yourselves continually, until you lull the sharpest pains, calm the most feverish excitements and obtain the sweetest repose that a spirit weary, but restless, can indulge in. It is the antidote of fear.

I commend this positive certainty to you with the utmost confidence. Everything in the future is appointed by God. As men you will account it reasonable. As disciples you will believe it, for it its plainly revealed, and as Christians I trust you may rejoice in it heartily, for it must be a theme of rejoicing that all is in the hands of the great King. The Lord is King! Let His people rejoice!—

*“The Lord is King; who then shall dare Resist His will, distrust His care, Or murmur at His wise decrees,*

***Or doubt His royal promises?  
Oh, when His wisdom can mistake,***

***His might decay, His love forsake,  
Then may His children cease to sing,  
The Lord Omnipotent is King.”***

II. But now, secondly, there is A SPECIAL APPOINTMENT WITH REGARD TO CERTAIN ENDS. I am not going to pursue the connection, but the text itself will suffice me, for it says, “at the time appointed the end shall be.” Now, there are certain “ends” to which you and I are looking forward to with great expectancy. There is the end of the present trouble— let us think of that. I do not know what your particular trouble may be, but this I know—as surely as you are in the furnace you will be anxious to be delivered out of it. Whatever submission we may have to the Divine will, it is not natural for us to love affliction—we desire to reach the end and come forth from the trial. “At the time appointed the end shall be.”

You have been slandered in your character— a very frequent trial to God’s servants—and you are irritated and vexed and in a great haste to answer it—to rebut the calumny and to vindicate your reputation. Be still. Be very quiet and patient. Bear it all. Stand still and see the salvation of God, for light is sown for the righteous and He will bring forth your righteousness like the light and your judgment as the noonday. “At the time appointed the end shall be.” When the dogs are tired they will leave off barking and when the Lord bids them be still, they shall not dare to move a tongue against you. “At the time appointed the end shall be.”

You are in poverty. It is some time since you had a situation in which you could earn your daily bread. You have been walking wearily up and down those hard London streets—you have been searching the advertisement sheet—you have looked everywhere for something to do. You gaze upon the dear wife and pitiful children with ever-increasing anxiety. Are you a child of God? Have you learned to cast your burden upon the Lord? Then, “at the time appointed the end shall be.” There shall yet be deliverance for you. “Trust in the Lord and do good and so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” The ravens are fed at this day, as they were in David’s day—and He that feeds the ravens will not let His children starve. Patiently wait the appointed time. Industriously seek to find it, but still with patience submit to the Divine will.

It may be, dear Friend, that you are passing out of another trial which it shall not be possible for me to describe. Indeed, it is one which you cover up and keep to yourself. And of all sorrows, those are among the most severe when the heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddles not with it. You have been seeking in prayer for help out of this trial and you have believed that the help would come, but it has been long delayed. It is now month after month that you have put up storm signals and yet the blessed lifeboat of your heavenly Father’s mercy has not come out to your almost wrecked vessel. Be still and know the salvation of God. “At the time appointed the end shall be.”

The time is not for you to appoint. To set times for God to answer prayer is always wrong. He who gives has the right to choose the time of the gift. Beggars must not be choosers. God has appointed the time of your visitation and at the time appointed let Hell and earth do what they may, it shall surely come! Only be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord and in the quiet confidence of faith possess your soul—for the end of your trial and trouble shall surely come at the time appointed.

It may be, Brethren, that the end you are desiring is greater usefulness and you have been panting after this for years. In that class, or in that village chapel—or whatever other form of labor it is that you have undertaken—you have been groaning out your very soul, asking the Lord that He would give you the Holy Spirit more plenteously. You have tried to get rid of everything that might hamper you in your work, or that would prevent the Lord’s using you. You have pleaded to be delivered from all wrong motives and all gross and carnal desires and yet, for all that, the blessing tarries. Do not give up the work! Do not play the Jonah! There have been many who have done it who have found no whale to swallow them, or if the whale swallowed them there has been an end of them. You keep to your work, still, for “at the time appointed the end shall be.”

God will not suffer the faithful worker to work in vain. Your labor of love shall not be in vain in the Lord. You know not when the prosperity is to come. Some do not live to see their own work. If so they may take up the language of Moses and say, “Let Your work appear unto Your servants”—let us do the work—“and Your glory unto their children.” Let our children live to see the result of our work and the Glory of God through it and we shall be well content. “At the time appointed”—to every honest and earnest servant of Christ—“the end shall be.”

Beloved Friends, you are looking forward, some of you, to the end of your life’s battle. Life is to the genuine Christian an incessant fight. The moment we are converted the battle begins. We think, sometimes, that corruption will be destroyed and that we shall find no indwelling sin to beset us. I have heard some of God’s servants talk about indwelling sin being destroyed in them. I only wish I could have any hope that it would be so in me—instead of this I find that to will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not.

When I would serve God, still there is an evil heart of unbelief that checks me in it all. And I believe that if men could see their own hearts right, that is about the experience of every child of God. It is a warfare from the first to the last and until we get to Heaven we may never talk about putting up our sword into its scabbard and taking our rest. But, glory be to God, “in the time appointed the end of this warfare shall be.” It is war with Amalek in perpetuity, according to the oath of God, “Because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” But once let us enter into the true Canaan and it shall be war with Amalek no more, for the Lord shall tread Satan, himself, under our feet, while inbred sin shall be cast far away and we shall be without fault before the Throne of God!

No temptation arising from the world shall reach us. No suggestion from Hell shall grieve us. No angry temper shall disturb us. No thought of pride. No suggestion of the flesh shall come in to mar our matchless purity, but we shall serve God day and night in His Temple! The beauty of holiness shall be upon us—in the time appointed the blessed end shall be. So, too, with the service of our lives. I think no servant of God is tired of serving his Master. We may be tired in the service, though not tired of it. I have heard a story of the celebrated Mr. William Dawson who used to call himself “Billy” Dawson, much to the point.

On one occasion, when he and some other Methodist friends were spending the evening together, a dear friend of mine happened to be present and heard what passed. They were praying that Mr. Dawson’s life might be spared for many years to come, that such an earnest man might be kept in the Church for the next 20 or 30 years. At last, as they were just in the middle of prayer, William Dawson said, “Lord, don’t hear ‘em! I want to get my work done and go Home! I don’t want to be here any longer than there is need to be!” And the Brethren stopped their prayers— thunderstruck as they witnessed his emotion!

Now I believe that feeling will often pass over the earnest working Christian. “Oh,” he says, “I am not lazy. I am not idle. But still, I would like to get my work done.” ‘Tis your lazy workmen that are all the day long getting through their job, but the industrious man would just as soon make a good day of it and get a great deal done in a short time. Well, lest that feeling should ever grow into impatience, the text whispers into our ears, “At the time appointed the end shall be.” You shall go out to reap for the last time. There shall be a last sermon and a last prayer and there shall be a last look of anxiety over backsliders. There shall be a last tear of sorrow over the impenitent. There shall be a last motion of the soul over those that have deceived you and disappointed your hopes. It shall be all finished. The top stone of your life-work shall be brought out with shouting of, “Grace, Grace,” unto it! You shall lay your crown at His feet from whom you received it and you shall hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.” “In the time appointed the end shall be.”

With many a child of God life is not merely a warfare spiritually and a work for God outwardly, but it is attended with much suffering. I speak not now of martyrs, men so little esteemed in their own age that they fell by the hand of the public executioner, yet so honored by posterity that a bright halo encircles their memory. I rather refer to those whose heroic faith has endured an agony of physical suffering with a sacred composure of mind. Have you ever heard of the infirmities under which Richard Baxter labored? He was a man whose vigorous sermons were supplemented by such voluminous writings that his works are a prodigy of toil! Or need I remind you of Robert Hall? He, almost within our own memory, was accounted the prince of modern preachers for his eloquence.

Why, it has been said that he would be no mean proficient in medical pathology who could describe the complicated diseases of either of these men. Yet they ceased not to toil! Pain was, to their idea, no excuse from service. They found recreations from their own groans in warning sinners of the more dreadful groans of lost souls. But my heart’s pity is towards full many a dear saint for whose complaint there is no remedy but patience. Ah, I know many servants of God whose every breath seems to be a pang—their poor bodies are in such a condition that life is like protracted death! Sometimes in the long and weary night, especially when poverty is associated with sickness and friends become fewer and fewer every year, it is no wonder that the sufferer cries, “Why is His chariot so long in coming? Where is my Beloved gone? Why does He not admit me into the pastures of rest?”

Well, weary sufferer, “in the time appointed the end shall be.” I think we may put all together and say that we would not wish to postpone that day. What folly to wish to be longer out of Heaven than we must! But we would not wish to antedate that period, for the Master must know best and for us to be there an hour before His time—if such a thing were possible—would not be to be in Heaven at all, for to be in Heaven is to be in perfect conformity with the Divine will. A good soul who was asked whether she would live or die, said she would rather leave it with God. “But,” they said, “if the Lord permitted you to choose, what would you do?”

“Why,” she said, “I think I would not choose, but I would ask God to be good enough to choose for me and then I would choose what He chose for me.” And that is the best state of heart to be in. The end is appointed. The very day and hour of death are settled. And the means by which we shall receive the death-shock—whether we shall drop dead in the street, or whether we shall die in the pew—such a thing has happened in this Tabernacle—or whether we shall lie in protracted weakness, the tenement being gradually taken down and the soul gazing steadfastly into the excellent Glory by the month together before she takes her flight. Whichever it is to be, God has settled it all and He has settled it all for the best.

Sometimes in thinking of it, if one might make the choice, it seems that it must be delightful to have a sudden death—to shut one’s eyes on earth and open them in Heaven. I could never understand that prayer in the Litany which many people think very excellent—it may be so and it may be that my idea of it is wrong in which they pray to be delivered from sudden death. I would never think of praying such a prayer and never shall! I do not know of any privilege that seems to be greater than that of sudden death. One gentle sigh and away you are gone! Like a dear servant of God, Mr. Watts Wilkinson, who prayed that he might never know death and he died in his sleep—his prayer was heard and he was taken Home in the midst of slumbers soft and sweet.

How blessed, like Isaac Sanders, of St. Ann’s, Blackfriars, and Dr. Beaumont, the Wesleyan minister, to expire in the pulpit, to be in your Master’s service and called away! Well, you have not got your choice, so that whichever form you might most dread you need not encourage any timid apprehensions, for you shall not have the disposal of the matter. The Lord will be careful to take you Home in a heavenly way, for He will send such a chariot for His servants as shall be most suitable to them. I do not think they go to Heaven in a beggarly procession, but that God fetches the guests who are to dwell with Him forever, each one of them, in a suitable manner and so shall you be taken up to dwell with God in the way which your own heart would choose if infinite wisdom were to counsel you.

III. One more thought before we close. All things are appointed and especially these sacred and blessed ends. But remember that besides the ends, ALL THE MEANS TO THE ENDS are also appointed—all that intervenes is appointed, too. Balance this thought with the other. My trouble appointed! Yes, but there is an appointed portion of Divine Grace that shall sustain me under it—Grace exactly according to the measure of my necessity while under the tribulation.

Temptation appointed! Yes, but there is appointed extraordinary help to deliver the soul from going down into the Pit and to pluck the foot out of the net, lest by any means one sheep of Christ should be devoured by the lion of Hell. You fear sickness, because that may be appointed—but it is also appointed, “I will make all his bed in his sickness,” and that appointment carries you over the other. It is appointed, perhaps, that you should be in need—but then it is appointed that better should be your dinner of herbs than the stalled ox of the wicked.

You know it is appointed unto you to die, at least, unless the Lord should suddenly come in His Glory—but then it is appointed unto you to rise again and the death appointed is not the death of common men! It is when sleeping in Jesus the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken you! And what of the Divine Grace appointed? Is it not appointed that up from the grave you should rise in a nobler image than that which you now wear, even in the image of your Lord and covenant Head? What if it is appointed that the body should lie among the clods of the valley? Yet it is equally appointed that these very hands should strike the celestial strings of the golden harp and these very eyes should see the King in His beauty!

Rejoice, then, that the appointments of God concerning every one of His children are sure and effectual. You must be with Christ where He is to behold His Glory. You must be a partaker of His everlasting blessedness. He will not suffer you to perish, nor will He leave you to be cast away. If all the other matters are appointed, so are these great and glorious things appointed—they shall come about in their appointed time and so shall your heart give to God constant praise!

And now, dear Friends, there is nothing in this Truth of God that can give any comfort to those who are not reconciled to God. It is a great and terrible Truth to those who are not God’s friends. At the time appointed the end shall be. What a winding up awaits those who will encounter the doom of the impenitent, no tongue can describe. There will be an end to haughty and contemptuous skepticism and an end to careless apathetic unbelief. There will be an end to the indulgence of fleshly lusts and an end to the enjoyment of creature comforts. There will be an end to the longsuffering with which God has borne with you so patiently and an end to the sound of Mercy’s voice ringing in your ears, admonishing you to repent.

Who among you can foresee that time appointed? Ah, I would you went reconciled to God, poor Sinner, for if not, living and dying as you are, the events that shall transpire will grow blacker and blacker to you. All that shall happen in the future, especially in eternity, will bring you only woe after woe and you will forever have to cry, “One woe is past and behold another woe comes and yet another!” Like Job’s messengers, your miseries will follow at each other’s heels. Why rebel against the King of Heaven? Why set your will against the Divine will? He speaks to you tonight—in the cool of the evening He appeals to you, and He says, “Return unto Me. Arise and seek your Father’s face.”

And if you would be reconciled, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust Christ with your soul. Trust Him implicitly! Trust Him sincerely! Trust Him now, and you are reconciled at once and then, from now on, the great and terrible wheels of Providence have no terror for you—for all things work together for good to them that love God—to them that are the called according to His purpose. May the blessing of God abide with you evermore.

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PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH  
NO. 2788

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 20, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 20, 1878.

**“Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” Daniel 9:17.**

A TRUE-HEARTED Believer does not live for himself. Where there is abundance of Grace and great strength of mind in the service of God, there is sure to be a spirit of unselfishness. It was so with Daniel, who was a model man in the matter of decision of character and a holy, believing walk before the Lord. That “man greatly beloved” was, in all respects, faithful to his convictions. No lion’s den could silence his courageous prayer. No presence of mighty monarch or of his festive guests could turn him aside from delivering his fateful message.

Yet Daniel was not satisfied. Whatever might be his own condition, he remembered what Jerusalem was and what the people to whom he belonged were and, in the depths of his soul he sorrowed, notwithstanding all that God’s Grace had worked within him. I firmly believe that the better a man’s own character becomes and the more joy in the Lord he has in his own heart, the more capable is he of sympathetic sorrow and, probably, the more of it he will have. If you have room in your soul for sacred joy, you have equal room for holy grief and, depend upon it, you will have both of these emotions if the Lord has perfectly consecrated you and purposes to use you for His Glory.

Daniel was also a man of many visions. With the exception of John, whom Daniel greatly resembles, it has scarcely fallen to the lot of any man, unless it is Ezekiel, to have so many wondrous visions of God. Yet his visions did not make him visionary. There are many persons who could not be trusted to see the tip of an angel’s wing—for they would become so proud, afterwards, that there would be no holding them. But he who is fully consecrated to God may see vision after vision and he will make a practical use of what he sees—and try to find out something to be done, something to be repented of, something to be prayed for— something that shall be for the good of the Church of God.

Daniel had also been studying the prophecies, and he knew, by what he had discovered, when certain predictions would be fulfilled. But he was not, like some students of prophecy in our day, utterly unpractical. They seem to be so taken up with the future that they do nothing in the present! They are so fully occupied in looking up to the sky, with their mouths wide open, waiting for the coming of the Lord, that they forget that the very best way to wait for the coming of the Master is to be found doing His will! “Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing.” What Daniel learned from the study of the Sacred Books, he turned to practical account and, finding that a certain time was near, of which good things were foretold, he set his face toward the Lord and began to pray—not for himself, but for his people, many of whom were at Jerusalem, hundreds of miles away from him, or scattered in various places all over the face of the earth. For them he used those bright and sparkling eyes which had looked up into the celestial fires. For them he used that thoughtful and enlightened mind which had studied the Oracles of God. For them he used those knees which were so familiar with the attitude of prayer and, getting alone by himself, he wrestled mightily—as Jacob had done of old—only Daniel’s pleading was for a far greater number of people who were in a still direr trouble—and he, too, wrestled until he came off more than a conqueror!

I am anxious, dear Friends, that Daniel’s prayer should, by the blessing of God’s Spirit, inspire us with the spirit of prayer—and that his example, in forgetting himself and remembering his people, would help us to be unselfish and lead us to care for our people—even God’s people—to whom we have the honor and privilege to belong. Patriotism is an instinct which is found, I think, in every true Englishman. And most of the other nations of the earth can also boast of their patriots. Let it never be said that the Church of God has no feeling of patriotism for the Holy City, for the Heavenly Land and for her glorious King enthroned above. To us, Christian patriotism means love to the Church of God, for—

*“There our best friends, our kindred dwell, There God our Savior reigns.”*

Let us have loyalty, by all means, but, chiefly, loyalty to Christ! Let us have true patriotism, but, especially that patriotism which consists in love to “the land of the living” of which Christ is the one King and Ruler.

In meditating upon Daniel’s prayer, “Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary,” I shall, first of all, speak upon the holy place—“Your sanctuary.” Then, secondly, we will consider the earnest prayer itself. And, lastly, we will think of the conduct consistent with such a prayer as this.

I. First, then, Daniel speaks of THE HOLY PLACE. “Your sanctuary.” Of course, he refers to the Temple at Jerusalem, which was then in utter ruin. It had been broken down and burned by the Chaldeans and Daniel, therefore, rightly calls it desolate—but fervently prays that God would cause His face to shine even upon its ruins!

My first remark is that the Temple at Jerusalem was typical of the Church of God. We are never to regard any building now upon earth as a sanctuary, a holy place. We do, very incorrectly, speak of places as being consecrated to Divine worship, but it is utterly impossible that there should be any more holiness in any one building than in another. Holiness is not an attribute of material substances—it does not appertain to iron, stone, mortar, brick, or timber. It is something which belongs to the mind and to the spirit of man and, from the time of our Lord, there has been no building which was even typically holy. Sitting on the well at Sychar, he said to the woman of Samaria, “The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...The hour comes and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” Stephen declared to the Jewish Sanhedrim, “The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands,” and proved the truth of his statement by quoting the Lord’s own declaration by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord.” Talk of holy buildings—can anything that man has made be as holy as yon bright blue sky which the Lord has spread out like a curtain, and as a tent to dwell in? Talk of holy water—can any water be holier than that which drops in blessed showers straight from Heaven?

“But,” says someone, “if the Temple was typical, of what was it a type? Why, of the Church of God! There is still a Temple upon the earth, but it is a Temple not made with hands—a Temple reared not by human masons, and hewers of stone, and carpenters, and other artificers, but built by God Himself! This Temple is the Church of God. “Which church?” asks someone. There never was more than one—that is, the Church which Christ has redeemed with His own blood. The living stones, which compose this living Temple, were all chosen by God from before the foundation of the world! They are, one by one, being quarried by effectual Grace and built up by the power of the Divine Spirit, so as to grow unto a holy Temple in the Lord!

So we learn that as the Temple was typical, so also was it unique. There were never two temples at one time. True, there was a second, which was built upon the foundations of the first. Still, there was only one at a time—the second was the continuation of the former one with less of splendor. All through the land of Canaan there was only one spot where sacrifice might be lawfully offered—only one shrine where, on high occasions, the multitudes met together for worship. And, in like manner, there is only one Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Which church is that?” someone again asks. None of them all—but there are some people, in all the visible churches, who belong to the one sanctuary of God. We may hope that even in those churches which have most departed from primitive simplicity, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace! And that there is a still larger proportion among those who keep more closely to the Word of God and to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. You cannot say of any part, or of the whole of what is called the visible church, that it is the sanctuary of God—it is a sort of shell in which the real Church of God is encased and which it helps, perhaps, to preserve— but which it also certainly disfigures.

There is an elect people to be found on earth. Do you ask, “Who are they?” I answer, “The Lord knows them that are His.” They are a people redeemed from among men by a special and peculiar purchase of our Lord—a people quickened with one life, in whom there is but one living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever—a people in mystical, real, spiritual, indissoluble union with their great Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus Christ—a people who are, some of them, very poor and quite unknown. Some of them, however, are in the high places of the earth—a few may be found even there. They are scattered up and down in the world and some of them do not know one another, but the Lord knows them all. And whether they know it or not, there is a communion between them all.

Some friends talk about exclusive communion, but it is impossible to practice such a thing, for all true communion is with Christ the Head, and also with all the rest of the members, just as, in the body, every member communicates with every other member and, unless it should cut itself off, and kill itself, it must commune with all the rest. It may tie little pieces of red tape around itself and try to stop the circulation of the blood, but, as long as there is life, the heart beats through the whole body. Every pulse has its effect upon the whole, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot—and so is it with the communion of saints. We are all one body! One life pulsates through all the living Church of the living God. There was but one Temple and there is but one Church.

People try to get a visible form of that one Church, but I believe that is utterly impossible. The Church of Rome claims to be that one Church— and we know what sort of a church it is! And, on the other hand, there are certain brethren who profess to be the one assembly of God. Well, I will not say what kind of church they have made, but I believe that all schemes for comprehending all the saints in one visible church must fail. Adam never saw Eve until God had perfectly fashioned her—and you will never see the Church, the Bride of Christ, till she is perfect and complete! And when she is, you will clap your hands with joy at the sight of the exquisite beauty which God shall have given to her before she is presented to her Heavenly Bridegroom. The process of perfecting her is going on now—and Christ’s Bride is being “curiously worked” out of material taken from Christ’s own side. And she will be able to say to Him, “Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfected.” Yes, He sees and He knows it all.

There was but one Temple, then, and there is but one Church, the sanctuary of God, and for that Church we ought to pray. This should correct the idea of some who, when they pray for God to bless His sanctuary, mean, “Lord, bless little Bethel! or, “Lord, bless the parish church!” or, “Lord, bless the extremely orthodox community to which I belong!” or “Lord, bless the select few that gather to hear our dear minister!” I say, “The Lord bless all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and, wherever there lives upon the face of the earth a man who has anything of the Grace of God in him, the Lord lift up His Countenance upon him! May He deliver him from all errors and mistakes into which even God’s children fall in a measure, and may He bring them all to the one Lord, the one faith and the one baptism!” If there is good evidence that anyone is, indeed, a living one in God’s one true, spiritual Temple, shall we not all wish every blessing to such an one in the name of the Most High?

The Temple at Jerusalem was, further, the fabric of wisdom. It could only have been built by a Solomon. And Solomon found a band of men whom God had prepared to carry out the extraordinary work of the Temple, for, from its marvelous foundations, which have been lately uncovered, even to its topmost pinnacle, it excelled all the architecture which the world had ever seen! But the Church which God is erecting is a far more wonderful work of wisdom infinitely superior to that of Solomon! Wisdom planned it in election. Wisdom has worked marvelously and continues to work in the calling out of the saints. Wisdom fits each living stone for its proper place and puts each one into its right position. When it shall be all finished, it will be the marvel of all intelligence as they see what a matchless sanctuary God, and not man, has reared, and note how, in every single detail, His Infinite Wisdom is manifest!

The Temple that Solomon built was also the result of great cost. Immense wealth was lavished upon it and you do not need that I should try to tell you at what cost the Lord is building up His true sanctuary here among men. The cost of any one of us, if we are, indeed, living stones, no arithmetic can ever calculate! Nowhere but in the heart of Christ could our ransom price be found—and even that heart had to be pierced to find it. Well does Peter say, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” How marvelous, then, is that Temple which is erected at such a cost! Everything about it is according to God’s riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Solomon’s Temple, glorious though it was, had not about the whole edifice so much of splendor as God displays in even the least of the living stones which He builds upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Again, the Temple of old was the shrine of God’s indwelling. It was the one place under the old dispensation of types, now done away with, where God dwelt in visible manifestation among His ancient people. We are told that a peculiar light shone between the wings of the cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant and that pillar, which looked like a cloud by day, flamed like a mighty beacon by night! It was there that men must go, or, at least, to that spot that they must look if they sought the Lord. And therefore it was that Daniel worshipped and prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. At the present time, the one place in all the world, where God dwells, is His Church. You can find Him anywhere upon the earth as the Creator, but the Glory of the Godhead comes out most brilliantly in Redemption, for it is of His redeemed people that it is written, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” God has not said, of any one country, “England, America, Russia, Spain, shall be Mine.” But Moses truly said, “the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.”

It is in His Church that God dwells. Sometimes men take us into some gorgeous building with ornamental roof and wondrous architecture and, as we are led up to a brass railing, we are told that, inside that barrier, it is peculiarly holy. And then we are pointed to some steps and we are told that at the top of those step, it is much holier than it is anywhere else. To my mind, it is an amazing thing that men should entertain such absurd notions for which there is not the slightest shadow of a foundation! But you get where there is a true child of God—and there the place is holy. I declare that I have often stood on holy ground, but it has been by the bedside of some poor, expiring saint with whom the Lord has been dwelling and through whom He has manifested the wonders of His Grace. That is where God dwells—in that godly woman dying in the workhouse! That is where He dwells—in that humble-minded man plodding at the plow tail to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow! That is where He dwells—in that saintly woman who endures a daily martyrdom for Christ’s sake—and in that man whose holy life adorns the Doctrine of God, his Savior, in all things! These are the true holy places—the sacred shrines of God wherein the Holy Spirit delights to dwell!

The Temple at Jerusalem was also the place of God’s peculiar worship—and where is God worshipped now, Beloved, but in His living Church? A number of us may meet together and call ourselves Christians, and think that we are worshipping God, but, unless we are really regenerate and the Spirit of God is in us, there is no true worship. You cannot offer acceptable worship to God by forms, or ceremonies, or the sweetest music, or even in the simplest style of worship in the most plain meeting house, or by sitting still, and saying nothing, as the members of the Society of Friends do, unless you worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth! It is heart-work, soul-work, the work of the Spirit of God drawing us near to God which alone is acceptable to Him. I dare say it yet again—there is no worship under Heaven that can be pleasing to God except the worship of the one true Church, the sanctuary of God— and that Church is composed of believers in Jesus, whose hearts are knit together into one in Christ!

The Temple at Jerusalem was also the throne of Jehovah’s power. It was out of Zion that He sent forth His rod and from that sacred shrine that He spoke, by His ancient Prophets, the Word that was full of power. Who could stand against Him when He was angry and spoke in His fury out of His Holy Place? And Christ’s power, through the Holy Spirit, still goes forth from His Church. The man who is to preach with power, must be one of those who are quickened by the Holy Spirit and through whom the Spirit speaks with Divine energy. Mere human eloquence is nothing in this matter! Nor is learning, by itself, of any account! Though you may have gone to 20 universities and received from them all the degrees with which men delight to bedizen them, all is in vain without the Spirit of God! It is the life of Christ in a man, the Holy Spirit being with him, that enables him to speak with power! It is the work of the Church of God to evangelize the world. It cannot be evangelized from any other source. God will not send angels to do that which He has committed unto men and, certainly, He will not employ the wicked to declare His statutes—so His Church must do it. The living waters flowed forth from Jerusalem. Light, instruction and the Oracles of God went forth from Jerusalem of old. And now they must go forth from the Church of God, which is among men to this day. Let us, each one, take care that we have our share in this blessed employment!

See, then, what the sanctuary of God is. Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of the Temple of His body, said to the unbelieving Jews, “Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” But now He is gone from us and we know Him no more after the flesh—but we still have God among us! That God is the sacred third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity in Unity—the Holy Spirit—and though we may not say that He is Incarnate among men, yet we can truly say that He dwells among men. There is still a Divine indwelling, the Holy Spirit is here on earth right now, dwelling in His people, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?” The whole body of Believers put together makes up the one great spiritual Temple, which is the sanctuary of the living God!

II. Now, secondly, I must speak more briefly upon THE EARNEST PRAYER—“Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.”  
And, first, I note that it is a prayer quite free from selfishness. Daniel does not even say to the Lord, “Cause Your face to shine upon me.” Have you not, Beloved, sometimes felt that you could almost forego the Light of God’s Countenance, yourself, if He would but bless His Church? O Souls, if God will but save some of you—if God will but make you into pillars in His eternal Temple, some of His saints will be well pleased even if they themselves have to go mourning on their own account!  
Further, Daniel’s prayer was the child of thought. He had thought over the condition of the Temple at Jerusalem and, thinking it over, he had become troubled in his mind. It was lying desolate, but he knew that there was a promise that it should be rebuilt. He thought over these two things—he let his soul lie soaked in the Truth of God about His sanctuary—and then he prayed. It often happens that there is very little power in those prayers that leap out of our lips without premeditation—born in a minute, like gnats, and dying just as soon. But the prayer that lies in the soul, like eggs in a nest, and that has to be sat upon, as it were, and hatched, and brought forth—there is life in such supplication as that and that is the kind of prayer which prevails with God! Such was the prayer of Daniel.  
It was also a prayer which cast itself entirely upon God—“Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” He does not say, “Lord, send more Prophets.” Or, “Raise up new kings.” Or, “Do this or that,” but only, “Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God would be the Subject as well as the Object of our supplications! O God, Your Church needs You above everything else! A poor, little, sick, neglected child needs 50 things, but you can put all those needs into one if you say that the child needs its mother. So, the Church of God needs a thousand things, but you can put them all into one if you say, “The Church of God needs her God.”  
There was also great faith in this prayer—“Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” Daniel seems to say, “Lord, it scarcely needs Your command, it only needs You to smile upon Your sanctuary and all shall be well!” But, Daniel, the Temple is all in ruins! There was scarcely a column standing upon its proper pedestal—and hardly one stone left upon another. “Ah,” he says, “that is true. But, Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” The face of God is as the sun when it shines in its strength. The favor of God is not merely something to His Church, but it is everything! The revelation of His love to His people is not simply a blessing, but it is all the blessings of the Covenant in one! Cause Your face, O infinitely glorious Jehovah, to shine upon Your Church here below! Will you not, Beloved, all join in that prayer?  
It was, however, a very comprehensive prayer because wherever God’s face shines upon His Church, note what happens. First, her walls are rebuilt. Desolations, when God shines upon them, glow into perfection! We shall soon see our church members multiplied and all things in proper order if the Lord will but shine upon us! Then shall you see each one of the Lord’s servants in his right place, ministering before the Lord. I hope we all pray for ministers, but I am afraid we do not pray for them as often and as earnestly as we ought. But, Lord, if You will cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, we shall have ministers enough and of the best sort, too! If Your face is but turned Zionward, You will find the man who will tell of the love of Jesus. When the Lord shines upon a Church, then its worship will be acceptable to Him—even the most humble form of it will be acceptable in His sight. We know, Beloved, what it is to have God’s face shining upon us, do we not? How sweet the service is then! How intense the prayers! How fervent the praise! How you feel fed! How glad your souls are! In this land of weeping skies and gathering clouds, we know what it is to have a long time of dullness—but how different is the prospect when the sun shines forth in its glory—and how different is our worship when the Lord lifts upon us the Light of His reconciled Countenance!  
Then, too, truth will be proclaimed in all its clearness. We shall not have to complain of the cloudy preaching of which we hear so much nowadays, or of the men whose cleverness consists in confusing the minds of their hearers, or, to speak in plain language, in inventing lies to contradict the blessed Word of God and to seek to undermine everything for which we have ever had respect and regard! They have tried to quench Hell, and to pull down Heaven! There is nothing that their unholy fingers have not sought to pollute! But if God shall cause His face to shine upon us, we shall have the old Truth of God declared once again in all its clearness.  
Then, too, we shall see the beauty of holiness in all the members of God’s spiritual Church. We may well pray for that, for there are many professors, in the present day, who are the enemies of the Cross of Christ—enemies because they manage to get into the Church and then dishonor it by their ungodly conduct. O Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your Church, that all Your people may walk in the beauty of holiness!  
Then, also, there will be delightful fellowship. In the sunlight of God’s Presence, we have fellowship with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hearts are exceedingly glad.  
And then there will be power in the testimony. With God’s face shining upon His sanctuary, His Word goes forth from His servants with energy and force which none can resist. Join, then, Beloved, in this prayer of Daniel, “Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.” Do it for the Church’s own sake. What a sad thing it is when the Church is like Samson after the Lord had departed from him—when she shakes herself, as at other times, but can perform none of her former feats! What wretched Sabbaths some of our Brothers and Sisters have to spend when they go and listen to a profitless ministry and mingle with Brethren as dull, and cold, and dissatisfied as themselves! Join also in this prayer for the world’s sake. If the Church has not the Lord to shine upon her, what is the poor world to do? What hope, what light, what knowledge of the Truth of God, what salvation can come to a perishing world of sinners except through a living Church? What are your own children to do without this shining of God’s Countenance? If you take them to a place where the worship is dull and lifeless—if they are compelled to listen to something that never interests them at all, and to go where there is no one to care about their souls, you may live to see them grow up to break your hearts. Therefore pray God to bless His Church for your dear children’s sake.  
And, then, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, for the Holy Spirit’s sake— for a lifeless Church is a dishonor to God—and the better a Church has been, the more of a nuisance does it become when the Presence of God is gone from it. May the Lord grant that we may never know what this means in our own case and, for all these reasons, let us pray to God to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary.  
III. Now I am to conclude by briefly reminding you of THE CONDUCT THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS PRAYER. If you and I have been praying this prayer—and I hope we have—what kind of conduct will be consistent with it?  
Well, first, we shall consider the state of the Church. Some professing Christians do not seem to me as if they ever thought of the Church at all. Some do not think much about the church with which they are connected. Do all of you, who are members of this church, know whether the Sunday school is getting on well or not? Now, speak the truth—do you? Did you ever make any enquiry about it? Then there are various Societies for the spread of the Gospel connected with this church—do all of you know that there are such Societies and do you help them all you can? Come, now, put the matter to your own consciences! Then there are numbers of people who are members of various little churches, but who never care anything about other churches. They are like the mouse that lived in a box and when the lid was opened, one day, it came out into the cupboard and said that it had no idea that the world was so big! Yet it was only then looking at the inside of a cupboard! And there are many professing Christians who have not a much wider range of vision than that mouse had in the cupboard—they have no idea of the size of the Church of Christ, or of its various interests. That should not be the case with any of us who are members of the Church of the living God! Let us look over all that is in our Master’s house! Let us count His flocks and His herds, and see how everything that is His flourishes and increases.  
The next thing for us to do is to lay to heart the evil or the good of Zion. Consider it well and then be grieved if you see sin triumphant, or error rampant—and do not perceive that the cause of God is advancing in the world! I am afraid there are many nominally Christian people who look, every morning, to check the price of eggs, who have not examined the last Missionary Society’s Report, nor have they any clear idea as to the increase or decrease of the work of the Lord. This ought not to be true of any professed follower of Christ! How can we expect the Lord to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary when His people have little or no care about that sanctuary?  
Then, if we begin to think, and begin to care, we shall try to do what we can for God’s Church. It is all very well for a man to pray, but the value of his prayer very much depends upon its sincerity, and that sincerity will be proven by his doing something that will help to answer his own prayer. What are you doing, my Brother? What are you doing, my Sister, to promote the Glory of God in His sanctuary? All the living members of the body of Christ contribute something to the general welfare of the whole body. The little finger would be missed if it were cut off and there is not a tiny valve near the heart, nor a minute vessel anywhere in the human system which could be taken away without inflicting an injury upon the whole body. Just so is it in the Church of Christ—we cannot afford to spare any part of the mystical body of Christ. But what use are you, Brother, in that body? What are you doing, Sister, for the well-being of your fellow members? There is something which you should be doing, or else you would not have any portion in the Lord’s spiritual sanctuary.  
But when we have done all that we can, let us pray much more than we ever have done. Oh, for a praying Church! I rejoice that ever since I have been with you, the spirit of prayer has never died out among us and I earnestly entreat you never to let it do so. May our Prayer Meetings be sustained in fervor and increased in number! Praying is, after all, the chief matter. Praying is the end of preaching! Preaching has its right use, and must never be neglected, but real heart devotion is worth more than anything else. Prayer is the power which brings God’s blessing down upon all our work. I beg you, day by day, as you walk the streets, to have this petition in your hearts and in your mouths, “‘Cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.’ O God, bless Your Church all over the world—in Europe, in America, in Asia, in Africa, in Australia! Everywhere prosper Your work among the heathen, and in our own highly-favored land, too, cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary.’” And do not cease to present that prayer until, to the fullest possible extent, it shall be answered. And when will that be? When He comes, for whose coming we look with joyful expectation! The Lord blesses you for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALMS 114; 48.**

Psalm 114. When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back? You mountains, that you skipped like rams; and you little hills, like lambs? Tremble, you earth, at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the God of Jacob; who turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

I did not interrupt the reading of the Psalm by any exposition. It is a perfect whole and could not well be divided without spoiling it. We may admire the poetry as well as the Inspiration of this Psalm. It begins with rugged abruptness—“When Israel went out of Egypt.” It only gives just a hint of the discomfort of the Israelites while in Egypt, arising from the fact that they did not understand the Egyptians—“strange language.” No doubt they were often beaten by their taskmasters for not obeying orders, when they really did not understand what must have seemed to them the barbarous speech of their Egyptian oppressors. But God led them up out of the house of bondage, the tribe of Judah leading the van, and all the people following in due order.

How beautifully the Psalmist describes the dividing of the Red Sea! He represents the waters as perceiving the Presence of God and fleeing away, not because Israel came to the bank, but because God was in the midst of His people—“The sea saw it and fled”—as if abashed at the Presence of its Maker, alarmed at the terror of Jehovah’s might. So was it with the Jordan, that swiftly-flowing river was “driven back” by a very special miracle. The dividing of the Red Sea was a marvelous act of God’s power, but the driving back of that rushing river has some extraordinary points about it peculiar to itself. And all this happened because God was there. The sea flees before Him, the river is driven back by Him. In like manner, my Brothers and Sisters, if God is in the midst of our church, nothing can withstand its onward march! If the Lord is in any man, that man need not even think or talk of difficulties, for, with God nothing is impossible!

So mighty was the influence of God’s Presence that the mountains themselves began to move and even to skip like rams, and to leap like lambs. There was some fear there, for they trembled in their solid sockets, “at the Presence of the God of Jacob.” There was joy, too. We speak of “the everlasting hills,” yet the Psalmist depicts them as moving as easily as the lambs frisk in the meadows in the springtime—“The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.” How grand is the poetic utterance! “What ailed you, O you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you were driven back?” “You could no longer rush in your accustomed channel, but must needs return to the source from where you came. What ailed you, O you mountains, that you trembled as if a palsy had seized upon you? ‘What ailed you, O you little hills?’”

Now comes the answer, which yet is not given in the form of an answer. The Inspired poet, in order to heighten the grandeur of his language, kept the name of God out of the Psalm until he came to the end, when he thus answered his own riddle—“Tremble, you earth, at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters”—another miracle, for God multiplied His marvels. Having brought His people out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness, and made the hills to move at His majestic Presence, now He performs a converting work—changing the rock into a lake, so plenteous was the effusion of water—and making the flint to gush into a veritable river which followed the children of Israel through the wilderness, for, as Paul says, “they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, (the margin is, “that went with them,”) and that Rock was Christ.”

Psalm 48:1-3 *.*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. It was so with the literal Jerusalem and it is so now with the Church of Christ, of which, “the city of the great King” was a type. God still dwells among men. His Spirit abides with His people and His Church stands securely upon the rock of His eternal purposes, evermore the same.

4. For, lo, the kings were assembled. The adversaries who boasted that they would destroy Jerusalem—“the kings were assembled,”  
4-7. They passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. You broke the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. The adversaries of Zion looked up at the city set on that high hill and they despaired of being able to capture it. And, in like manner, those who attack the Truth of God as it is in Jesus—if they did but know how well it is garrisoned by the Omnipotence of Jehovah, they, also, would faint with fear and give up the assault. If they do not, the Lord can break them in pieces as He broke the ships of Tarshish with His strong east wind.  
8-14. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah. We have thought of Your loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Your Temple. According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise unto the ends of the earth: Your right hand is full of righteousness. Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Your judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death. According to Alexander and Bonar, this last clause should be read, “He will be our Guide at death and over death.” He will lead us across the Jordan, and be our God and our Guide in the land that flows with milk and honey, wherever we are bound. So, glory be unto the God of Abraham—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever and ever! Amen.

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DANIEL—A PATTERN FOR PLEADERS  
NO. 3484

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1915.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1870.

**“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and do; defer not, for Your own sake, O my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”  
Daniel 9:19.**

DANIEL was a man in very high position in life. It is true he was not living in his own native land, but, in the Providence of God, he had been raised to great eminence under the dominion of the country in which he dwelt. He might, therefore, naturally have forgotten his poor kinsmen— many have done so. Alas, we have known some that have even forgotten their poor fellow Christians when they have grown in Grace and have thought themselves too good to worship with the poorer sort when they have grown rich in this world’s goods. But it was not so with Daniel. Though he had been made a president of the empire, yet he was still a Jew—he felt himself still one with the seed of Israel. In all the afflictions of his people he was afflicted, and he felt it his honor to be numbered with them and his duty and his privilege to share with them all the bitterness of their lot. If he could not become despised and as poor as they, if God’s Providence had made him to be distinguished, yet his heart would make no distinction—he would remember them and pray for them, and would plead that their desolation might yet be removed.

Daniel was also a man very high in spiritual things. Is he not one of God’s three mightier in the Old Testament? He is mentioned with two others in a celebrated verse as being one of three whose intercessions God would have heard if he had heard any intercessions. But though thus full of Grace, himself, (and for that very reason), he stooped to those who were in a low state. Rejoicing as he did before God as to his own lot, he sorrowed and cried by reason of those from whom joy was banished. It is a sad fault with those Christians who think themselves full of Grace, when they begin to despise their fellows! They may rest assured they are greatly mistaken in the estimate they have formed of themselves. But it is a good sign when your own heart is fruitful and healthy before God, when you condescend to those who backslide and search after such as are weak, and bring again such as were driven away. When you have, like your Master, a tender sympathy for others, then are you rich in Divine things! Daniel showed his intimate sympathy with his poorer and less gracious Brothers and Sisters in the way of prayer. He would have shown that sympathy in other ways had occasions occurred, and no doubt he did—but this time the most fitting way of proving his oneness with them was in becoming an intercessor for them.

My objective here and now will be to stir up the people of God and especially the members of this Church, to abound exceedingly in prayer— more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of His Church and the extension of the Redeemer’s Kingdom.

First, our text gives us a model of prayer. Secondly, it and its surroundings give us encouragement for prayer. First, then, our text gives us—  
I. A MODEL OF PRAYER.  
I think I may notice this first as to the antecedents of the prayer. This prayer of Daniel was not offered without consideration. He did not come to pray as some people do, as though it were a thing that required no forethought whatever. We are constantly told we ought to prepare our sermons and I surely think that if a man does not prepare his sermons he is very blameworthy. But are we never to prepare when we speak to God, but only when we speak to man? Is there to be no preparation of the heart of man when we open our mouth before the Lord? Do not you think we often, both in private and public, begin to pray without any kind of preparation? The words come and then we try to quicken them rather than the desires coming first and the words like garments to clothe them?  
But Daniel’s considerations lay in this, first—he studied the Books of God. He had with him an old manuscript of the Prophet Jeremiah. He read that through. Perceiving such-and-such things spoken of, he prayed for them. Perceiving such-and-such a time given, and knowing that that time was almost come, he prayed the more earnestly! Oh, that you studied your Bibles more! Oh, that we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold Him to His Word and say, “Fulfill this, Your Word, unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope.” Oh, it is grand praying when our mouth is full of God’s Words, for there is no word that can prevail with Him like His own! You tell a man, when you ask him for such-and-such a thing, “You yourself said you would do such-and-such.” You have him then! And so when you can lay hold on the Covenant Angel with this consecrated grip, “You have said! You have said!” Then you have every opportunity of prevailing with Him. May our prayers, then, spring out of our Scriptural studies—may our acquaintance with the Word be such that we shall be qualified to pray a Daniel prayer!  
He had, moreover, it is clear if you read the prayer, studied the history of his people. He gives a little outline of it from the day in which they came out of Egypt. Christian people should be acquainted with the history of the Church—if not with the Church of the past, certainly with the Church of today. We make ourselves acquainted with the position of the Prussian army and we will buy new maps about once a week to see all the places and the towns. Should not Christians make themselves acquainted with the position of Christ’s army and revise their maps to see how the Kingdom of God is progressing in England, in the United States, on the Continent, or in the mission stations throughout the world? All our prayers would be much better if we knew more about the Church— and especially about our own Church! I am afraid I must say it—I am afraid there are some members of the Church that do not know what is going on—hardly know what is meant by some of our enterprises. Brothers and Sisters, know well the Church’s needs as far as you can ascertain them! And then, like Daniel, your prayer will be a prayer founded upon information—and with the promises of God and the fact of the Church’s needs, you will pray prayers of the Spirit, and of the understanding. Let that stand for earnest consideration.  
But next, Daniel’s prayer was mingled with much humiliation. According to the Oriental custom which expresses the inward thought and feeling by the outward act, he put on a coarse garment made of black hair called sackcloth, and then taking handfuls of ashes, he cast them on his head and over the cloth that covered him—and then he knelt down in the very dust in secret. These outward symbols were made to express the humiliation which he felt before God. We always pray best when we pray out of the depths—when the soul gets low enough she gets a leverage. Then we can plead with God. I do not say we ought to ask to see all the evil of our own hearts. One good man prayed that prayer very often. He is mentioned in some of the Puritan writers—a minister of the Gospel. It pleased God to hear his prayer and he never rejoiced afterwards. It was with great difficulty that he was even kept from suicide, so deep and dreadful was the agony he experienced when he did begin to see his sin as he wanted to see it! It is best to see as much of that as God would have us see of it. You cannot see too much of Christ, but you might see too much off your sin! Yet, Brothers and Sisters, this is rarely the case. We need to see much of our deep needs, our great sins, for ah, that prayer shall go highest that comes from the lowest. To stoop well is a grand art in prayer. To pour out the last drop of anything like selfrighteousness! To be able to say from the very heart, “Not for our righteousness’ sake do we plead with You, O God, for we have sinned, and our fathers, too.” Put the negative, the weightiest negative, upon any idea of pleading human merit! When you can do this, then are you in the right way to pray a prayer that will move the arm of God and bring you down a blessing! Oh, some of you ungodly ones have tried to pray, but you have not bowed yourselves. Proud prayers may knock their heads on mercy’s lintel, but they can never pass through the portal! You cannot expect anything of God unless you put yourself in the right place, that is, as a beggar at His footstool—then will He hear you, but not until then.  
Daniel’s prayer instructs us in the next point. It was excited by zeal for God’s Glory. We may sometimes pray with wrong motives. If I seek the conversion of souls in my ministry, is not that a good motive? Yes, it is. But suppose I desire the conversion of souls in order that people may say, “What a useful minister he is”? That is a bad motive which spoils it all. If I am a member of a Christian Church and I pray for its prosperity, is not that right? Certainly, but if I desire its prosperity merely that I and others may be able to say, “See our zeal for the Lord! See how God blesses us rather than others?” That is a wrong motive. The motive is this, “Oh, that God could be glorified, that Jesus might see the reward of His sufferings! Oh, that sinners might be saved, so that God might have new tongues to praise Him, new hearts to love Him! Oh, that sin were put an end so that the holiness, righteousness, mercy and power of God might be magnified!” This is the way to pray—when your prayers seek God’s Glory, it is God’s Glory to answer your prayers! When you are sure that God is in the case, you are on a good footing. If you are praying for that which will greatly glorify Him, you may rest assured your prayer will speed. But if it does not speed, and it is not for His Glory, why, then you may be better content to be without it than with it. So pray, but keep your bowstring right—it will be unfit to shoot the arrow of prayer unless this is your bowstring—“God’s Glory, God’s Glory!” This above all—first, last, and midst—must be the one objective of your prayer.  
Then coming closer to the prayer, I would have you notice how intense Daniel’s prayer was. “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and do, defer not, for Your own sake.” The very repetitions here express vehemence. It is a great fault of some people in public prayer when they repeat the name, “O Lord, O Lord, O Lord,” so often—it often amounts to taking God’s name in vain and is, indeed, a vain repetition! But when the reiteration of that sacred name comes out of the soul, then it is no vain repetition—then it cannot be repeated too often and is not open to anything like the criticism which I used just now. So you will notice how the Prophet here seems to pour out his soul with, “O Lord, O Lord, O Lord,” as if, if the first knock at Mercy’s door does not open it, he will knock again and make the gate shake! And then the third time come with another thundering stroke if, perhaps, he may succeed! Cold prayers ask God to deny them—only importunate prayers will be replied to! When the Church of God cannot take, “No,” for an answer, she shall not have, “No,” for an answer! When a pleading soul must have it—when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the Angel go without a blessing, the Angel shall not go till He has given the blessing to such a pleading one! Brothers and Sisters, if there is only one among us who can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come! Let this encourage any earnest man or woman here that fears that others are not excited to prayer as they should be. Dear Brother, do you undertake it? Dear Sister, in God’s name, do you undertake it? And God will send a blessing to many through the prayer of one. But how much better would it be if many a score of men and women here, yes, the entire Church of God, were stirred up to this, that we give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth! Oh, that our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing! As soon as Zion travailed—you know that word—as soon as she travailed she brought forth children. Not till it comes to travail—not till then—may we expect to see much done! God send us such travailing to each one of us—and then the promise is near to fulfilling!  
But coming still to the text, and a little more closely, I want to observe that this remarkable prayer was a prayer of understanding as well as earnestness, for some people in their earnestness talk nonsense—and I think I have heard prayers which God might understand, but I am sure I did not. Now here is a prayer which we can understand as well as God. It begins thus, “O Lord, hear.” He asks an audience. This is how the petitioner does if he comes before an earthly majesty—he asks to be heard. He begins with that, O Lord, hear. I am not worthy to be heard. If You shut me and my case out of hearing, it will be just.” He asks an audience—he gets it—and now he goes at once to his point without delay, “O Lord, forgive.” He knows what he needs! Sin was the mischief, the cause of all the suffering. He puts his hand on it. Oh, it is grand when one knows what one is praying for! Many prayers wander—the praying Persian evidently thinks he is doing a good thing in saying certain good phrases, but the prayer that hits the target in the center is the prayer it is good to pray! God teach us to pray so. “O Lord, forgive.”  
Then observe how he presses the point home. “O Lord, listen and do.” If You have forgiven—he does not stop a minute, but here comes another prayer quick on the heels of it—Do good Lord, interpose for the rebuilding of Jerusalem—do interpose for the redemption of Your captive people! Do interpose for the reestablishment of sacred worship! It is well when our prayers can fly fast, one after another, as we feel we are gaining ground. You know in wrestling (and that is a model of prayer) much depends on the foothold, but oftentimes there is much depending upon swiftness of action. So in prayer. “Hear, me, my Lord! You have heard me, forgive me. Have I come so far, then work for me—work the blessings I need.” Follow up your advantage—build another prayer on the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, “Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him. Because He has heard me once, therefore will I call again.” Such a prayer proves the thoughtfulness of him who prays. It is a prayer offered in the spirit and also with understanding.  
And now one other thing. The prayer of Daniel was a prayer of holy nearness. You catch that thought in the expression, “O my God.” Ah, we oftentimes pray at a distance—we pray to God as if we were slaves lying at the foot of His Throne—as if we might, perhaps, be heard, but we are not sure. But when God helps us to pray as we should, we come right to Him, even to His feet, and we say, “Hear me, O my God.” He is God— therefore, we must be reverent. He is my God, therefore we may be familiar—we may come close to Him. I believe some of the expressions that Martin Luther used in prayer, if I were to use them, would be little short of blasphemy, but as Martin Luther used them, I believe they were deeply devout and acceptable with God because he knew how to come close to God. You know how your little child climbs your knee. He gives you a kiss and he will say to you many little things that if a person in the market were to say, you could not bear—they must not be said. No other being may be so familiar with you as your child. But oh, a child of God— when his heart is right—how near he gets to his God! He pours out his childlike complaint in childlike language before the Most High. Brothers and Sisters, this is to be noted well, that though he is thus pleading and in the position of humiliation—he is still not in the position of slavery! It is still, “O my God”—He grasps the Covenant. Faith perceives the relationship to be unbroken between the soul and God and pleads that relation! “O my God.”  
Now the last thing I shall call your attention to in this model prayer is this, that the Prophet uses argument. Praying ought always to be made up of arguing. “Bring forth your strong reasons” is a good canon for a prevalent prayer! We should urge matters with God and bring reasons before Him—not because He needs reasons, but He desires us to know why we desire the blessing! In this text we have a reason given, first, “Defer not for Your own sake,” as much as if he had said, “If You suffer this people of Yours to perish, all the world will revile Your name and Your honor will be stained. This is Your own people and because they are Your property, suffer not Your own estate to be damaged, but save Jerusalem for Your own sake.”  
Then next, He puts it on the same footing in another shape, “For Your city and Your people.” He urges that this people were not like other people. They had truly sinned, but still there was a relationship between them and God that existed between God and no other people! He pleads the Covenant, in fact, between Abraham and Abraham’s seed and the God of the whole earth. Good pleading that! And then he puts in next, “For they are called by Your name.” They were said to be Jehovah’s people. They were named by the name of the God of Israel. “O God! Let not a thing that bears Your name be rolled about like a common thing! Suffer it not to be trailed in the dust—come to the rescue of it! Your stamp, Your

seal is upon Israel. Israel belongs to You, therefore come and interpose.” Now from this I gather that if we would prevail we should plead arguments with God—and these are very many—and discreet minds, when they are fervent, will readily know how far to go in pleading, and where to stop. I remember one morning a dear Brother now present praying in a way that seemed to me to be very prevalent when He spoke thus, “O Lord, You have been pleased to call Your Church, Your Bride. Now we, being evil, have such love towards our spouses that if there were anything in the world that would be for her good, we would not spare to give it to her. And will You not, O Husband of the Church, do the same with Your Spouse and let Your Church receive a blessing, now that she pleads for it?” It seemed good arguing, after Christ’s own sort, “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Get a promise and spread it before the Lord, and say, “O Lord, You have said it—do it!” God loves to be believed in. He loves you to think He means what He says. He is a practical God. His word has power in it and He does not like us to treat His promises as some of us do, as if they were waste paper, as if they were things to be read for the encouragement of our enthusiasm, but not to be used as matters of real practical truth! Oh, plead them with God! Fill your mouths with reasoning and come before Him. Make this your determination, that as a Church, seeing we need His Spirit and need renewed prosperity, we will not spare nor leave a single argument unused by which we may prevail with the God of Mercy to send us what we need! Thus much, then, upon this as a model prayer. Now I shall need a little longer time to speak upon—  
II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS GIVE TO US IN PRAYER.  
Brothers and Sisters, it is always an encouragement to do a thing when you see the best of men doing it. Many a person has taken a medicine only because he has known wiser men than himself take it. The best and wisest of persons in all ages have adopted the custom of prayer in times of distress and, indeed, in all times. That ought to encourage us to do the same. I heard a dear Welsh brother speak last Thursday evening who interested and amused me, too, but I cannot profess to repeat the way in which he told us a Biblical story. It was something in this way. He told it as a Welshman, and not quite as I think I might. He said that after the Lord Jesus Christ had gone up to Heaven, having told His disciples to wait at Jerusalem till the Spirit of God was given, Peter might have said, “Well, now we must not go out preaching till this blessing comes, so I shall be off a-fishing.” And John might have said, “Well, there is the old boat over at the lake of Gennesaret. I think I shall go and see how that is getting on—it is a long time since I saw after it.” And each one might have said, “Well, I shall go about my business, for it is not many days hence when He is coming, and we may as well be at our earthly calling.” “No,” says he, “they did not say that at all, but Peter said, ‘Where shall we hold a Prayer Meeting?’ And Mary said she had got a nice large room that would do for a Prayer Meeting. True it was in a back street and the house was not very respectable and, ‘Besides,’ says she, ‘it is up at the very top of the house, but it is a big room.’ ‘Never mind,’ says Peter, ‘it will be nearer to Heaven.’ So they went into the upper room and there began to pray, and did not cease the Prayer Meeting till the blessing came.”  
Then the Brother told us the next story of a Prayer Meeting in the Bible. Peter was in prison and Herod was so afraid that he would get out again that he had 16 policemen to look after him. And the Brothers and Sisters knew they could not get Peter out in any other way than one—so they said, “We will hold a Prayer Meeting.” Always the way with the Church at that time, when anything was amiss, was to say, “Where shall we have a Prayer Meeting?” So Mistress Mark said she had got a good room which would do very well for a Prayer Meeting. It was in a back street, so nobody would know of it, and they would be quiet. So they held that Prayer Meeting and began to pray. I do not suppose they prayed the Lord to knock the prison walls down, nor to kill the policemen, nor anything of that kind, but they only prayed that Peter might get out—and they left how he was to get out to God. While they were praying there came a knock at the door. “Ah,” said they, “that is a policeman come after another of us. But Rhoda went to the door to look, and when she looked she started back in fright! What did she see? She looked again, however, and she was persuaded that it was no other than Peter! She went back to her mistress and said, “There is Peter at the gate.” Good souls! They had been praying that Peter might come out, but they could not believe it, and they said, “Why, it is his spirit—his angel.” “No,” said the girl, “I know Peter well enough. He has been here dozens of times and I know it is Peter”—and in came Peter, and they all wondered at their unbelief! They had asked God to set Peter free, and free Peter was! It was the Prayer Meeting that did it! And rest assured we should, everyone, find it our best resource in every hour of need to draw near to God— *“Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw. Prayer mounts the ladder Jacob saw,  
Gives exercise to faith and love,  
Brings every blessing from above.  
Restraining prayer, we cease to fight!  
Prayer makes the Christian armor bright! And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.*  
It is prayer that does it—and this fact should encourage us to pray!  
The success of Daniel’s prayer is the next encouragement. He had not got to the end of his prayer before a soft hand touched him and he looked up—and there stood Gabriel in the form of a man! That was quick work! So Daniel thought, but it was much quicker than Daniel expected, for as soon as ever he began to pray, the word went forth for the angel to descend. The answer to prayer is the most rapid thing in the world! “Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.” I believe electricity travels at the rate of two hundred thousand miles in a second—so it is estimated, but prayer travels faster than that, for it is, “Before they call I will answer.” There is no time occupied at all! When God wills to answer, the answer may come as soon as the desire is given. And if it delays, it is only that it may come at a better time—like some ships that come home more slowly because they bring the heavier cargo. Delayed prayers are prayers that are put out to interest awhile, to come home not only with the capital, but with the compound interest, too! Oh, prayer cannot fail—prayer cannot fail! Heaven may as soon fall as prayer fail! God may sooner change the ordinances of day and night, than He can cease to reply to the faithful, believing spirit-worked prayer of His own quickened, earnest, importunate people! Therefore, because He sends success, Brothers and Sisters, pray much!  
It ought to encourage us, too, in the next place, to recollect that Daniel prayed for a very hard case. Jerusalem was in ruins. the Jews were scattered. Their sins were excessive. But, nevertheless, he prayed and God heard him. We are not in so bad a case as that with the Church—we have not to mourn that God has departed from us—our prayer is that He may not, even in any measure, withdraw His hand. I pray God that I may long be buried before He shall suffer this Church to lose His Presence. There is nothing that I know of in connection with our church life that is worth a single farthing, if the Spirit of God is gone. He must be there. Brothers and Sisters, if you are not prayerful. If you are not holy. If you are not earnest, God will not keep pastors, deacons, Elders and Church members living near to Him! The sorrow of heart which one will feel if one is kept right cannot be expressed. May the Lord prevent our declining. If you are declining, may He bring you back. Some of you, I am afraid, are so—getting cold. Now and then I hear of a person who finds it too far to come to the Tabernacle. It used to be very short at one time, though it was four or five miles. But when the heart gets cold, the road gets long. Ah, there are some who want this little attention and the other. Time was when they stood in the aisle, in the coldest and draftiest place—if the Word was blessed to them, they did not mind it. May God grant that you may always be a living people, for years and years to come, until Christ Himself comes! But oh, you that are living near to God, make this your daily, hourly, nightly prayer, that He would not withdraw from us for our sins, but continue to stretch out His hand in loving kindness, even until He gathers us to our Father!  
It ought, further, to encourage us in prayer to remember that Daniel was only one man, and yet he won his suit. But if two of you agree as touching any one thing, it shall be done—but a threefold cord, a fifty-fold cord—oh, if out of our four thousand members, every one prayed instantly, day and night, for the blessing, oh, what prevalence there would be! Would God it were so!  
Brothers and Sisters, how about your private prayers—are they what they should be? Those morning prayers, those evening prayers, and that mid-day prayer, for surely your soul must go up to Heaven, even if your knees are not bent—are those prayers as they should be? It will bring leanness upon you—there cannot be a fat soul and neglected prayer! There must be much praying if there is much rejoicing in the Lord.  
And then your family prayers—do you keep them up? I was in a railway carriage the other day and a gentleman said to me, who was sitting beside me, “My son is going to be married tomorrow—going to be married to one of your members.” “I am glad to hear it,” I said. “I hope he is a Believer.” “Oh, yes, Sir. He has been a member of your Church for some years. I wish you would write me something to give them tomorrow.” Well, you know how the carriage will shake, but I managed to jot down something on a little bit of paper with a pencil. The words, I think, that I put were something like this, “I wish you every joy. May your joys be doubled. May your sorrow be divided and lightened.” But then I put, “Build the altar before you build the tent. Take care that daily prayer begins your matrimonial life.” I am sure we cannot expect our children to grow up a godly seed if there is no family prayer! Are your family prayers, then, what they ought to be?  
Then next, let me say to each one, how about your prayers as members of the Church? Perhaps I am the last person that might complain about a Prayer Meeting. It really is a grand sight to see so many of you, but I must confess I don’t feel quite content, for there are some members whom I used to see, but don’t see now. I know I see some fresh ones and we are never short of praying men, but I want to see the others as well! I know those who are constantly at Prayer Meetings can say it is good to be there. Often it is the best evening in the week to us, when we come together to entreat for the blessing! Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, “All our strength lies in prayer”! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer. What prayers we put up night and day when we launched out to reach the Gospel in a larger building! And what an answer God sent us! Since then, in times of need and trouble we have cried to God and He has heard us. Daily He sends us help for our college, for our orphanage, and for our other works, in answer to prayer! Oh, you that come here as members of the Church, if you do not pray, the very beams out of these walls and the stones will cry out against you! This house was built in answer to prayer. If anybody had said that we, who were but few and poor, could have erected such a structure, I think it would have sounded impossible! But it was done—you know how readily it was done, how God raised us up friends, how He has helped us to this day. Oh, don’t stop your prayers! You seem to me, good people, to be very like that king who, when he went to the dying Prophet, was told, “Take your arrows and shoot” and he went to the window, and he shot but once—and the Prophet was angry and said—“You should have shot many times, and then you would have utterly destroyed your enemies.” And so we pray, as it were, but little. We ask but little, and God gives it. Oh, that we would ask much and pray for much—and shoot many arrows, and plead very earnestly!  
Look at this city of ours. I would not say a derogatory word against my country, but I am afraid there is not much to choose between the sin of London and the sin of Paris. And see what has come of Paris! One could hardly live in that city and know all the sin that was going on there without fearing that nation’s sin would bring a national chastisement! And oh, this wicked City of London, with its dens of vice and filthiness! You are the salt of the earth, you that love Christ, let not your salt lose its savor! God forbid that you should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for this wicked people! Everywhere, sea and land, is compassed by the adversaries of the Truth of God to make proselytes. I beseech you, compass the Mercy Seat, that their efforts may be defeated! At this time there ought to be special prayer. When God in Providence seems to be shaking the Papacy to its base, now should we cry aloud and spare not! Out of these convulsions God may bring lasting blessings. Let us not neglect to work when God works. Let the hand of the man be lifted up in prayer when the wing of the angel is moved in Providence. We may expect great things if we can pray greatly and wrestle earnestly.  
I call you in God’s name, to the Mercy Seat! Draw near there, with intense importunity—and such a blessing shall come as you have not yet imagined! Pray for some here present that are unconverted. There are a good many of them. They will not pray for themselves—let us pray them into prayer! Let us pray to God for them until they, at last, pray to God for themselves! Prayer can unlock Mercy’s door, for others as well as for our own people! Let us, therefore, abound in prayer, and God, send us the blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **DANIEL 9:1-11.**

Verses 1, 2. In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years whereof the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the Prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Daniel was himself a Prophet, but he studied the Inspired prophecies of Jeremiah. If such a man reads Scripture, how much more ought we! Whatever the Light of God we may suppose to dwell within us, we shall do well to walk by the mere sure Word of prophecy.

3-5. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the Covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity. And have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments. Daniel certainly had rebelled less than any of his countrymen and yet he is the first to make confession on their behalf. So, my Brothers and Sisters, when we have confessed our own sins, and have found mercy, then we should begin to be intercessors for others! We should make confession for the sins of our families, for the sins of our city, for the sins of our country. If no longer need we plead for salvation for ourselves because we have obtained it, let us give the full force of our prayers for the benefit of others!

6. Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the Prophets, which spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. It greatly increases sin when we sin against warnings sent from God. Daniel confesses this.

7-9. O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You. O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. What a gracious verse that is! Surely it might be printed in letters of gold, and every trembling, penitent sinner might look at it till, at last, beams of light should dart into the darkness of his despair!

10, 11. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His ways which He set before us by His servants, the Prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #734 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE DAWN OF REVIVAL, OR PRAYER SPEEDILY ANSWERED

NO. 734

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 10, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show you; for you are greatly beloved.” Daniel 9:23.**

PRAYER is useful in a thousand ways. It is spiritually what the old physicians sought after naturally—namely, a catholicon—a remedy of universal application. There is no ease of need, distress, or dilemma, in which prayer will not be found to be a very present help. In the case before us Daniel had been studying the book of Jeremiah, and had learned that God would accomplish seventy weeks in the desolation of Jerusalem, but he felt that there was still more to be learned, and he set his face to learn it.

His was a noble and acute mind, and with all its energies he sought to pry into the prophetic meaning. But he did not rely upon his own judgment—he betook himself at once to prayer. Prayer is that great key which opens mysteries. To whom should we go for an explanation if we cannot understand a writing, but to the author of the book? Daniel appealed at once to the Great Author, in whose hand Jeremiah had been the pen. In lonely retirement the Prophet knelt upon his knees and cried unto God that He would open up to him the mystery of the prophecy, that he might know the full meaning of the seventy weeks and what God intended to do at the end of them, and how He would have His people behave themselves to obtain deliverance from their captivity.

Daniel made his suit unto the Lord to unloose the seals and open the volume of the book, and he was heard and favored with the knowledge which he might have sought for in vain by any other means. Luther used to say that some of his best understandings of Holy Scripture were not so much the result of meditation as of prayer—and all students of the Word will tell you that when the hammers of learning and Biblical criticism have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found concealed therein. To every student of the Word of God who would become a well-instructed scribe we would say, “With all the means which you employ. With all your searching of commentaries. With all your digging into the original languages. With all your research among learned Divines, mingle much fervent prayer.”

As the Lord said to Israel, “With all your offerings you shall offer salt,” so does wisdom say to us, “With all your searching and with all your studying, offer much prayer.” Rest assured that the old maxim, “To have prayed well is to have studied well,” is worthy to be written not only upon the walls of our studies but upon the tablets of our hearts. If you will place the Book of Inspiration before your attentive eyes and ask the Lord to open up its meaning to you, the exercise of prayer itself shall be blessed by God to put your soul into the best state in which to get at the hidden meaning which lies concealed from the eyes of the worldly wise—but which is clearly manifested to meek and lowly souls—when they reverently seek the guidance of their heavenly Father.

The particular point in the text to which I would direct your attention, this morning, is that Daniel’s prayer was answered at once—while he was yet speaking! Yes, and at the beginning of his supplication. It is not always so. Prayer sometimes tarries like a petitioner at the gate until the king comes forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeks. The Lord, when He has given great faith, has been known to try it by long delays. He has suffered His servants’ voices to echo in their ears as from a bronze sky. They have knocked at the golden gate, but it has remained immovable, as though it were rusted upon its hinges.

Like Jeremiah they have cried, “You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.” Thus have true saints continued in patient waiting for months, and there have been instances in which their prayers have even waited years without reply! Not because they were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted, but because so it pleased Him who is a Sovereign, and who gives according to His own pleasure. If it pleases Him to bid our patience exercise itself, shall He not do as He wills with His own? Beggars must not be choosers either as to time, place, or form. Brethren must not take delays in prayer for denial— God’s long-dated bills will be punctually honored—we must not suffer Satan to shake our confidence in the God of Truth by pointing to our unanswered prayers.

We are dealing with a Being whose years are without end—to whom one day is as a thousand years—far be it from us to count Him slack by measuring His doings by the standard of our little hour! Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers. They are not blown away by the wind—they are treasured in the King’s archives. There is a registry in the court of Heaven where every prayer is recorded. O tried Believer, your sighs and your tears are not fruitless! God has a tear bottle in which the costly drops of sacred grief are put away and a book in which your holy groans are numbered! And by-and-by your suit shall prevail.

Can you not be content to wait a little? Will not your Lord’s time be better than your time? By-and-by He will comfortably appear, to your soul’s joy, and make you put away your sackcloth and ashes of long waiting, and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition! However, in the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved, there was no waiting at all. In Daniel’s case the promise was true, “Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.” The angel Gabriel was made to fly very swiftly, as though even the flight of an angel was hardly swift enough for God’s mercy. Oh how fast the mercy of God travels, and how long His anger lingers!

“Fly,” He said, “bright spirit. Try your utmost power of wing! Descend to my waiting servant and fulfill his desire.” Brethren, my heart’s desires and earnest longings are that at the commencement of our supplication we may have an answer from the Throne of God! This is the commencement of our prayers only in a certain sense, for prayer has never ceased here— for the last few months the public meeting for prayer every morning and every night has been sustained by earnest Brothers and Sisters—but we are now at the commencement of a month of more special prayer and I pant for an early visitation of Divine Grace.

It will be a very blessed encouragement to us, a stimulus to more intense ardor, an argument for greater confidence in God if we should be favored, with Daniel, to receive gracious answers to our supplications at their very commencement! In speaking of such a mercy, two points press for consideration. First, reasons for justly expecting so early a blessing. And secondly, forms in which we earnestly desire and hopefully expect it.

I. First, have we any REASONS TO EXPECT THAT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SUPPLICATION THE COMMANDMENT OF MERCY WILL COME FORTH? Rest assured that we have, if we are found in the same posture as Daniel, for God acts towards His servants by a fixed rule. Let self-examination be now in vigilant exercise while we compare ourselves with the successful Prophet.

God will hear His people at the commencement of their prayers if the condition of the supplicant is fitted for it. The nature of such fitness we may gather from the state of Daniel’s mind and the mode of his procedure. Upon this, our first noteworthy observation is that Daniel was determined to obtain the blessing which he was seeking. Note carefully the expression which he has used in the third verse—“I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication.” That setting of the face is expressive of resolute purpose, firm determination, undivided attention and fixed resolute perseverance. “I set my face towards the Lord.”

We never do anything in this world until we set our faces thoroughly to it. The warriors who win battles are those who are resolved to conquer or die. The heroes who emancipate nations are those who count no hazards and reckon no odds, but are resolved that the yoke shall be broken from the neck of their country. The merchants who prosper in this world are those who do their business with all their hearts and watch for wealth with eagerness. The half-hearted man is nowhere in the race of life—he is usually contemptible in the sight of others—and a misery to himself. If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well! And if it is not worth doing thoroughly, wise men leave it alone.

Especially is this a truth in the spiritual life. Wonders are not done for God and for the Truth of God by men asleep upon their back, or out of their beds but still asleep! Souls are not saved by men who scarcely know or care whether they are saved themselves! Errors are not dashed from their pedestals by those who are careless concerning truth and count it of little value. Reformations have not been worked in this world by men of lukewarm spirit and temporizing policy. One fiery Luther is of more value than twenty like the half-hearted Erasmus who knew infinitely more than he felt, and perhaps felt more than he dared to express.

A man, if he would do anything for God, for the Truth, for the Cross of Christ, must set his face and with the whole force of his will resolve to serve his God. The soldier of Christ must set his face like a flint against all opposition, and at the same moment set his face towards the Lord with the attentive eyes of the handmaiden looking towards her mistress. If called to suffer for the Truth of God, we must set our face towards this conflict as Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem. He who would conquer in this glorious war, and overcome the Lord at the Mercy Seat must be resolved! Resolved with his whole soul—resolved after matured thought— resolved for reasons which are too weighty for him to escape—resolved that from the Throne of Grace he will not depart without the blessing.

Never, never shall a man be unsuccessful in prayer who sets his face to win the promised mercy. Granted that you are seeking what you ought to seek for, that you are seeking it through Christ and by faith in Him, the one qualification to success that we recommend to you, Brothers and Sisters, is the setting of your faces towards the attaining of it. If there are but a dozen men in this, my Church, who have set their faces for a revival, we shall surely have it! Of this my heart knows no doubt. If there are but half-a-dozen, like Gideon’s men that lapped—if, I say, there are but six who are unwavering, and will not be baulked by difficulties, or turned back by disappointments—as sure as God is God, He will hear the prayers of such!

No, if it came down to but two or three, the promise is to two of us who are agreed as touching one thing concerning the kingdom. Yes, more—if two could not be found, if there were but one faithful saint left, provided that he were endowed with the spirit and ardor of Daniel—he would yet prevail as Daniel did of old! We must not fail in the setting of our face towards the Lord. I humbly but devoutly ask God, the Holy Spirit, to give you, my beloved in the Lord Jesus, both men and women, members of this Church, a solemn resolution that in the work in which we are engaged for God you will not be satisfied unless the largest answers are granted.

This was the first proof that God might safely give Daniel the blessing at once, for the Prophet’s heart was fixed in immutable resolve, and there was no turning him from the point. Now, if a beggar is resolved to have his request, you may as well give in at once—it is wasting both his time and yours to put him off with delays—we think it best to give it to him at once, and so does our heavenly Father with us.

Next, Daniel felt deeply the misery of the people for whom he pleaded. Read that expression, “under the whole Heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem.” The condition of that city—lying in ruins, her inhabitants captives, her choicest sons banished to the ends of the earth—afflicted him very sorely. He had not a light superficial acquaintance with the sorrows of his people, but his inmost heart was embittered with the wormwood and the gall of their cup. Brethren, if God intends to give us souls He will prepare us for the honor by causing us to feel the deep ruin of our fellow creatures, and the fearful doom which that ruin will involve unless they shall escape from it.

I would have you school yourselves till you obtain a horror of the sinner’s sin—surely not so strange a task if you remember your own former estate and present tendencies! How fiery was that oven through which your spirit passed when the hand of God was heavy upon you both by day and night? I want you, my Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus, to get a clear view of the wrath of God which threatens your own children, your own friends, your fellow seat-holders, your neighbors, your kinsfolk— unless they are saved.

If you could get into your heart as well as into your creed the sincere belief that, “the wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” If you could remember that even those who hear the Gospel have no way of escape if they remain impenitent, and that if they reject Christ there remains nothing for them but “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” If your soul could be made to melt for heaviness because of the woes of lost spirits, and because so many of your fellow men will, within a little while, be lost—lost as these others are, past all recall, beyond all hope, or all dream of alleviation—surely you would become awfully earnest about souls!

We would hear praying of a mighty sort if Believers sympathized with men in their ruin! Then groans and tears would not be so scarce! Then the soul, pouring out itself in groans which cannot be uttered, would be but an ordinary thing! Then shall we prevail with God through the precious blood of Jesus when we feel intensely the sinner’s need! If there are some here who really feel the terrors of the world to come and are bound under those terrors, and moved to wait and wrestle at the Mercy Seat till souls are rescued from their sins, there is no fear but what at the very commencement of our supplication the commandment to bless us will go forth!

In the next place, Daniel was ready to receive the blessing because he felt deeply his own unworthiness of it. I do not know that even the 51ST Psalm is more penitential than the chapter which contains our text. I bade you remark, while we were reading it, how the Prophet confesses the people’s sin and styles it by three, four, five or more descriptive epithets, all expressive of his deep sense of its blackness. Read the chapter and note how he humbly acknowledges sins of commission, sins of omission, and especially sins against the warnings of God’s Word and the entreaties of God’s servants.

The Prophet is very explicit. He lays bare his heart before the Lord. He tears off every film from the corruption of the people. He exposes the wound to the inspection of the Great Surgeon and asks Him to send it health and cure. I believe that the Lord is about to bless that man, personally, to whom He has given a deep sense of sin. And certainly that Church which is willing to make confession of its own sinfulness and unworthiness is on the eve of a visitation of love.

Let us go, then, to our God—I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable us to go to Him—each man and woman making confession for himself apart. Individual confession is needed! I have sins which, perhaps, you might not discover in you. Sins, which it were not possible for you to commit because you are not placed in my station. You, too, have in your families, in your business, in your private and public lives, sins with which I am not acquainted. Each man has a point of sin where he is separated from his fellows. And each man must therefore make his own confession, apart, with the fullest honesty, with the deepest humiliation. And each one must add to his acknowledgements the humble prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts!”

My dear fellow Members, are you conscious, each one, of your own personal iniquity towards the Lord your God? Then let not this day pass till a full confession has been made! And should there remain, dear Brethren, in us as a Church any transgression unconfessed, I hope the Lord may lead us to confess it. If we have been proud of our numbers. If we have been exalted by success. If there should be any bickering among us. If any Christian here has any ill feeling towards another, let not this day go down till all such evil is removed! I am very conscious that, in the midst of so large a Church, much sin may remain undetected. O for great searching of heart!

Beloved, you will certainly spoil our hopes and cause us to miss the blessing unless every evil thing is put away. Let this be a day for purging out the old leaven that we may keep the feast not with the leaven of malice, but in holiness as becomes the disciples of Jesus. The idols must be utterly abolished! And till we put them all away we cannot expect to receive a blessing from the Lord our God. “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Let us bless His name for His exceedingly great goodness to us as a Church and sing of all His loving kindness which He has shown to us these 13 years!

Let us confess our unworthiness, our coldness, and deadness, and lethargy, and wanderings of heart, and the backsliding of many among us! And then, having confessed our faults, we may expect that at the very commencement God will visit us! When the vessel is empty, Heaven’s fountain will fill it. When the ground is dried and chapped and begins to open her mouth with thirst, down shall come the rain to make fat the soil. When we feel a sense of need, deep and crushing, then shall a blessing shine forth from the Presence of the Most High. “At the beginning of your supplication the commandment came forth.”

But again, dear Friends, we have not exhausted the points in Daniel which deserve our imitation. You will notice that Daniel had a clear conviction of God’s power to help His people in their distress. His lively sense of Divine power was based upon what God had done in the olden time. One is interested to note in the history of the Jews, how in every dark and stormy hour their minds reverted to one particular point of their history! Just as the Greek, in the days when Greece was living Greece, would remember Thermopylae and Marathon and feel his eyes sparkle and every sinew grow strong at the thought of the heroic day when his fathers slew the Persians and broke the yoke of the great king!

So with nobler emotions, because more heavenly, the Israelite always thought of the Red Sea and what the Lord did to Egypt when He divided the waters, and they stood upright as a heap that His people might pass through! Daniel, in the prayer says, “You have brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have gotten You renown, as at this day.” He lays hold upon that deed of ancient prowess and pleads, in effect, after this fashion: “You can do the same, O God, and glorify Your name anew, and assure deliverance to Your people.”

My Brothers and Sisters in the bonds of the Lord Jesus, you and I may at this moment draw comfort from the fact that this God who divided the Red Sea is our God forever and ever! And is at this hour as mighty as when He overthrew the horse and his rider in the mighty waters. We worship the God who loves His chosen now even as He did of old. It is written, “But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep,” and so He leads us. He led them through the wilderness and brought them to the promised rest. And even thus will He bring us to our eternal home.

O God, You that went forth before Your people, go forth before us after the same fashion! Though doubts and fears roll before us like a sea, remove them, we beseech You! Though our iniquities clamor behind us, swallow them up in the Red Sea of Jesus’ blood! Though we march through the wilderness, yet give us Heaven’s manna and let the Rock distil with living streams! Though we deserve not to be visited by Your love, yet are we not Your people and the sheep of Your pasture? Are we not called by Your name? Have You not bought us with Your blood? Bring us into the promised land! Give us the heritage of Your people and bless us with the blessings of Your chosen! We too, if we are sensible of past mercies to the Church of God, and to ourselves personally, shall then be ready to receive present mercy.

But once more, the most apparent point about Daniel’s prayer is his peculiar earnestness. To multiply expressions such as, “O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!” may not always be right. There may be much sin in such repetitions, amounting to taking God’s name in vain. But it is not so with Daniel. His repetitions are forced from the depths of his soul, “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do!” These are the fiery volcanic eruptions of a soul on fire, heaving terribly! It is just the man’s soul needing vent. Jesus Himself, when He prayed most vehemently, prayed three times, using the same words.

Variety of expression sometimes shows that the mind is not altogether absorbed in the object, but is still able to consider the mode of its utterance. But when the heart becomes entirely swallowed up in the desire, it cannot stay to polish and fashion its words—it seizes upon any expressions nearest to hand—and with these it continues its entreaties. So long as God understands it, the troubled mind has no anxiety about its modes of speech. Daniel here, with what the old Divines would have called multiplied ingeminations, groans himself upward till he gains the summit of his desires!

To what shall I liken the pleadings of the man greatly beloved? It seems to me as though he thundered and lightened at the gate of Heaven! He stood there before God and said to Him, “O You Most High, You have brought me to this just as you did Jacob to the Jabbok. And with You all night I mean to stay and wrestle till the break of day. I cannot, will not let You go except You bless me.” No prayer is at all likely to bring down an immediate answer if it is not a fervent prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” But if it is not fervent we cannot expect to find it effectual or prevalent. We must get rid of the icicles that hang about our lips. We must ask the Lord to thaw the ice caves of our soul and to make our hearts like a furnace of fire heated seven times hotter. If our hearts do not burn within us we may well question whether Jesus is with us. Those who are neither cold nor hot He has threatened to spew out of His mouth! How can we expect His favor if we fall into a condition so obnoxious to Him? Our God is a consuming fire and He will not have communion with us until our souls grow to be like consuming fires, too. Unless we are warm with love to God we cannot expect the love of God to manifest itself in us to its highest degree.

Now I know some of you are cold enough. But I thank God we have a great many very warm-hearted earnest Christians in connection with this Church—Christians, I will here make bold to say, that I never expected to live to see—such true and lovely saints. I have seen Apostolic piety revived in this Church! I will say it before the Throne of God—I have seen as earnest and as true a piety as Paul or Peter ever witnessed! I have seen in some here present such godly zeal, such holiness, such devotion to the Master’s business as Christ Himself would look upon with joy and satisfaction. But there are others who are members of the Church who never enter heartily into our projects of labor, nor yet unite with our solemn assemblies of prayer.

What shall I say of them? If I were to speak sharply they would only say that I scolded them with severity, and that might not serve my turn, for I desire their best interests. Shall I not rather say to them, “My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are, indeed, with us. If you have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, we do beseech you, ask the Lord to make you more earnest than the most earnest of us have ever been! And ask Him to make you, if you have been laggards, to now take the front place! If you have been slow either in the generosity of your giving, or in the earnestness of your pleading, ask the Lord that you may, from this day on, double your pace and do more in the time that remains for you in this life than others might be expected to do who have not before now been so backward as you have been!

Of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum—if the whole Church in this place shall be brought to set its face to be conscious of the deep need of sinners, to confess its own sin, to be mindful of God’s mercy, and to be vehemently, passionately in earnest for a blessing, I cannot, for my own part, see the slightest reason why at the commencement of the supplication the commandment should not go forth!—

*“Let us pray! The Lord is willing,  
Ever waiting, prayer to hear!  
Ready, His kind words fulfilling,  
Loving hearts to help and cheer.”*

Thus much upon that first reason. We may expect a speedy answer to prayer when the condition of the suppliant is as God would have it.

Secondly, I believe we have every reason to expect a blessing when we consider the mercy itself. That which we, as a Church, are seeking is, if I understand your hearts and my own, just this—we want to see our own personal piety deepened and revived, and we want to see sinners saved. Well, is not that, in itself, so good a thing that we may expect the Giver of every good and perfect gift to give it to us? We need not ask the sun to shine—is it not its very office as a sun to do so? We ask God to give us this good thing—is it not according to the Nature of the Father of Lights to bestow on us such mercies? We seek that which is for the good of His Church—the Church which He has purchased with His own blood!

A brother once remarked in prayer that none of us would let our spouse ask again and again for any good thing and refuse her—if it were in our power to give her anything under Heaven we would feel it our greatest delight to do so! And shall the bride, the Lamb’s wife, find her Husband less kind than we poor evil mortals are to our wives? No. If Christ’s Church pleads with her own Husband, she cannot be refused! Depend upon it, her royal Husband will give her according to His infinite fullness! What we ask is for God’s Glory. We are not seeking a gift which may glorify us or may exalt some one of our fellow men. We crave not victory for the arms of a warrior. We ask not success for the researches of a philosopher. We seek nothing which can bring honor to human prowess or to human wisdom. We seek that which will put crowns upon the head of our gracious God, and we seek it with the one pure desire that He may be glorified!

Above all, we ask that which is dear to the heart of Christ. He is the Friend of sinners—for sinners He lived, for sinners He died, for sinners He rose, for sinners He pleads, for sinners He reigns in Glory—and if we come to God and say to Him, “By the blood and wounds of Jesus, by the griefs of Gethsemane, and by the groans of Calvary, hear us!” how can it be that we shall be kept waiting? No, I gather that if such is the burden of the prayer, at the beginning we shall receive it.

Thirdly, there is another thing which encourages me, namely, the nature of the relations which exist between God and us. Is not that a choice word, “O man greatly beloved”? “Yes,” you will perhaps say, “it is easy to understand why God should send so swift an answer to Daniel, because he was a man greatly beloved.” Ah, has your unbelief made you forget that you are greatly beloved, too? You, my dear Brothers and Sisters, as a Believer in Jesus Christ, will not be at all presumptuous if you apply to yourself the title of, “Man, greatly beloved.” I will ask you a few questions which will prove your title. Must you not have been greatly beloved to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot?

When God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for you, must you not have been greatly beloved? Let me ask you about your experience. You lived in sin, and rioted in it. Must you not have been greatly beloved for God to have had patience with you? You were called by Grace and led to a Savior, and made a child of God and an heir of Heaven. Why, that proves, does it not, a very great and super-abounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with goodness, I have no doubt it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved! If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger! If He has made you poor, you have been greatly beloved in your poverty.

I know this, when I look back upon my own life, I must confess my unworthiness and acknowledge my sin most sincerely. And yet I dare to feel and to say that I am a man greatly beloved of my God! He has given me such distinguished mercies to enjoy when I have deserved not even the least of them, that I cannot help saying, “He crowns me with loving kindnesses and tender mercies.” I make my boast in the tender mercy of my God all the more freely because I am sure that you, my Beloved, also are specially beloved of Heaven!

The more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, why, the more evidence you have that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours! The more unworthiness the saint feels, the more proof of the great love of God in having chosen him and called him and made him an heir of bliss. Now, if there is such love between God and us, let us ask very boldly. Do not let us go to God as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to give—we are greatly beloved!

“If He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things.” Come boldly, Brother! Come boldly, Sister, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubts of your own heart, you are greatly beloved! And Jesus says, “Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” Who will refuse to ask when such encouragements are suggested to our minds? But enough! I am afraid I shall weary you on this point, and I need a long time on the second. But time has gone. Therefore a few minutes must suffice. O swiftwinged Time, I could gladly delay you when such a theme is on hand!

II. If we are to gain the blessing at the commencement, IN WHAT FORM SHOULD WE PREFER TO HAVE IT? Could I have my heart’s desire, I would crave a blessing for every one of you. I wish the blessing would come on me at the commencement, that I might preach with more power and pray with more fervor, and that my own spiritual life might be of a more healthy and vigorous character.

I wish the blessing might come on you, my dear Brethren, deacons and elders, for in the management of such a Church as this you need much more Grace than falls to the lot of ordinary men. I pray that you may be made examples to this flock, true guides in this, our Israel. I wish that the Holy Spirit may fall on all of you workers for Christ who will be here this afternoon. The Lord bless you Sunday school teachers. May you weep in your classes today! Pray for your children before you begin to talk with them! May my dear friends who teach our great classes of men and women have a rich blessing this afternoon!

May it be seen in Mrs. Bartlett’s class and Mr. Ranks’ class and the others, that the Lord is with you, indeed, and of a truth. It would be a great token for good if this very day we felt the first waves of a great revival. I wish the Lord’s power would come upon some of His people who do nothing—that they may be dreadfully miserable this afternoon—that they may be so unhappy that they cannot keep at home but be compelled to start out and do good! You who are working, may God help you to work with heart and soul, not doing it officially as of routine, but doing it with your very life, as though your heart’s blood warmed in the work, and your soul’s breath were in every word you spoke.

You who do so little, O may the Master constrain you to amend your ways! It would be a very blessed sign of Grace if every one of us felt this day, “Perhaps there is something more I could do for Christ. I shall do it at once. Perhaps there is something I might give to Christ, some department of Christian labor shall have a special donation from me. Perhaps I have a talent which I have never used, like an old sword hanging on the wall. This day of battle every weapon must be used, and I have not used mine. Now, before the Lord I lift my hand to Heaven, and I ask that if I have anything, even though it is the smallest talent, if I have not used it, may He help me to use it at once.”

This is such a dark world that we must not waste the tiniest piece of candle. The night is so dark that even a glowworm must not refuse to give its feeble ray. Each one of us must give personal service to Christ! Do you not know that all God’s people are priests? Those lying priests, nowadays, put on their gaudy trappings like the priests of Baal, and come forward and say, “We are priests.” Priests of Dagon, priests of Baal, priests of Hell, but not God’s priests! God’s priests are those who are alive from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit—and every man and every woman here who loves Jesus is a priest to God!

O brethren, God would have you all act as priests, and not to say, “We have a minister, let him serve God for us.” I will have nothing to do with your responsibilities! Serve God yourselves! It is as much as I can do to serve Him—only by His Grace am I upheld under my own load. In fact, my own responsibilities are so heavy that I cannot bear them! But as for being a proxy for any one of you, I cannot be anything of the kind! Personally you were bought with blood! Personally you hope to enter Heaven! Personally, then, consecrate yourselves this day unto the Lord, and if you do so, oh, what a blessing it will be! May God send a new and quickened life into His people at the commencement of our supplication!

I was turning over in my mind how early and sweet a blessing it would be if the Lord would give us today, this morning, this evening, this afternoon, some conversions! Who shall we especially plead for? What kind of conversions do we desire? What if the Lord would call by Grace some of the children of the Church members? What a blessing that would be! Oh for salvation for our sons and daughters! Pray for them, parents! Pray for them! Pray now, and the Lord will hear you!

Or suppose He were to give to some dear Brother here the soul of his wife for whom he has prayed so long? Or to some of you, my Sisters, your husbands who are still in the gall of bitterness? I would take it as a special favor if the Lord would give us our dearest friends. I look forward during this month with the hope that we may see some in our own households—our servants, our children—and our unconverted friends and acquaintances saved. But we are not selfish! We should think it a priceless blessing if some of you who have been seat-holders for years were to yield to Sovereign Grace!

I am afraid for many of you because you have felt the power of the Gospel in a measure. But there is some darling sin you cannot give up—which sin will be your everlasting ruin! I remember M’Cheyne says, “Christ gives last knocks.” That is a very sorrowful thought. He knocks at the door, but there is such a thing as a “last knock,” and some of you will get your last knock before long. He will never knock again! You will never have another warning nor another invitation, but He will say, “Let him alone, let him alone.” You, perhaps, will feel all the easier, but ah, if you do not wake here, you will wake up in Hell! And if before long God does not startle you into repentance, you will be startled into everlasting despair. O, may God give us your souls this day!

It would be no small mercy if the Lord would give us many of the casual hearers who will be here tonight, or are now here this morning. I cannot understand why it is these aisles are always crowded, and why on Sunday night the doors have to be closed and thousands shut out! Why, men rush into this House as eagerly as if they came here to get gold and treasure! They seem so earnest and so eager, and push and tread, one upon another. Surely God must bless some of them! We never know who are here—men from the utmost ends of the earth—of all nations, kindreds, and tongues! Crowds who never heard the Gospel at all. I am so thankful to think of them, because when they do hear it, if they have never heard it before, they are, perhaps, more likely to be blessed by it than those who have grown hardened under the sound of it.

O, for a mighty cry! A prevailing cry! A Heaven-shaking cry! A cry that would make the gates of Heaven open! A cry which God’s arm could not resist! The cry of all the saints here, knit together in love, with holy vehemence, using the great plea of the atoning sacrifice and making this the burden of their cry, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy.” Let the gracious visitation begin in this place! But if God so pleases, we shall be equally content if it begins anywhere else—let Him but throw the stone into the stagnant pool of His Church— and I can see the first circle going round these galleries and many of you saved! I can see the next circle enclosing the neighboring churches! I can see it spread over London—I can see the widening amphitheatre taking in the whole of this United Kingdom! I can see it cross the Atlantic—till all round the world God’s kingdom spreads, and days of refreshing come from the Presence of the Lord!

Now let us say in His sight, if He does not please to hear us at the commencement of the supplication, yet it is our desire to wait upon Him until He does. O You, our Beloved, if the day does not break nor the shadows flee away. If You will still remain hidden behind the mountains of separation, yet we wait for You as they that wait for the morning! And we watch and long as the watchman watches for the rising of the sun. But do not tarry, O our God! Make haste, our Beloved! “Be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,” for Your name’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1681 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SHUTTING, SEALING AND COVERING— OR, MESSIAH’S GLORIOUSWORK  
NO. 1681

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and  
prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”  
Daniel 9:24.**

The Lord God appointed a set time for the coming of His Son into the world. Nothing was left to chance. Infinite Wisdom dictated the hour at which the Messiah should be born and the moment at which He should be cut off. His advent and His work are the highest point of the purpose of God, the hinge of history, the center of Providence, the crowning of the edifice of Grace and, therefore, peculiar care watched over every detail. Once in the history of the world has the Son of God appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and this is the event before which all other events must bow. The studious mind will be delighted to search out the reasons why the Messiah came not before and why He did not tarry till yet later ages. Prophecies declared the date, but long before, Infallible Wisdom had settled it for the most profound reasons. It was well that the Redeemer came—it was well that He came in what Scripture calls the fullness of time, even in these last days.

Note, again, that the Lord told His people somewhat darkly, but still, with a fair measure of clearness, when the Christ would come. Thus He cheered them when the heavy clouds of woe hung over their path. This prophecy shone like a star in the midst of the sorrow of Israel! So bright was it, that at the period when Christ came, there was a general expectation of Him! Holy men and women, diligent in the study of the Scriptures, were waiting for Him—Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel— and Anna looked for redemption in Jerusalem with others of like mind. Not only the Jews, but the Samaritans expected Him, for the woman at the well exclaimed, “I know that the Messiah comes, which is called Christ.”

Even in heathen lands there was remarkable cessation from stir and battle; an unusual peace reigned over all the nations and the hush of expectation ruled the hour—

*No war, or battle’s sound,  
Was heard the world around—  
The idle spear and shield were high up hung; The hooked chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood;  
The trumpet spoke not to the armed throng; And kings sat still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.*

Men were looking out for the coming One, for the corn of earth was ripe for the reaper. Men were on the tiptoe of expectation and wondered when the promised Prince would arrive. Alas, they knew Him not when He appeared! After this fashion are things at the present moment with regard to the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Of that day and of that hour knows no man,” but it is known unto God and fixed in the roll of His eternal purposes. “Known unto God are all His works from the creation of the world,” and especially those grand works which concern the Person of our adorable Lord Jesus.

He shall come as God has appointed—the vision of His Glory shall not tarry. He has given us suggestive hints as to that glorious appearing and He has plainly taught us to be looking for and listening unto the Day of the Lord. Among His last words are these, “Surely I come quickly”—these are words of consolation as well of warning. He bids us watch constantly for the coming of the Lord—that it overtake us not as a thief in the night. And He assures us that He will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. Therefore comfort one another with the glad tidings and whenever your hearts sicken because of abounding sin, hear with the ear of faith the voice of promise crying, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes.” Rest assured that He comes who will, in the fullest and most manifest sense, finish transgression and make an end of sin—and bring in everlasting righteousness.

The advent of the Well-Beloved is the consolation of His mourning saints. Both at His first and second appearing the Lord not only comes to drive away the wicked as chaff, but also to comfort and exalt His elect—it is a day that shall burn as an oven and yet, to the redeemed, it will be the happiest day that ever dawned! The First Advent of our Lord is spoken of, in our text, as ordained to be before the 70 weeks were finished and the city should be destroyed. And so it was, even as the Prophet had spoken. I shall not occupy your time by attempting to fix the beginning and the end of the period intended by the 70 weeks and the seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. That is a deep study, requiring much research and learning, and I conceive that the discussion of such a subject would be of no great practical use to us this Sabbath morning.

You will be better nourished upon the Lord, Himself, than upon times and seasons. Suffice it to believe that Jesus Christ our Lord, the Messiah, came exactly as it was prophesied and remained on earth as it was foretold He should do. In the middle of the predestined week He was cut off, when He had completed three and a half years of saving ministry. And within another period of like length, the Gospel was preached throughout all nations and Messiah’s peculiar relation to Israel was cut off. At another time it may afford you profitable contemplation if you consider the 490 years from the decree of the king for rebuilding to the overthrow of Jerusalem.

We will, at this present hour, survey the work of the Messiah—that is His Hebrew name, or of Christ, which is the Greek interpretation thereof. Let us survey the work of the Anointed. Secondly, let us inquire as to our participation in it. And then, thirdly, let us contemplate the consequences which follow upon us being sharers in it, or upon our not being participants in it. Oh for a measure of the anointing, that we may fitly meditate upon our great theme! Come, Holy Spirit and rest upon us!

I. First, let us survey the Messiah’s work. According to my text, it divides itself into two grand works, which two works subdivide themselves, in each case, into three particulars. The first work of our Lord Jesus Christ is the overthrow of evil and it is thus described— “To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity.” But our Lord’s labor is not all spent upon pulling-down work! He comes to build up and His second work is the setting up of righteousness in the world, described, again, by three sentences—“To bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

The first work of the Messiah is the overthrow of evil. This overthrow of evil is described by three words. If I were to give you a literal translation from the Hebrew, I might read the passage thus—“To shut up the transgression, to seal up sin and to cover up iniquity.” According to learned men, those are the words which are here used and the three put together are a singularly complete description of the putting away of sin. First, it is shut up. It is, as it were, taken prisoner and confined in a cell. The door is fastened and it is held in durance—it is out of sight; held to a narrow range—unable to exercise the power it once possessed. In a word, it is “restrained”—so the margin of our Bibles reads it.

The Hebrew word signifies to hold back, to hold in, to arrest, to keep in prison, to shut in or shut up. Its dominion is finished, for sin, itself, is bound. Christ has led captivity captive. But it is not enough to shut up the vanquished tyrant, unless he is shut up forever and, therefore, lest there should be any possibility of his breaking loose, again, the next sentence is, “To seal up.” The uses of the seal are many, but here it is employed for certainty of custody. Just as when Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, the king sealed the stone with his own signet and with the signet of his lords. Or, better still, as when our Divine Master was laid in the grave, they rolled the stone to the mouth of the sepulcher and His enemies set a seal and a watch, lest His body should be stolen by His disciples.

In His case—  
*“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,  
Christ has burst the gates of Hell.”*

But sin cannot thus arise. It is imprisoned in the sepulcher of Jesus and it can never come forth, for the royal seal of the Immutable God is set upon the door. Thus is sin placed doubly out of sight—it is shut up and sealed up—as a document put into a case and then sealed. “Finished,” and, “made an end of,” are the two words used in our authorized version, and they give the essence of the meaning. To borrow a figure from current events—Arabi, the Egyptian rebel, is shut up as our prisoner and his defeat is sealed, therefore his rebellion is finished and an end made of it. Even thus is it with transgression—our Lord has vanquished evil and certified the same under the hand and seal of the Omnipotent—and, therefore, we may with rapture hear Him say, “It is finished,” and also behold Him rise from the dead to seal our justification!

Yet, as if this might not suffice, the next term in the Hebrew is, “to cover up,” for the word to make reconciliation or expiation is usually, in the Hebrew, to cover over. “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Christ has come to cover sin, to atone for it and so to hide it. His glorious merits and substitutionary sufferings and death put away sin so completely that God, Himself, beholds it no more. He has blotted it out, cast it into the sea and removed it from us as far as the east is from the west! The two former sentences speak of finishing transgression and making an end of sin—and these expressions are full and complete—while this third one explains the means by which the work is done, namely, by an expiation which covers up every trace of sin.

Thus in the three, together, we have a picture of the utter extinction of sin, both as to its guilt and its power, yes, and its very existence! It is put into the dungeon and the door is shut; after this the door is sealed and then it is covered up, so that the place of sin’s sepulcher cannot be seen anymore forever! Sin was, aforetime, in God’s sight, but through Christ Jesus we read, “You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin; You have taken away all Your wrath.” Sin was in God’s way till Christ shut it up and now it pushes itself no more into the sight of the Lord. Sin was always breaking loose till Jesus sealed it up, but now it cannot come forth to lay any accusation against the justified.

The three words might be put into one word by saying Christ has made a clean sweep of sin of every kind. Whatever may be its special development, whether it is transgression, which means the breaking of bounds. Or sin, which is any lack of conformity to the Law. Or iniquity—that is to say, inequity, or the lack of equity, a default in righteousness. In all forms in which it can be described—Christ has shut it up, sealed it up and covered it up by His atoning Sacrifice, once and for all! The depths have covered it. If it is searched for, it cannot be found! Our blessed Scapegoat has carried it away into the land of forgetfulness—it shall not be mentioned against us anymore forever. Those three words contain infinitely more of meaning than I have either space or ability to set forth.

Observe, dear Friends, that the terms for sin are left in an absolute form. It is said, “to finish transgression,” “to make an end of sins,” “to make reconciliation for iniquity.” Whose transgression is this? Whose sins are these? Whose iniquity is it? It is not said. There is no word employed to set out the persons for whom Atonement is made, as is done in verses like these—“Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” “I lay down My life for the sheep.” The mass of evil is left unlabeled so that any penitent sinner may look to the Messiah and find in Him the Remover of sin! What transgression is finished? Transgression of every kind! But what sins are made an end of? Sins of every sort—against Law and against Gospel, against God and against men—sins past, sins present, sins to come! And what iniquity is expiated? Every form of iniquity, whatever falls short by omission, whatever goes beyond by commission!

Christ, in this passage, is spoken of in general terms as removing sins, transgressions and iniquities in the mass. In other places we read of the objects of His Substitution, but here all is left indefinite to encourage all! He gives us no catalog of offenses—for where should He write it? The very heavens could not hold the enumeration! He takes the whole, unformed, horrible, black, disgusting mass and this is what He does with it—He encloses it, fastens it up and buries it forever! In the words of our version, He finishes it, makes an end of it and makes expiation for it. The Messiah came to wipe out and utterly destroy sin and this is, and will be, the effect of His work! Put all the three sentences into one and this is the sum of them.

Indulge me for a few minutes while I take the sentences separately and press each cluster by itself. And first notice that it is said He came to finish the transgression. As some understand it, our Lord came, that in His death, transgression might reach its highest development and sign its own condemnation. Sin reached its finish, its ultimatum, its climax, in the murder of the Son of God! It could not proceed further—the course of malice could go no further. They had stoned the Prophets and killed everyone that was sent to them. But now He came and God said, “They will reverence My Son,” but they did not. On the other hand, they cried, “This is the heir! Let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours.” Sin finished itself when it brought forth the death of the Son of God. It could produce no riper fruit, for no supposable crime can exceed the putting to death of Jesus our Lord.

Now has sin finished itself and now has Jesus come to finish it. “Thus far,” He says, “you shall go, but no further: here in My wounds and death shall your proud waves be stopped.” Sin virtually committed suicide when it slew the Savior, for His death became its death! The kingdom of sin was overthrown in that day when it smote the Prince of Peace! Then was a period put to the dominion of evil and, to come back to the Hebrew, the Lord restrained transgression and Satan was bound with a great chain. “The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Sin may no longer range unchecked! Sin is now arrested and held under warrant, restrained under the bonds of Law and, from the day of our Lord, by the preaching of the Gospel, sin has become more and more shut up as to its reigning power.

Some men have been altogether delivered from the rule of evil and other men, who remain its slaves, yet go not to such a pitch of outward riot as they would have done had not Christ appeared. Sin is being besieged! It skulks behind its earthworks. Its sorties are becoming fewer and less forcible. And though it is still powerful, the hour of its pride is passed, its head has received a deadly wound—the age has come in which the victory of truth and righteousness is guaranteed by the death of Jesus Christ our Lord! Your finis is written, O Transgression! Written by the pierced hands! Your huge volume has in it writing long enough and grievous enough, full enough of blasphemy against God and of evil towards men, but now the Lord Jesus takes the pen from you and you shall write no more as you have done. The huge leviathan of evil has met its match and is placed under the power of the Avenger.

Thus says the Lord, “Behold, I will put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips, and I will turn you by the way by which you came.” The Lord has set bounds to the transgression which aforetime broke all bounds! Where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound! Sin is shut up that Grace may have liberty. This is one part of our Lord’s great work— all Glory be unto His name—He has accomplished it with power and the power of the enemy is broken!

Now take the second sentence, which, in our version is, “To make an end of sin.” Messiah has come to proclaim so free, so rich, so gracious a pardon to the sons of men that when they receive it, sin virtually ceases to be—it is made an end of. The man that is in Christ and has Christ for His covenant Head, is, this day so delivered from all sin that he may boldly ask the question, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” If Christ has made an end of sin, that is the end of it—the matter is ended and no more is to be said!

Down among the dead, men let sin lie, forever buried by the right hand of the conquering Savior. But the Hebrew has it, “to seal up sins.” Now, I take it to mean just this. There are certain handwritings which are against us and they would be produced against us in court. But by order of the Judge, all these handwritings are sealed up and regarded as out of sight— no man dare breaks the seal and no man can read them unless the seal is broken—therefore they will never be brought against us. They have become virtually null and void. Everything that can be brought as an accusation against God’s people is now sealed up and put out of the way, once and for all, never to be opened and laid to their charge before the living God!

Or, if you regard sin as a captive prisoner, you must now see that by Christ’s death, the prison wherein sin lies is so sealed that the enemy can never come forth, again, in its ancient power. Sin could once sit on the highest mountain and look over the world and say, “All this is mine.” And the embodiment of sin could come to Christ and say of all the kingdoms of the world, “All these will I give You,” as though he claimed them all for his own. But it is not so today! The mountain of the Lord’s house is, this day, exalted upon the top of the hills and though, as yet, all nations do not flow unto it, yet a glorious company comes streaming up to the Temple of the living God—and that company shall increase from day to day! As when a brooklet grows to a stream and the streamlet rises to a river, and the river swells till it rolls in fullest force into the shoreless main, so is it yet to be with the ever-growing Church of Jesus Christ, which, before long, shall carry all before it and cover the earth with blessing.

Evil, you cannot reign! Jesus has come and overcome you, Himself, and taught man to vanquish you! You cannot come, again, to the crown you once had, for the Seed of the woman has broken your head! He shall reign forever and ever and you shall die! Hallelujah! The coffin of sin is both shut up and fastened down with the seal of Christ’s victory! But now, the last expression is in English. He has come “to make reconciliation for iniquity,” that is, to end the strife between God and man by a glorious reconciliation—a making, again, of peace between these two—so that God loves man and, as a consequence, man loves God. In the blessed Atonement of Christ, God and man meet at a chosen meeting place. Christ is Jehovah’s darling and our delight. A slain Savior is well-pleasing to God and oh, how pleasing He is to a sinner who is deeply under a sense of sin! Here, here is that Mercy Seat sprinkled with blood where man may speak to God without fear—and where God does speak to man without wrath! Here Righteousness and Peace have met together! Mercy and Truth have kissed each other! Oh, glorious reconciliation which Christ has made by honoring the Law in His life and in His death!

Now, take the Hebrew for it, and read the sentence thus—to cover iniquity. Oh, what bliss this is! To think, dear Friends, that sin is now, once and for all, covered! Not as though it lay rankling there beneath some coverlet through which fire might burn, or lightning strike, but Christ’s covering is such that, if you could heap Hell over sin, it were not so hidden! And if you could pile worlds upon it, were not so concealed! And if all Heaven bowed to overlay it, it were not so out of sight as when Jesus buried it deeper than the lowest depths, where no memory can remember it, or mind perceive it!—

*“Our guilt shall vanish quite away,  
Though black as Hell before,  
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,  
And shall be found no more.”*

This is what is to be done with the whole kingdom of evil, as well with the power of it and with the guilt of it. Dagon is to fall and to be broken— and the very stump of him is to be demolished. As when the darkness flies before the sun, not a trace of its blackness is left, so is sin to be utterly destroyed from the redeemed of the Lord! It is not merely the guilt of sin that is shut up and sealed and covered, but sin itself, its power, its dominion, its habit, its defilement—the dread that comes of it and the fear and the burning of heart which it engenders. All the foul birds of sin’s filthy cage must fly away, never to return, chased away by the glorious work of Him who shall save His people from their sins! For this the Messiah was cut off, and this, by His death, is achieved—

*“O love! You bottomless abyss!  
My sins are swallowed up in thee;  
Covered is my unrighteousness,  
Nor spot of guilt remains on me.  
While Jesus’ blood, through earth and skies,*

*Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!”*  
I fail to describe this triumphant overthrow of sin and Satan. I have neither wisdom nor language answerable to such a theme. I invite you, now, for a few minutes to consider the second work, namely, the setting up of righteousness. This is set before us in three expressions—first, in the words, “to bring in everlasting righteousness.” And what is that? Why, His own righteousness which is from everlasting to everlasting and will never be taken way from those who have it and will never cease to be their beauty and their glorious Jesus! The work of Christ in His life and death is, by God, imputed to His people—indeed, it is theirs because they are one with Christ! He is the Lord, their righteousness, and they are the righteousness of God in Him. Saints are so righteous in Jesus Christ that they are more righteous than Adam was before he fell, for he had but a creature righteousness, but they have the righteousness of the Creator— Adam had a righteousness which he lost—but Believers have a righteousness which they can never lose, an everlasting righteousness!

Nor is that all the meaning of our text—those to whom God imputes righteousness, to them, also, He imparts righteousness. He makes them pure in heart. He changes their desires. He makes them love that which is right and just and good and so He gives them Grace to lead godly, sober, honest and holy lives! This righteousness shall not be crushed out of them, for the work of the Spirit shall continue until they shall become perfect and be meet to dwell with God in His Light. Happy are those spirits to whom Christ gives an everlasting righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of God and in it they shall shine forth as the sun! They are right and they shall be right! They are true and they shall never degenerate into falsehood! They are God’s own children and they shall go on to develop the image of Christ, their elder Brother, till they shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing! This Christ came to do—He imputes and imparts righteousness and thus brings in everlasting righteousness as the foundation of His Kingdom.

Next, in order to the setting up of a Kingdom of righteousness, He is come that He may, “seal up vision and prophecy.” That is, by fulfilling all the visions and the prophecies of the Old Testament in Himself, He ends both prophecy and vision. He seals up visions and prophecies so that they shall no more be seen or spoken. They are closed and no man can add to them and, therefore—and that is the point to note—the Gospel is forever settled, to remain eternally the same! Christ has set up a Kingdom that shall never be moved. His Truth can never be changed by any novel revelation. If any man comes to you and says, “I am a Prophet!” bid him go and find believers among the foolish, for, to you, Jesus has sealed up prophecy and vision and there is to be no more of it. There is no need of it, because in Christ, God has spoken all He means to say concerning the way of salvation. Until such time as Christ Himself shall come, the canon is complete, and though there are many voices crying, “Lo, here!” and, “Lo, there!” and some so fascinating that they might deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, yet those whom Christ has chosen know the Shepherd’s voice and, “a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.”

Brothers and Sisters, there was always something better yet to come in all times till Christ arrived, but after the best, there comes none. A certain philosopher taught this; the next philosopher taught that and the next one contradicted this and that and taught another thing—while another master arose and contradicted all who went before. So man groped, as in the dark, for the wall, but now, the day has dawned and the true Light of God shines, for Christ has appeared! This, then, is an essential part of the setting up of that which is good—namely, to settle truth on a fixed basis whereon we may stand steadfast and immovable. The candles are snuffed out because the day, itself, looks out from the windows of Heaven. Rejoice in this, Beloved! God makes you righteous in Christ and with Christ, and in order that you shall never be perplexed with change, He sets aside all other teachers, that Christ may be your All in All!

Then, as if this were not enough, and truly it would not be enough, He is also come to anoint the Most Holy, or the Holy of Holies, as you may read it. And what doe this means? Nothing material, for the Holy of Holies, the place into which the High Priest went of old, is demolished, and the veil is torn in two. The Most Holy place is now the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! He was anointed that God might dwell in Him. Together with Christ, the Holy of Holies is now His Church and that Church was anointed or dedicated when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost, to be with us and to abide in us forever. That was a noble part of the setting up of the great Kingdom of Righteousness, when tongues of fire descended and sat upon each of the disciples and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This is Christ’s work, for which He came and for which He ascended on high, to set up the Truth of God, to set up righteousness and to make it everlasting by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church of God in the midst of the sons of men. Thus you see, in six ways, which condense themselves into two, our Lord set about His lordly enterprise. Heaven rings with the praises of the Messiah who came to destroy the work of sin and to set up the Kingdom of Righteousness in the midst of the world!

II. Let us now inquire as to our participation in these two works. I will put a few questions as briefly as I can, and I pray God, the Holy Spirit, that every one of us may honestly answer them. First, dear Brothers and Sisters, Christ has come into the world to do all this good work, but has He done it for us? “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” What for? “That whoever believes in Him might not perish.” There is a general aspect to the Atonement, but there is quite as surely a special objective in it. God loved the world and, therefore, He gave His Son. But to what end did He give His Son? Here is the answer, “That whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

There was a special eye to Believers. Come, then, have you believed? The first question that is to help you to answer that inquiry is this—Is your sin shut up as to its power? “Sin shall not have dominion over you” if Christ is in you. How is it between your soul and evil? Is there war, or peace? Once you loved sin—you could not have enough of it. Is it so now? Do you still delight in evil? For if you do, the love of God is not in you! Can you still put forth your hand to iniquity as you once did? Then do not pretend that Christ has done anything for you! If you are a Believer, your sin may not be absolutely dead, but it is shut up for dead—it is held fast in the condemned cell. It may still breathe, but it is crucified with Christ!

How it tugs to get its hands loose from the nails! How it struggles to get its feet down from the tree! But it cannot, for He that nailed it there knew how to drive nails and how to fasten the offender to the tree. Do you begin to grow weary of iniquity? Is it distasteful and unpleasant to you? And, when looking over the day, you perceive where you have spoken unadvisedly or acted hastily, or in any other way soiled your character—do you feel as if you would gladly wash out every spot with tears? If it is so, Christ has begun with you—He has come to shut up your sin and to end its reign—it shall no more have dominion over you. It may be in you, but it shall not be on the throne! It may threaten you, but it shall not command you! It may grieve you, but it shall not destroy you! You are under another Master—you serve the Lord Christ. Judge for yourself how this matter fares with you.

The next question arising out of the text is, Is your sin sealed up as to its condemning power? Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit in your soul, saying to you, “Go in peace; your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you”? Have you clutched that promise, “He that believes in Him is not condemned”? Have you believed in Jesus? Has that blessed Word of God, “There is therefore now no condemnation,” breathed a deep calm over your spirit? Some of you do not know what I mean, but others of you do. Oh, what bliss, what a Heaven it is to know, “I am washed in the blood of the Lamb! I am delivered, clean delivered from every sin—past, present and to come—as to any possibility of its being laid to my charge! Christ has put my sins into a bag, sealed them up, hurled that bag into the sea and flung them out of existence! They are gone, never to be found again, ever!”

He has made an end of sin. Come, dear Hearer, do you know anything about this? If you do not, it is the one thing you need to know and, until you know it, you will never have any rest to your spirit, but you will be tossed to and fro as upon a raging sea. “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” There is no peace to any of us till Christ has made an end of our sin! How is it with your hearts? And next, is your sin covered as to its appearance before God? Has the Lord Jesus Christ made such an expiation for your sin that it no longer glares in the Presence of the Most High, but you can come unto God without dread? Can you hopefully say, “Lord God, You see no sin in me, for You have covered me with the righteousness of Christ and washed me in His blood”? Did you ever feel the sweetness of that? It is rapture! I can remember times when I have been driven to doubt whether it could be true, it seemed too good—and then again, when my faith has revived, I have said—“Good as it is, it is true, for it is like God to do these great marvels and to put away the sins of His people and cover them once and for all.”

Oh, then there has been a joy within my spirit not at all like the joy of harvest, or the joy of marriage, or the joy of a first-born child in the house. No! It is a joy like the bliss of angels, deep, unspeakable, mysterious, Divine! Have you ever felt it? You will feel it constantly if Christ comes to dwell with you! You will, then, be assured in your heart that He has made an end of your sin. Further, let me question you about the next point. Has the Lord Jesus Christ made you righteous? Do you Glory in His blood and righteousness and do you now seek after that which is pure and holy? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” If we continue in sin, we shall perish in sin. He is saved who comes out from evil and seeks to live honestly, righteously, soberly after the manner of the godly and the saintly. Is it so with you? Is there a great and deep change in your spirit, so that you now love those good things which once you despised and ridiculed in others? Oh, if you cannot answer my poor questions, how will you stand before the Judgment Seat of God when He shall test you as with fire?

Furthermore, are the prophecies and visions sealed up as to you? Are they fulfilled in you? When God declares that He will wash us and make us whiter than snow, is it so with you? When He declares that He will cleanse our blood, which has not yet been cleansed, is it so with you? When He says, “A new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them: and I will write My Law upon their hearts”—is it so with you? Are you fishing about after empty dreams and fancies, or have you laid hold upon the old prophecies and the ancient visions and discovered the substance of them to be deeply worked in your very heart?

Nor is this all—are you anointed to be most holy to the Lord? Are you set apart that you may serve Him? Has the Holy Spirit come upon you, giving you a desire to do good? Have you a wish to rescue the perishing, a longing to bring the wandering sheep back to the great Shepherd’s fold? Is the Spirit of God so upon you, today, that you can truly say, “I am not my own; I am bought with a price”? Jesus, the Messiah, came to do all these things and if He has not done them to you, then He has not come to you— you are still a stranger, still far off from Him! Oh, may the Lord make you desperately unhappy till you come to Jesus! May you never know what quiet means till you find it at the pierced feet! From this hour may you breathe sighs and may every pulse be a new agony of spirit, till, at last, you can say, “Yes, the Messiah was cut off, and cut off for me, and all that He came to do He did for me, and I am a sharer and a partaker in it all.”

III. Lastly, we have but a brief interval in which to speak of the results of participating in all this. The results! I need a week to speak of them! They are, first of all, security. How can that man be lost whose transgression is finished and whose sin has ceased to be? What is there for him to dread on earth, in Heaven, or in Hell? If Christ has put away my sin, I cannot die! If Christ has washed away my guilt, I cannot be condemned! I am safe and may triumphantly sing—

*“More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven!”*  
Therefore, rejoice in this!

And now, inasmuch as you are secure, you are also reconciled to God and made to delight in Him. God is your Friend and you are one of the friends of God! Rejoice in that hallowed friendship and live in the assurance of it! Now you have the anointing, do not doubt it! Christ has made it yours by His death. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon you; you are fit for service; set about it without further question. The anointing is upon you; you are most holy to the Lord; so let your life be wholly consecrated. Your heart ought to be, and shall be, by the Spirit’s power, as holy as that innermost shrine into which no unauthorized foot ever intruded—into which only once in the year the High Priest went—and then not without blood. God dwells in you, and you in God! Oh, blessed consequences—you shall soon dwell with Him forever!

But now, suppose when I put the question, you had to shake your head and say, “No, it is not so with me”? Then hear these few sentences. If the Messiah has not done this for you, then your sin will be finished in another way—sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. An awful death awaits you—death unto God, purity and joy. Woe, woe, to you! Death, on the pale horse pursues you, and will overtake you soon! Then will one woe be past, but another will follow it. If Christ has never made an end of your sin, then mark this, your sin will soon make an end of you and all your hopes, your pleasure, your boasts and your peace will perish! Oh, terrible end of all that is hopeful within you! You shall be a desolation forever and forever!

Has Christ not reconciled you? Then mark this, your enmity will increase! There is no peace between God and you, now, but soon will the war begin in which He must conquer and you, never yielding, will continue forever more to hate God and to find in that hate your utmost torment, your fiercest Hell! Have you never had the righteousness of Christ brought in? Then mark this, your unrighteousness will last forever! One of these days God will say, “He that is unholy, let him be unholy, still: He that is filthy, let him be filthy, still.” That will be the most awful thing that can ever happen to you! You have heard of the fable of Medusa’s head— whoever looked upon it, when it was held up, was turned to stone—and one day, Sinner, you shall look at Death—and it will petrify your character so that it shall be forever what it is when death came to you! Where death finds you, there judgment shall find you, and there eternity shall leave you! Oh, wretched Soul, to have nothing to do with the everlasting righteousness of Christ! Are not the prophecies fulfilled in you, the prophecies of mercy? Then listen! The prophecies of woe will be written large across your history. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, with all the nations that forget God.” Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to save you!

I will not detain you with many such words of terror, but through the Old Testament they roll like peals of thunder, nor is the New Testament less stern towards him that goes on in his iniquity and will not turn to the Christ. Lastly, will you never be anointed to be most holy? Then remember, holiness and you will stand at a distance, forever—and to be far off from holiness must necessarily be to be far off from Heaven and happiness! Sin is misery. In it lies both the root and the fruit of eternal woe. Purity is paradise—to be right with God is to be right with yourself and all created things! But if you will not be holy, then you must, by force of your own choice, be forever tossed about upon the restless sea of wretchedness! God save you, Brothers and Sisters! God save you for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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DANIEL’S BAND  
NO. 2256

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 15, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 3, 1890.

**“O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.”  
Daniel 10:11.**

IT did not do Daniel any harm to know that he was greatly beloved of God, or else he would not have received that information from Heaven. Some people are always afraid that if Christian people obtain full assurance and receive a sweet sense of Divine love, they will grow proud, and be carried away with conceit. Do not have any such fear for other people and especially do not be afraid of it for yourselves! I know of no greater blessing that can happen to any man and woman here than to be assured by the Spirit of God that they are greatly beloved of the Lord. Such knowledge might do some of us, who are Christians, the greatest conceivable good! Daniel was not injured by knowing that he was greatly beloved. It has often been said that Daniel is the John of the Old Testament and John is the Daniel of the New Testament. Those two men, Daniel and John, were choice saints. They rose to the greatest height of spiritual obedience and then to the greatest height of spiritual enjoyment.

The knowledge that we are greatly beloved of God, instead of doing us harm, will be a means of blessings in many ways. If you know, my dear Brothers and Sisters, for sure, that you are greatly beloved of God, you will become very humble. You will say, “How could God ever love me?—

*‘What was there in me to merit esteem,*

*Or give the Creator delight?’”*  
I think a sense of God’s love is even more humbling than a sense of our own sin! When the two are blended, they sink the soul very low, not in depression of spirit, but in its estimate of itself.

A sense of God’s love will also excite in you great gratitude. “Oh,” you will say, “how can I repay the Lord for such an amazing favor?” You will be conscious that you can never repay Him, but you will begin working out all sorts of schemes and plans to try to show how much you value the love of God. You will bring out your alabaster box from its hiding place—you will willingly enough break it and pour the precious ointment upon the dear head of Him who has loved you so greatly. I am sure that a certainty of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit is one of the greatest promoters of holy gratitude—and holy gratitude is the mother of obedience. When we feel how much we owe, then we seek to know the will of God and take a delight in doing it. Whatever He says to us, we are glad to do as a proof that we really are grateful for “love so amazing, so Divine.”

This will also consecrate us. I believe that to know certainly that you are greatly beloved of God will make you feel that you cannot live as others do. You cannot trifle with sin. He who lives in the heart of the King must be faithful to Him. If called to stand in God’s immediate Presence as a courtier and a favorite, you must take care how you behave yourself and you will do so. “You are not your own; for you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” In proportion as we are sure of His love, our love to Him will burn like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat—and everything contrary to the will of God will be consumed in that blessed flame.

A sense of Divine love will also strengthen us. What is there that a man cannot do when he is in love, even, with one of his own race? But when he gets to be in love with God and knows of a certainty that he is greatly beloved of God—he would cut his way through a lane of devils—he would face an army of angels and defeat them all—for love is a conquering Grace. When faith is side by side with love, it—

*“Laughs at impossibilities,*

*And says, ‘It shall be done,’”*  
and love goes and does it, for there is nothing which the love of God will not enable us to do.

Moreover, this assurance of God’s love will make us very courageous. If you are a man greatly beloved and you know it, you will be a brave man! Let me never come into collision with the sword of that man whom God greatly loves—he will cut me in halves! The love of God makes a hero of the man on whom it is fixed. He is in the thick of the fray. He defies sin, death and Hell. He will burn for Christ—he would be ready to burn a thousand times when once he was assured that he was the object of the peculiar love of God and, like Daniel, could be addressed as “a man greatly beloved.”

This will make a man glad. If we are greatly beloved of God, how can we be miserable and discontent? Oh, no! If you are a man greatly beloved, you will trip with light feet over the hills of sorrow. You will be glad in the Lord, even when you have much to depress and discourage you. You will begin the music of Heaven even here, for a sense of God’s love in the soul sets all the bells of the heart ringing. He is the most glad man who has the greatest assurance that he is “a man greatly beloved.”

I have said all this as a preface to show you that you need not be afraid of knowing that God loves you. Some seem to think that a state of doubt is a state of discretion. It is a state of folly! Full assurance of the faithfulness and truthfulness of God is nothing but commonsense spiritualized! To believe a lie is folly, but to believe the Truth of God is wisdom. If you are a Believer in Christ, though the very least and weakest of Believers, you are a man greatly beloved! Believe it and be not afraid to rejoice in it. It will have no influence over you but that which is sanctifying and healthgiving!

Well, now, to help us think of Christ’s great love to us, I am going to talk a little, first, about the case of Daniel, the man greatly beloved. Secondly, about the case of every Believer, for every Believer is a man greatly beloved. And thirdly, about the case of some special saints—Believers who are the elect out of the elect—the choicest of the choice ones of the Most High! Of these it may truly be said that they are men greatly beloved.

I. First, then, let us consider THE CASE OF DANIEL who was “a man greatly beloved.  
Because Daniel was greatly beloved of God, he was early tried and enabled to stand. While he was yet a youth, he was carried into Babylon and there he refused to eat the king’s meat, or to drink the king’s wine. He put it to the test whether, if he fed on common food, he would not be healthier and better than if he defiled himself with the king’s meat. Now, religion does not stand in meat and drink, but let me say a good deal of irreligion does—and it may become a very important point with some as to what they eat and what they drink. Daniel was tested early and because he was a man greatly beloved of God, he stood the test. He would not yield even in a small point to that which was evil. Young man, if God greatly loves you, He will give you an early decision and, very likely He will put you to an early test. If you are greatly loved, you will stand firm, even about so small a thing as what you eat and drink, or something that looks less important than that. You will say, “I cannot sin against God. I must stand fast, even in the smallest matter, in keeping the Law of the Lord my God.” If you are enabled to do that, you are a man greatly beloved!  
Afterwards, Daniel was greatly envied, but found faultless. He was surrounded by envious enemies who could not bear that he should be promoted over them, though he deserved all the honor he received. So they met together and consulted how they could pull him down. They were obliged to make this confession, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God.” O dear Friends, you are greatly beloved if, when your enemies meet to devise some scheme for your overthrow, they cannot say anything against you except what they base upon your religion! If, when they sift you through and through, their eager, evil eyes cannot detect a fault—and they are obliged to fall back upon abusing you for your godliness, calling it hypocrisy, or some other ugly name—you are a man or woman greatly beloved!  
Further, Daniel was delivered from great peril. He was cast into the lions’ den because he was a man greatly beloved of God. I think I see some shrink back and I hear them say, “We do not want to go into the lions’ den.” They are poor creatures, but Daniel was worth putting in the lions’ den—there was enough of him to be put there! Some men would be out of place among lions—indeed, cats would be more suitable companions for them! They are such insignificant beings that they would be more at home among mice! Lion’s dens would not be at all in their line. They would imitate Solomon’s slothful man and say, “There is a lion outside, I shall be slain in the streets.” There is not enough manhood in them to bring them into close quarters with the king of beasts!  
Even among our hearers there are many poor feeble creatures. A clever man preaches false doctrine and they say, “Very good. Was it not well put?” Oh, yes! It is all alike good to some of you who cannot discern between the true and the false! But Daniel could distinguish between good and evil and, therefore, he was thrust into the lion’s den. It was, however, a den out of which he was delivered. The lions could not eat him—God loved him too well. The Lord preserved Daniel and He will preserve you, dear Friend, if you belong to “Daniel’s band.” It is one thing to sing— *“Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone,”*  
but it is quite another thing to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone when you are at the mouth of the lions den! If you are like Daniel, you will have no cause for fear even then. If your trial should be like going into a den of lions, if you are a man greatly beloved of God, you will come out again. No lion shall destroy you—you are perfectly safe. The love of God is like a wall of fire round about you.  
Once more, Daniel was a man greatly beloved and, therefore, he had revelations from God. Do not open your eyes with wonder and say, “I wish that I had all the revelations that Daniel had.” Listen to what he says—“I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.” And again—“As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart.” The revelations he received actually made him ill! “I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” He whom God loves will see things that will astound him! He will see that which will almost kill him! He will see that which will make him faint and sick well near unto death!  
When one said, “You cannot see God and live,” another answered, “Then let me see him if I die.” So those who are greatly beloved say, “Let me see visions of God whatever it may cost me. Let me have communion with Him even though it should break my heart and crush me in the dust. Though it should fill me with sorrow and make me unfit for my daily business, yet manifest Yourself to me, my Lord, as You do not unto the world!” Even men greatly beloved, when they deal closely with God, have to find out that they are but dust and ashes in His sight. They have to fall down before the Presence of His glorious majesty, as the beloved John did when he fell at Christ’s feet as dead.  
I will make only one more remark upon Daniel’s case and that is this— he stood in his lot. Because he was a man greatly beloved, he had this promise with which to close his marvelous book, “Go you your way till the end: for you shall rest, and stand in your lot at the end of the days.” He was a man greatly beloved, but he does not understand all that God has revealed—and he is to go his way and rest quite satisfied that whether he understood it or not, it would work him no harm, for when the end came, he would have his place and his portion—and he would be with his Lord forever! The next time you get to studying some prophecy of Scripture which you cannot make out, do not be troubled, but hear the voice of God saying, “Go your way. Wait awhile. It will all be plain, by-and-by. God is with you. There remains a rest for you, a crown that no head but yours can wear, a harp that no fingers but yours can play upon, and you shall stand in your lot at the end of the days.”  
Thus I have briefly described the case of Daniel.  
II. In the second place, I am going to speak OF THE CASE OF EVERY BELIEVER who is also greatly beloved of God. I must be very brief because of the communion service which is to follow.  
Every Believer has been called out from others. My Brothers and Sisters, look at the hole of the pit from which you were rescued! Like Abraham, you have been called out from your family, and from your father’s house. Possibly, you have not one godly relative. Many here are the only ones of their kith and kin that ever knew the Lord so far as they know of, or can remember. Behold in this the Sovereign, electing Love of God. Are you not a man greatly beloved? Even if you have come of a godly stock, yet you have seen others who seemed to be nearest to the Kingdom and yet have been cast out from it. Admire the Grace of God which has called you, and your father, and your grandfather, and your brother and sister, and your wife, and maybe children, too! Oh, be grateful, and bless the name of the Lord! But, “who makes you to differ from another?” Who but God, the Giver of all Grace, has made you to differ from the ungodly around you? Therefore, adore Him for His matchless mercy, His distinguishing Grace.  
Remember, too, that if you have been called out from a sinful world and transformed into a child of God, this is the token that you have been chosen from the beginning. God loved you long before He began to deal with you in the way of Grace. Before you were born and before this world was made, Christ died for you. God loved you with an everlasting love— *“Before the daystar knew its place,  
Or planets ran their round,”*  
your name was in His Book—and your image was on the heart of Christ, whose delights were with the sons of men! Remember His Words by the Prophet, Jeremiah, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Feed on that precious Truth of God! Inwardly digest it—let it enter into your very soul. He has loved me with an everlasting love, then, surely, I may claim the title of “a man greatly beloved.”  
Remember, too, that in the fullness of time, you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Your God took upon Himself your nature and on the Cross He bore your sins in His own body on the tree. The chastisement of your peace was upon Him and with His stripes you are healed. The blood mark is now on you—you are one for whom He died in that special way which secures effectual salvation to you! He loved His Church and gave Himself for it—and this is the song of that Church in Heaven, “You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth.” If you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, verily, I say to you, you are “a man greatly beloved.”  
You have also been pardoned and put among the Lord’s children. Remember your sin for a moment. Dare you remember it? Have you remembered it? Then forget it, for God has blotted it out! He has cast all your sins behind His back. The depths have covered them—there is not one of them left. They sank like lead in the mighty waves of oblivion and they shall never arise to condemn you! You are forgiven! Perhaps you were a drunk, a swearer, disobedient to parents, or unchaste. But whatever your sin, the blood of Jesus has cleansed you and you are whiter than the snow—and He has covered you with the robe of His perfect righteousness and you are “accepted in the Beloved.” Are you not a man greatly beloved?  
I remember one who came creeping to the Savior’s feet. It was myself, black as night, condemned in my own conscience and expecting to be driven to the place where hope could never come! I came to Christ wearing the weeds of mourning, but, in a moment, when I looked to Jesus, He put on me the garments of salvation! He took away my sin and placed a fair crown upon my head—and set my feet upon a rock—and established my goings. Blessed be His name! If there is a man in the world who can sing— *“Oh, ‘twas love, ‘twas wondrous love,  
The love of God to me!  
It brought my Savior from above,  
To die on Calvary.”*  
I am that man! And you can sing it, too, dear Friend, can’t you? I mean if you have been forgiven your trespasses for Christ’s sake. I feel sure that your heart is now speaking, even if your tongue is silent, and it says, “Indeed, as a pardoned man, I am greatly beloved.”  
Since the Lord forgave your sin, you have been a praying man and God has heard your prayers. From the horns of the unicorns has He delivered you! Out of the depths of the sea you have cried and He has rescued you, like Jonah. With the Psalmist, you can say, “Verily, God has heard me. He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” Are you not greatly beloved? As our dear Friend, Dr. Taylor, said in prayer this morning, we have a Mercy Seat to which we can always go. Not only have we gone to it in the past, but we may go to it whenever we need. We have the entree’ of the King’s palace at will. Are we not men greatly beloved?  
Beside that, remember that the Lord has upheld you until now. In your pilgrim path, how many times have your feet almost slipped? How often have you been tempted? Ah, worse than that, how often have you yielded to temptation? Yet here you are, your character not ruined, your soul not lost, your face towards Jerusalem and the enemy’s foot is not on your neck—and it will never be, glory be to the name of the Lord! When I think of all our experience in the way in which the Lord has led us, I can truly say of all His people that they are men and women greatly beloved!  
Now, tonight you are invited to feast with Christ and His Church—not to come and be dogs under the table—but to sit with Him at the royal banquet, with His banner of love waving over you! You are invited to be His companions here, His comrades at His feet. Oh, what a festival is this sacred supper! Haman thought himself honored when he was invited to his king’s banquet—but what shall we say who are bid to come to this high festival?—  
*“What food luxurious loads the board,  
When at the table sits the Lord!  
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,  
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!”*  
Only one thing more will I say under this head, but the story is so marvelous that we may be forever telling it and yet it will never be all told! The love of Christ to some of us has been so wonderful that when we once begin the theme, we seem to forget all about time and wish there were no fleeting hours to bid us end our story! Eternity itself will not be too long for telling “the old, old story, of Jesus and His love.”  
But, what I was going to say, is this—we shall soon be with Him. Some of us sit here heavy at heart and there are wrinkles on our brow. And there is a weariness in the frame which makes the wheels of life drag heavy. Beloved, it is but the twinkling of an eye, so brief is life, and we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory! Do you ever try to realize the greatness of that love that will take you to be with Christ, to dwell with Him and to share His Glory forever? Can you not put the incorruptible crown on your head tonight in fancy—no—in faith? Can you, even now, begin to wave the palm of victory and strike the harp of everlasting praise? Do you feel as if you could, even now, join the sacred songsters above and sing the heavenly hymn, the hallelujah chorus of the ages yet to be? As surely as we are in Christ, tonight, we shall be with Christ, byand-by. Oh, men and women, greatly beloved, to have such a future as this before you ought to make your Heaven begin below!  
III. Time fails me, so I must speak of THE CASE OF SPECIAL SAINTS— those who are, in a peculiar sense, men and women greatly beloved.  
There are some men who are, as I said at the beginning of my discourse, elect out of the elect. Remember that Christ had 70 choice men— His disciples—but then He had 12 choicer men, His Apostles. And He had three of these who were with Him when the others were not—and out of these three He had one John—“that disciple whom Jesus loved.” His love is so sweet, that while I would be grateful to be even outside the seventy, so long as I might be among the 500 brethren who saw Him after He rose from the dead, yet I would then have the ambition to get in among the seventy—not for the honor of it, but for the love it would bring! I would like to be one of the eleven for the same reason. I would be glad to be one of the three and I would, above measure, be thankful if I might be that one whom Jesus loved. Have you not the same holy aspiration?  
Well, now, let me tell you that if you would be among the choicer spirits, greatly beloved of God, you must be men of spotless character. Christ loves great sinners and even saints that fall and stain their garments He will not cast away. But you will never enjoy the fullness of Christ’s love unless you keep your garments unspotted from the world. You cannot find a fault in Daniel and if you want to live on earth so as to be in Heaven while you are here—and to drink the wine of Christ’s love to the bottom of the chalice, even the spiced wine of His pomegranate—you must watch every step and observe every word, for our Lord is very jealous and half a word of evil will grieve Him! If you would walk in the Light of God as He is in the Light and have constant fellowship with God, I beseech you, be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect and follow after unsullied holiness. The pure in heart shall see God! Oh, that we might, everyone, have this purity! It is those who have not defiled their garments who shall walk with Christ in white!  
The next point is that men who are greatly beloved are men of decision. When Daniel had the lions’ den in prospect, because of his faithfulness to His God, “He went into the house; and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” There was no compromising in Daniel’s case! If you want to be greatly beloved, do not attempt any compromise with sin! Have nothing to do with policy, craft and holding with the true and the false at the same time. If God is to use you in His service, you must be like the tribe of Levi, separate from your Brothers—and you must always be ready to stand up bravely for God and for His eternal Truth at any cost. It is my earnest desire that we may have in this Church many men and women of this kind who will be, as Mr. Moody puts it, out and out for Christ!  
Next, if you would be men greatly beloved of God beyond all the rest of His people on whom special shining of His face shall come, you must be much in communion with Him. Daniel fasted and prayed and communed with God with cries and tears—and God came and revealed Himself to him. He was greatly beloved, for he lived near to God. He was no far-off follower of his Lord. He dwelt in the full blaze of the Sun of Righteousness!  
If a man is to be greatly beloved of God, he must live above the world as Daniel did. Daniel became a prince, a governor, a man of substance and position, but when Belshazzar promised to clothe him with scarlet and to put a gold chain about his neck if he could read and interpret the writings on the wall, he said to the king, “Let your gifts be to yourself, and give your rewards to another.” Daniel did not want them! When he became great in the land, he walked with God as he had done when he was poor. It is a dangerous thing for some people to be made much of in this world—their hands soon get turned and they begin to think too much of themselves. He who thinks that he is somebody is nobody—and he whose head swims because of his elevation will soon have it broken because of his tumbling down from his lofty position. Daniel was a man greatly beloved and God showed him His great love by setting him in high places and keeping him there in safety.  
Once more, men who are greatly beloved by the Lord live wholly for God and for God’s people. You see nothing of selfishness about Daniel. He neither seeks to be great nor to be rich. He loves his own people, Israel. He pleads with God for the seed of Abraham. He is patriotic. He loves Jehovah and he pleads with Him for God’s own people. Now, if you want to be greatly beloved, give yourself up to the service of God and His Church— *“You that are men, now serve Him,  
Against unnumbered foes.  
Your courage rise with danger,  
And strength to strength oppose.”*  
No man need wish to be born in a time more suitable for heavenly chivalry than this. To stand alone for God in such an evil age as this is a great honor. I pray that you may be able to avail yourselves of your privileges. How few care to swim against the current!  
A strong stream is running in opposition to the Truth of God. Many say that the Bible is not half Inspired. Many are turning away from Christ, refusing to acknowledge His Deity, and some blasphemously speak of His precious blood as a thing of the shambles. O Sirs! If somebody does not stand out today for the cause of God and His Truth, what is to become of the nominal Church and of a guilty world? If you are loyal to Christ, show it! If you love Him and His Infallible Word, prove it! Then shall you hear Him say to you, also, “O man greatly beloved, go you your way till the end is: for you shall rest, and stand in your lot at the end of the days.” God grant it for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—1 John 4:9-21.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—810, 808, 735.  
EXPOSITION BY CHARLES H. SPURGEON  
**1 JOHN 4:9-21**

Verse 9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. There is love in our creation. There is love in Providence. But most of all there is love in the gift of Christ for our redemption! The Apostle, here, seems to say, “Now that I have found the great secret of God’s love to us, here is the clearest evidence of Divine Love that ever was or ever can be manifested toward the sons of men.”

10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent

His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins. In us there was no love—there was a hatred of God and goodness. The enmity was not on God’s side toward us, but on our side toward Him. “He loved us and sent His Son.” The gift of Christ, the necessary Propitiation for our sins, was all of love on God’s part. Justice demanded the Propitiation, but Love applied it. God could not be just if He pardoned sin without Atonement—and the greatness of the love is seen in the fact that it moved the Father to give His Son to an ignominious death that He might pardon sinners and yet be just.

11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another. Here we have a fact and an argument. We ought to love. We ought to love after God’s fashion, not because men loved us. Nor because they deserve anything at our hands. We are too apt to look at the worthiness of those whom we help, but our God is gracious to the unthankful and to the evil. He makes His sun to rise and rain to fall for the unjust as well as for the righteous. Therefore we ought to love the unlovely and the unloving. And just as God has a special love for His own people, we who believe in Him ought to have a peculiar affection for all who are His.

12. No man has seen God at any time. We do not need to see Him to love Him. Love knows how good He is, though she has not beheld Him. Blessed are they who have not seen God, yet who love Him with heart, mind and strength.

12. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you. He dwells in you—He is your nearest and dearest Friend—the Author of all other love. The Grace of Love comes from the God of Love.

13. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And His Spirit is the Spirit of Love. Wherever it comes, it makes man love his fellow man and seek his good. And if you have that love in your heart, it came from God, and you dwell in God.

14. And we have seen. Yes, there is something that we have seen. John writes for himself and his fellow Apostles and he says, “No man has seen God at any time,” but—

14. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. John saw Him live and saw Him die—and saw Him when He had risen from the dead—and saw Him as He ascended. So he speaks to the matter of eyesight and bears testimony that though we have not seen God, we have, in the person of the representative Apostles, seen the Son of God who lived and labored and died for us.

15. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. Let Christ be God to you and you are saved. If, in very deed, and of a truth, you take Him to be the Son of God and consequently rest your eternal hopes on Him, God dwells in you, and you dwell in God.

16. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. How far is this true of all of you? How many here can join with the beloved Apostle and say, “We have known and believed the love that God has to us”? We know it! We have felt it! We are under its power! We still know it—it remains a matter of faith to us—we believe it. We have a double hold of it. “We know,” we are not agnostics. “We believe,” we are not unbelievers.

16. God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. This is not mere benevolence—there are many benevolent people who still do not dwell in love. They wish well to their fellow men, but not to all. They are full of indignation at certain men for the wrong that they have done them. John’s words teach us that there is a way of living in which you are in accord with God and with all mankind—you have passed out of the region of enmity into the realm of love. When you have come there, by the Grace of God, then God dwells in you and you dwell in Him.

17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have a boldness in the Day of Judgement. That is a wonderful expression, “boldness in the Day of Judgment.” According to some, the saints will not be in the Day of Judgment. Then, what is the use of “boldness in the Day of Judgment”? As I read my Bible, we shall all be there, and we shall all give an account unto God. I shall be glad to be there, to be judged for the deeds done in my body—not that I hope to be saved by them—but because I shall have a perfect answer to all accusations on account of my sin. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” If I am a Believer in Christ—

*“Bold shall I stand in that grand day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay? While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

17. Because as He is, so are we in this world. Happy Christians, who can say that! If you live among men as Christ lived among men. If you are a savior to them in your measure. If you love them. If you try to exhibit the lovely traits of Character that were in Christ, happy are you!

18. There is no fear in love. When a man loves with a perfect love, he escapes from bondage. But perfect love casts out fear because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. There is a loving, holy fear which is never cast out. Filial fear grows as love grows. That sacred dread, that solemn awe of God we must always cultivate. But we are not afraid of Him. Dear Heart, God is your best Friend, your choicest love—

*“Yes, my own God is He,”*  
you can say, and you have no fear of Him now. You long to approach Him. Though He is a consuming fire, you know that He will only consume what you need to have consumed and will purify you, and make your gold to shine more brightly because the consumable alloy is gone from it! He will not consume you, but only that which would work for your hurt if it were left within you. Refining Fire, go through my heart! Consume as You will! I long to have sin consumed that I may be like my God. Say you not, too, my Brothers and Sisters?

19. We love Him because He first loved us. The reason for our love is found in Free Grace. God first loved us and now we must love Him—we cannot help it. It sometimes seems too much for a poor sinner to talk about loving God. If an ant or a snail were to say that it loved a queen, you would think it strange that it should look so high for an object of affection. But there is no distance between an insect and a man compared with the distance between man and God! Yet love does fling a flying bridge from our manhood up to His Godhead. “We love Him because He first loved us.” If He could come down to us, we can go up to Him! If His love could come down to such unworthy creatures as we are, then our poor love can find wings with which to mount up to Him!

20. If a man says, I love God. Not, “if a man loves God,” but, if a man says, “I love God.” It is a blessed thing to be able to say, “I love God,” when God, Himself, can bear witness to the truth of our statement! But the Apostle says, If a man says, I love God—

20. And hates his brother, he is a liar. It is very rude of you, John, to call people liars! But it is not John’s rough nature that uses such strong language—it is his gentle nature. When a loving disposition turns its face against evil, it turns against it with great vehemence of holy indignation. You can never judge a man’s character by his books. Curiously enough, Mr. Romaine, of St. Anne’s Church, Blackfriars, wrote the most loving books that could be—yet he was a man of very strong temper, indeed! Mr. Toplady wrote some of the sharpest things that were ever said about Arminians, but he was the most loving and gentle young man that ever breathed! St. John, full of love and tenderness, hits terribly hard when he comes across a lie. He was so fond of love, that he cannot have it played with, or mocked or mimicked. “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.”

21. For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this Commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God love his brother also. This is that “new Commandment” which our Lord gave to His Apostles and, through them, to His whole Church. “That you love one another as I have loved you.” John was, in a special sense, “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” It was meet, therefore, that he should be the Apostle to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring “this Commandment” to the remembrance of any who had forgotten it. “This Commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God love his brother also.” God help us to do so, of His great Grace! Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1295 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

OUR LORD’S HUMANITY A SWEET SOURCE OF COMFORT  
NO. 1295

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

**“Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.”  
Daniel 10:18.**

WE are not able, as yet, to bear the full revelation of Divine things. If any intellect had been strong enough, if any heart had been pure enough to see the exceeding glory of the Covenant angel, surely Daniel possessed such a head and heart. But even he fell upon his face and was cast into a dead swoon, for he was unable to bear the sight of the man clothed in linen, whose “body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning.” We ought to be thankful that our God has revealed no more. The Word of God is as excellent in its darkness as in its brightness. Had it unveiled more, its discoveries would have been no more beneficial— perhaps they had been less profitable. As it is, there is far more within this Book than you and I have seen as yet, and we need not wish that more had been written. If we entertain such a desire, our loving Lord may silence us with the words, “I have many things to show unto you, but you cannot bear them now.”

It appears from our text that, when weighed down under a sense of the Divine Presence, the readiest method of consolation is found in the touch of a certain sublime, mysterious, human hand. I know it is very usual to say that the personage who appeared to Daniel was the angel, Gabriel, but I cannot bring myself to believe that he is the angel of this chapter. Surely this glorious Being was that uncreated Messenger of the Covenant who, though not born into our nature in Daniel’s day, yet took upon Himself the similitude of a man for a time, as He had done before, when on special occasions He appeared to others of the saints before His actual Incarnation!

Even if we grant that an angel was the person who touched Daniel, still the truth which I wish to bring out will be none the less clear, namely, that even if an angel should wish to comfort us, he must assume a visible human form and he must lay upon us a sympathetic hand like our own so that there shall be, at any rate, “the appearance of a man,” or otherwise we shall not be strengthened. If this is granted as true, I shall not insist upon the text immediately referring to Christ, but I shed the general principle and say this—comfort is best brought to men by a man and if we are to be strengthened, the touch of “one like the appearance of a man” is needed.

Therefore we may, without difficulty, rise to the reflection that it is always to us the richest and highest comfort, as Believers in Christ, that the Lord Jesus is a Man and when He strengthens us, it is full often by laying His human hand upon us. He reveals His kinship with us and our spirit is consoled and strengthened by a sense of His union with us. My one objective is, by the Spirit’s aid, to draw water from the ancient well of our Lord’s humanity. The Son of God is also the Son of Man. We, none of us, doubt His Deity and, therefore, we shall be able to spend all our time in this sermon in musing upon His Manhood and the joys contained in that Truth of God.

Jesus is God. But Jesus was born, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again and Jesus is in Heaven, as a Man. He is God and Man in one Person, but there is no confusion of Natures. He is neither a deified man nor a humanized God. His Godhead is altogether Godhead and His Manhood altogether manhood. We must not divide the Person, nor confuse the natures. He is as truly Man as if He were not God and as truly God as if He had never assumed the nature of man. It is of His Manhood that we are now about to speak. We shall not attempt to prove it, but shall simply endeavor to show how the touch of the hand of Jesus, the Man, strengthens us.

I. And, first, dear Friends, does it not cheer us WHEN WE LABOR UNDER A SENSE OF LONELINESS? If we are true to Him, we are strangers and sojourners with Him, as all our fathers were. Before His Cross we find ourselves to be strangers in this land, even as He was, for as the world knew Him not, so it knows us not, and as it placed Him outside the camp, so, also, does it make aliens of us. It is sweet to feel, when walking the separated path, “I am a stranger with You”—a stranger in the world as You are, an exile as You were. In such solitude the Manhood of Jesus is a delicious cordial!

Some feel alone because they are the only ones of their house who serve the Lord. How you wish it were otherwise! It is your daily prayer that all your kindred may be followers of Christ, but they are not so. Perhaps they openly oppose you and make your life unhappy through their hard speeches. Well, there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother! There is a Brother who will hear what you have to say, no, who knows all that is in your heart before you utter it! He is the antitype of Joseph and He knows what it is to be separated from His Brethren. Of all that ever lived He was the loneliest, by far, and therefore He sympathizes with the forsaken ones.

The child of God, as he grows in Grace, becomes more lonely under certain aspects, just as the higher mountains have fewer familiarities, till Mont Blanc speaks to no equal in his awful height, but communes only with himself. They that serve God much and well—and draw near to His innermost Presence—in that proportion draw away from men, as to deriving comfort from them. But, oh, there are no heights to which Jesus has not risen, no attainments which He has not surpassed! That glorious Man is with you—with you in the singleness of heart with which you serve your God! He is with you in the perfect consecration which the Holy Spirit has given you, with you in the intimate fellowship of your soul with the Eternal Father! In your highest flight of ecstasy there is still a Man at your right hand, saying, “Fear not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.”

It falls to the lot of some Christians to stand alone in their contention for the faith. Perhaps there is made known to them what has not been revealed to others, or which, being revealed, others have refused to see—or seeing have been afraid to declare. In such cases true-hearted men find themselves standing very much alone, at least for a time. They have a treasure which others do not prize and they are bound to show it, for to this end was the treasure placed in their earthen vessel. God has not committed it to them for themselves, alone, but He has put them in trust with the Gospel for the good of others and they must speak it out. If, when they do so, they hear no sympathetic answer, but are met in the spirit of controversy and unkind rebuke, it is blessed for them to know that “the faithful and true Witness” is the champion of every honest testimony.

He stood alone as our atoning Sacrifice and into that loneliness we never intrude, but in all other work He is our companion, even He who is called, “the Man Christ Jesus,” and, therefore, we shall be cheered by His Presence if we find ourselves without earthly helpers. Oh, if we had our choice between having an angel to always live in our house and to know our secrets, or to have the Man Christ Jesus to be our constant Friend, we should not deliberate in our choice but choose our Lord’s company at once! An angel would often afflict us—we would be afraid to confess our littleness to him. We would fear that he would think them meanness. His unsuffering nature we would suspect of contempt—and we would be ill at ease in his presence. But such a feeling as that does not cross our mind when we have to deal with One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities!

We know our Lord to be true Man and, therefore, we speak to Him with familiarity and make Him our heart’s dearest companion. Lonely One, take care that you have no secrets apart from Jesus! Love your loneliness rather than seek to escape from it, if it brings you nearer to Him! You will do well to be always ready for Christian fellowship, yes, and to seek it— but do not live on it—for fellowship with Jesus is sweeter than fellowship with saints! I know that fellowship with saints is poor stuff if it come not through fellowship with the saints’ Master. When communion comes from His hands and we come to the feast in His company, then every Brother and Sister who sits at the table adds to our enjoyment.

But if we approach the table to see them and forget Him, then everybody adds to our discomfort and forms another veil to hide the Lord. Cling to the Christ of the Garden and the Cross, and find, O lonely One, your sweetest joy in the thought that He is a Man such as you are. Sing with me those sweet lines—

*“When gathering clouds around I view,  
And days are dark and friends are few,  
On Him I lean, who not in vain  
Experienced every human pain.  
He sees my needs, allays my fears,  
And counts and treasures up my tears.”*

II. How sweet it is to feel the touch of the humanity of Christ WHEN WE ARE HUMBLED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. I know not, Brethren, whether you are often favored to behold the shining of the Divine Glory and to feel the warmth of it in your own soul. This I know—if you are, you find it a wearing and breaking joy. If we had more of it, it might be a destroying delight, for “even our God is a consuming fire,” and when we come nearest to Him and best understand that He is Love, the glory of

that love overcomes us! We cannot eat much honey, neither can we endure much sensible enjoyment of the Divine Glory—I mean much comparatively, for, of course, it is much to us, but it is not much compared with what He could reveal if we were able to endure it.

Have you ever felt what it is to be as if you were not—to see your comeliness turned into corruption, your excellency all despoiled and yourself not only lying low in the Presence of God, but being as if you had no being at all—as if you had no separate existence in the Presence of such wondrous majesty, such awe-inspiring love? You feel no dread, far from it! And no unhappiness, but the very reverse—you, yourself, seem gone, and God is All in All. A blessed extinction of self makes room for Infinite Love! There is not one Covenant blessing but what, if we understood it, would have this humbling effect upon us!

Every gift which God bestows upon His chosen, if rightly understood and truly grasped, would make us say with Abraham, “I that am but dust and ashes,” or make us sit down with David and exclaim, “Why this to me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” Now, at such times of selfannihilation, it is strengthening to the mind, which is almost ready to expire beneath the load of heavenly Glory, to feel the touch of that hand and to perceive that He who is our God is also very near. It is bliss to me, to perceive that the Creator has become one with the creature, for Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem. Jesus ate, drank, slept, wept, bled and died—and now He sits at the right hand of the Father! And so, notwithstanding the awe which crushes me, I see an infinite condescension—no, I perceive a near kinship which draws me close to God. Himself, so that I say, “My Father,” and with the next breath, “My Brother, my Friend, my Husband, my Best-Beloved.”

I wonder what we should have done if we had known so much of God and had not known Christ! I suppose I am speaking paradoxically and saying what I should not say, for we never could have known God, except in Jesus Christ, in such a way as we do know Him. But if such a thing had been possible, it must have been destructive to us. But now, God in Jesus Christ, how blessed! God out of Christ, we know nothing of, nor need we. Luther used to say, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God.” Beware of attempting to deal with God apart from the Mediator, for no man comes unto the Father but through His Son, Christ Jesus. Thus have we felt the touch of the human hand strengthening us when we have fallen prostrate under a deep sense of the Glory of God.

III. Thirdly, Brothers and Sisters, and here, perhaps, you Sisters take precedence over us—IN SORROW—oh, how blessed it is to feel the touch of the man’s hand! Bodily pain is the portion of many of God’s people. They are seldom long without it. Weakness, constant weakness, keeps many of God’s precious ones tied to the bedchamber or to the house and often the beloved means of Grace are taken from them because of their inability to come up to the assembly of God’s saints. Others endure the affliction of poverty—with all their economy and industry, they find it difficult to provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Some true Christians are naturally of a somber temperament and, to them, even summer weather has a wintry aspect. The Lord has allotted to each one of His children a cross to carry and His loving wisdom led Him to do so. Those who are, for the most part, without trial, are usually the weakest in the Church of God. They are usually the least spiritual, the least instructed in experimental truth and altogether the least knowledgeable in Divine things. We have our sorrows, but have we not found, by actual experience, that the choicest consolation for sorrow is the fact that Jesus Christ knows all about it and is with us in it!

How often has that verse run through my soul like a trumpet note to urge me onward when otherwise I should have retreated from the battle?—

*“In every pang that rends the heart,  
The Man of Sorrows had a part.  
With boldness, therefore, at the Throne  
Let us make all our sorrows known.”*

There is no abyss of grief into which Jesus has not descended! Sickness of body and pangs of soul, bereavement, poverty, scorn, slander, desertion, treachery—He knows all these things! Malice, Envy, Contempt and deadly Hate all shot their fiery darts against Him. He has sounded the deeps of the ocean of sorrow. Did He not say that He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death? And did not the sweat of blood which covered His face show how terrible were the inward agonies through which His soul was passing? Prince of Sorrow are You, O Jesus! Emperor in the realm of woe, are You, O Christ! You could say far more truly than the Prophet of old, “I am the Man that has seen affliction.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, our bitter cup is sweetened, for His dear lips have touched the brim! No, He has drained it to its dregs! Now, Brethren, our hard sorrow is softened because it is only a piece from that loaf of which He ate the most, Himself. Well may we be satisfied to go through the valley of tears, for it is “the King’s vale” and all along it we can track His footprints. We know them, for they show the marks of the nails! They are the footprints of the Crucified! Joined with us in every grief and woe, He is always at our side when our hearts are heavy. He carried up to Heaven the same human heart which was pierced below—and there He remembers Calvary and all the griefs He suffered on our behalf. He still sympathizes with us.

I delight in that thought of one of our hymn writers, where he says— *“Yet even after death His heart  
For us, its tribute poured.”*

After our Lord was dead, His heart yielded blood and water for our sakes, so that after death He was still in sympathy with us. Jesus still gives His heart to His people! Glory be to His name! Who among you will refuse to shoulder your cross, now? Did you lay it down just now and say, “I can carry it no longer. I must give up in despair”? Why, He carries the heavier end for you! Put your shoulder to the burden which He consecrates by His fellowship. It will grow light when you think that He once carried it!

When Alexander’s troops were on long marches, that which cheered them was that Alexander always walked as far as they. If they were very thirsty in the broiling sun and if any water was to be found, of course they brought it first to Alexander. Should they not, first, consider their king?

But he nobly put the cooling draught on one side and said, “as long as a sick man needs water, Alexander will go without.” This made each warrior strong, for his king fared as he fared! Let this strengthen us tonight. Jesus Christ puts His hand upon us and says, “Fear not. I am with you in your sorrow. My heart is as your heart, therefore be of good cheer.”

IV. I will not dwell long on any one thought, but leave you to dilate upon it. The fact that Jesus Christ is a Man such as we are, should greatly comfort us in ALL OUR STRUGGLES. It seems hard, this battle of life, this “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the many”— this fighting against sin, this contention against inbred corruption, this warring against spiritual wickedness in high places—and we are apt to think sometimes, “Can we ever win? Is not the battle too difficult?”

In such moments look at yonder Man who sits upon the Throne of God! He is the typical Man, the representative to us of what manhood should be, no, of what, through His Grace, it is! He wrestled hard, as hard as you do, but He won the victory! You are tempted. Does that cause you doubt? He was “tempted in all points like as we are.” Yet He did not sin. Are you distressed by the contentions of godless men? “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.” The struggle is not so hard with you as it was with Him. You have an easier battle to fight and you have the promise that, as your days, your strength shall be.

Now, as He overcame, finding strength enough for His conflict, He is to you a living prophecy of what you shall do through Him. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you shall trample sin beneath your feet, you shall take the strongholds of the adversary and Grace shall reign within your heart! The world, the flesh and the devil, that trinity of evils, shall be overcome by you! You shall be a conqueror, no, listen—“More than a conqueror through Him that loved you.”—

“ **As surely as He overcame,  
And triumphed once for you,  
So surely you that love His name,  
Shall triumph in Him, too.”**

“Did a man ever do that?” asked a bold spirit concerning some renowned achievement, “for if one man did it, another man shall.” It was a brave speech! But let us apply it to Christ for a moment. Did He, a Man, live in the midst of this world amid fierce temptations—and did He come out of that scorching furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon Him? Then the eternal God can work the same in other men and we may believe, no, we may be confident that the victory shall be unto us through the blood of the Lamb. Be of good courage, O sons of men, for the Son of Man has won the victory! Throw not away your confidence. Let not your swords be laid aside. Jesus, Jesus the representative Man, has conquered!

And, therefore, those who are in Him, “strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man,” shall conquer also! Herein is comfort.  
V. Further, Brothers and Sisters, in the fifth place, what a blessed thing it has been to look at the Manhood of Jesus Christ AT TIMES WHEN WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED IN OUR BRETHREN. Our natural tendency to idolatry tempts us to confide in man. Among religious people there always has been a tendency, much to be deplored, to lean a good deal upon men of eminence—upon ministers, leaders and men of experience. We get a great deal of good from them, blessed be God, and, therefore, we conceive a high opinion of them as, indeed, we may rightly do if we attribute all that is praiseworthy to the God who gave it.  
But every now and then we pass beyond the proper confidence which a younger brother may place in an elder and we pin our faith to the man’s sleeve and make our hope, in a measure, dependent upon his sincerity. This is the peculiar sin of young Christians, but I have sometimes met with it in simple-hearted persons, even in extreme old age. The “dear minister,” the “venerable man of God”—they have looked far too much to him. Alas, there has come a discovery that man is only man and that some men are not saints though they talk in a saintly manner! There has been the explosion of a profession, the total casting down of an idol and the breaking of it to pieces—and at such times the faith of many has been grievously staggered—even those who are somewhat more established have, nevertheless, received a grievous blow.  
We have seen Judas again, and Demas, and Hymenaeus, and Philetus, and old Ahitophel rising from the dead and we have been filled with grief. At such times it is most cheering to remember that there is one Man who will never deceive us! There is One who has not uttered a promise which He will not fulfill, nor won from us a confidence which He will not more than justify! It is such a blessed thing to see Jesus standing there— honesty, integrity, uprightness, Righteousness Incarnate, truth His very Nature with no sinister motives or desires to make Him subtle for His own gain, but altogether disinterested—living for the glory of God and the good of His people.  
To get back into His bosom, again, and to nestle there and feel—“Child, here is a heart that is ever warm with true love. You are safe here”—this is rest, indeed! To get back to Jesus and say, “Now am I neither of Paul, nor of Apollos, nor of Cephas, but of Christ.” To hear the news of religious strife in this denomination and that and, amidst the clashing elements of different ecclesiastical parties, to say, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” and, clinging to Jesus, to feel, “But this is not vanity, this is reality, this is truth!” Oh, to stay with Jesus, Brothers and Sisters!—never to stir away from Him and to feel that the truth which you can trust, the integrity on which you can rely is embodied in the Man, Christ Jesus!  
Is not man the meanest thing in all creation? Do you not feel him to be so when he deceives you? But, then, when you look at Jesus, how manhood rises in your esteem! After all, He is capable of something grand and glorious! And you bless the Lord Jesus who has, by the sublime perfection of His Character, redeemed our nature from its frightful degradation!  
VI. Again, I hope I shall not weary you. Surely I may continue to draw out the silken threads of such a subject. Children of God will find the doctrine of Christ’s Humanity to be wonderfully comfortable to them IN SEASONS OF DOUBT. Many of you are free from grievous doubts and I would be the last to sow them in your minds. I love Cowper’s picture of the poor woman with her pillow and bobbins who only knew her Bible, true, and left all the philosophies in the world to those who cared for them.  
But there is a class of disciples like Thomas who think much and are apt to doubt much. They do not love doubts—they hate them, yet their doubts often go very deep and undermine the most precious doctrines. The men are really steadfast in the faith, but it costs them many exercises and painful questions. They ask, “How is this?” And, “Why is that?” Perhaps they have more brains than heart. I suppose many of us get into that condition and, do you know, to me a sight of my Lord is my great security—a sheet anchor which has held me fast in times of skepticism and doubt. I cannot doubt when I see Him! When I turn over the Bible and read of His Character, I find it impossible to be a disbeliever! If any man invented the Character of Christ, I will worship him—He must be Divine to have created such perfection!  
It seems to me that if the life of Jesus were not a fact, the very fiction would be a creation demanding perfect holiness in the inventor. Who but a perfectly holy being could have conceived a Character like that of our Lord and Master? Every other character has its flaw. Man may be likened to a statue I once saw in Cambridge, which I think is in Trinity College library now—a statue of Byron. I remember looking at it from one point of view and the gentleman who showed it to me said, “There, Sir, there is the poet!” Yes, and a noble face it is, full of high thought, rare imagination. You admire the man.  
“Come round to this point,” said my conductor, “for there is the man who dared defy the Deity.” You could see at once the semi-maniac Byron, lost to all pure and devout emotion. The artist had sketched the duplicate man, the true Byron, a man both great and wicked! Now, if some artist, able to exhibit the whole truth could thus set you forth in marble, your friends might go to ever so many points and say, “Beautiful! Beautiful! Admirable! Commendable! Lovely!” and so on. But when they came to some one point (and some of us may be very thankful that people do not get to that point) they would exclaim, “Alas,” and they would not like to say much more. They would feel the conviction that things are not altogether what they seem to be and that flaws are discoverable in those they most admire.  
It is not so with Jesus. Survey Him, before and behind, on the right and on the left. Come upon Him at midnight. Look at Him in midday. Watch Him as a Child, see Him as a Man. Look at Him alone. Behold Him in company. See Him in His pomp as He rides through Jerusalem. See Him in His shame as they hound Him to His death. From every point He is perfect, absolutely perfect! You cannot improve Him, you cannot hint at a fault in Him! This is, to candid minds, a solid establishment, rendering it hard to be a doubter. And it becomes to Believers, who love their Lord and Master, a blessed chain which holds them fast so that they cannot give up the Truth of God they have received, for they have not followed cunningly devised fables.  
If Peter and James and John, when they saw their Lord transfigured, were convinced, so are we, also, when we view His human life on earth, for His whole career is the transfiguration of humanity—a wonderful display of how poor human nature’s garments can be made whiter than any fuller can make them—how the brightness of manhood can excel the glory of the sun at noonday! This consoles us amidst the battle of doubtful thought.  
VII. Further, dear Brothers and Sisters, how blessedly the touch of our Redeemer’s human hand COMFORTS US IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH. Unless the Lord comes, “It is appointed unto all men, once, to die.” In the presence of death and the grave, when we really get to look at them, there is hardly one among us who does not begin to ask himself, “Is it all right?” Must we die? We shrink back—we cannot bear it. “Shall I rise again? If, after my skin, worms devour this body, shall I, in my flesh, see God? Does it seem likely? Is it possible? Can these dry bones live?”  
We have read the burial service many times and heard it read over our friends. We have thought that we believed in the Resurrection, but when it comes to ourselves, and we are about to die and sickness tells upon us, then we ask the question over again, “Shall we rise? And is it true? Is it really true?” Often and often have I put myself through my paces over that question and this is where I always land—I know that the Man, Christ Jesus, rose from the dead. I am sure of that. How do I know it? No fact in human history was ever better attested or even so well attested as this— that Jesus, who was crucified, did truly rise from the dead.  
The witnesses are so many. Read Paul’s summing up of the evidence in Corinthians. He shows that sometimes Christ was seen by one disciple alone, then by 12 and, on one occasion, at any rate, by 500 witnesses at once. Jesus showed Himself alive by indisputable proofs—we are sure that He rose from the dead. Well, then, I know that I shall, too, for the Apostle, by inspiration, has put the two things together—“If Christ rose not, then is there no resurrection of the dead. But if Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” One man has broken from the prison of the grave and, therefore, so will all who are like He!  
Brothers and Sisters, in the gaze of mortality we shall escape from this city, for our Samson rose in the morning and took away the gates, posts, bars and all, and carried them to the top of the hill! The gates of the grave are open—pass through, you redeemed of the Lord! He has rent away the bars of the sepulcher, it is a dungeon no longer! The tomb is now a bedchamber where you shall sleep a little while, till your body shall be prepared for the Lord’s embrace—  
**“What, though our inbred sins require  
Our flesh to see the dust,  
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose,  
So all His followers must.”**  
VIII. Once more. Children of God, the Manhood of Christ ought to be a great comfort to you WHEN YOU ARE SEEKING TO DO GOOD AMONG YOUR FELLOW MEN. This is an awful world, this world of human beings. If you ride along the main streets, it looks to be a very respectable city. But just go down the side streets! And from these, turn into the courts and alleys. Enter Jack Ketch, or Tiger Bay. Visit those regions where the means of livelihood are sin, where drunkenness is the chief delight, where debauchery has ceased to be pleasure and has become an occupation— where every villainy is transacted unblushingly. Oh, God! When we think of what humanity is, even where Christianity keeps it within bounds, and then think of what it is when left to itself to bow down before blocks of wood and stone, and offer orgies of vice as the adoration of God, we might justly say, “Oh, it is a foul thing! Let it alone! It scarcely deserves pity.”  
If we could but entertain the comfortable notions of the Corinthian Brethren and believe that the world is not to be converted, how relaxed we might be! We could sit down and care no more for this poor earth, because the Lord Jesus is coming and the thing will end—and there is nothing for us to do but to pull here and there a man off the sinking ship, for the kingdoms of this world are never to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—and He is never to have dominion from sea to sea. At any rate, not by the ordinary method of the proclamation of the Gospel— and we may as well go to bed and enjoy ourselves, for effort is needless where success is hopeless.  
So they tell us, and if I could believe them, I could sleep more soundly at nights. But I believe that the world is to be converted to God and that here, on this battleground, and by the same weapons with which the fight began, the conflict will be fought out to the glorious end! And I believe sin shall be trodden down by the Lord’s people, who will win the victory through His blood! Still, look at fallen human nature. Whitefield used to say that it was half beast and half devil. He was very near the mark, but I question whether both beast and devil are not slandered by being compared with man when he is left to himself!  
Fallen man is a horrible creature and each one of us may see a specimen in his own natural heart. But, oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us gird up the loins of our minds and be encouraged! Let us look beyond the Fall and see what humanity once was and what it may yet become! Jesus took human Nature upon Him and thereby did it the highest honor—an honor which has more than rolled away its reproach. Though free from sin, yet His Nature was human. And in assuming such a Nature, Jesus showed the value which He set by our race. He thought it worth His while to live, to suffer, to bleed, to die for such poor things as we have been speaking of. He thought it worth His while to preach to a woman who had had five husbands and was still living in sin.  
He thought it worth His while to permit His feet to be washed by a woman who had been a sinner. Worth His while to mix with tax collectors and sinners—the common vulgar people of the great cities, for He was a physician—and He had come to heal the sick. Never let us give way, for a solitary moment, to the proud feeling that anybody is below us, or that any human being is so mean that he is not worth looking after—and so bad that it is really of no use to hope to benefit him. Have I not heard it insinuated with regard to fallen women, “Oh, it is very melancholy work to have to do with them and probably it would be better to let them alone”?  
“And these children in the streets,” say some, “these waifs and strays— would it not be better to let those eminent Christian dignitaries, the parochial authorities, instruct them in the poorhouse? Would it not be better to let the grosser evils alone? They are so hideous! Drunkenness, poverty, uncleanness—they so abound in this great city that one runs great risks and undergoes much pollution in coming near them.” Very superior beings, sometimes, talk in this fashion. I mean, rather to say, that conceited coxcombs thus speak! Is there one being on the face of the earth so degraded that you and I might not have been more degraded, still, if the Lord’s Grace had been withheld? Does there live on the face of the earth one incarnation of wickedness that can possibly excel what we might have been if exposed to the same influences and denied the restraints of love?  
How, then, can we talk of sinners as being beneath us? Jesus Christ stoops, indeed, but for you and me it is almost impossible to stoop, for we are already down so low that we are near to the very lowest—and there is no great stoop possible on our part. This always cheers me. If my Master would give me a house full of convicts who had been imprisoned many times and given over as hopeless, I should feel great confidence in preaching the Gospel to them, because I should think, “Now, I am in the very place in which my Master would have chosen to place His pulpit.” Did He not come to save us, who are convicts under the Law of God? And, if He has done that, let us never despair of the worst of felons! Never despair of a creature for whom Jesus died! Never despair of a creature, the likes of which you may see by myriads before the eternal Throne, singing, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” City missionary, Bible woman, Brother, Sister, you who work among the lowest of the low—let the Master’s hand touch you and give you strength!  
Now, I have done when I have said a few inviting words to those here present who do not know much of the Redeemer and have not yet believed in Him. Do you feel yourselves guilty before God? Do you wish for mercy? Come, then, and come NOW, for Jesus Christ, a Man like yourselves, invites you! Remember, you cannot go to God without a Mediator, but you may go to Christ without a mediator and you may go just as you are. You need no introduction to Jesus! I know that you can go and tell another man like yourself your sins, for some are so foolish to do so. They confess their sins to the priests, as Judas did, but you know Judas then went and hanged himself, which was a very likely thing to do after such a confession.  
But if you will go and tell your sins to Jesus, who is a Man, and something more than a Man, He will hear your story and it will not pollute His ear. He will listen to it and He will do more—He will effectually absolve you. Have you not felt, now, that you have grown up to be big fellows, that you wished you were boys again, so that you could go at night and tell mother all that you had done wrong during the day, so that mother might kiss you and you would go to bed feeling that everything was right again? Well, there is no mortal to whom you can go for such forgiveness, now, but the Lord Jesus Christ—who will be to you all that your mother was when you were a child.  
Go and tell Him all about it and ask Him to wash you in His blood and cover you with His Righteousness—and He will forgive you as freely as your own kind mother would have done! Jesus Christ will feel for you, for He knows all your temptations and weaknesses. If there is any sort of excuse to be made for you, He will make it. He did that for His murderers when He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” For that which cannot be extenuated at all, He has something a great deal better than an excuse—namely, His own atoning Sacrifice. He will tell you, “Simply trust Me and I will save you.”  
Do not be afraid to come and tell Him all about your case. He will not spurn you! Did He ever spurn a sinner, yet? The dogs eat the crumbs under His table and He never drives them away. Dog of a sinner, you may come to His feet and He will make something better than a dog of you! But you tell me, “The Man, Jesus, is in Heaven.” So much the better, for if He were here on earth in this Tabernacle, then He would not be over in Seven Dials and Golden Lane and over in North and East London, or away there in Scotland and Ireland, or across the seas! But, being in Heaven, He is within equal reach of us all, wherever we may be! And whoever darts a thought after Him, or a wish towards Him—above all, whoever trusts Him—shall find in Him eternal life!  
Sinner, you have not to deal with an absolute God! You have to deal with God in Jesus, the Man! Come, then, to Him, for He has come to you. The Ladder, Christ Jesus, you know, has its foot on earth and its top in Heaven. The higher we ascend, the more we shall delight to think of the Glory of Christ. But our first business is to think of the foot of the Ladder and I want you, tonight, to know that its foot stands on earth, just in front of you. Jesus was such as you are—not sinful, that He could not be—but in all else like you. He was poor and suffering as you are. Now, put your foot on the first rung of the Ladder, His Manhood and His bloody sacrifice upon the Cross.  
Trust that and you shall climb till you ascend where the full Deity of the Incarnate Savior blazes forth! And you shall rejoice in His Second Advent and all the splendors of His future reign. Tonight you may leave those higher things alone. Begin at the bottom of the Ladder and commence to climb! The Lord help you! The Lord bless you! May He lay His hand on you at this moment, poor Sinner! That will melt your heart! That will cheer your spirit! That will give you life from the dead! May He do it for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 10.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—820, 260, 761.  
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THE MAN GREATLY BELOVED  
NO. 1089

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1873, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto you, be strong, yes, be strong.” Daniel 10:19.**

I ANTICIPATE an objection to my preaching from this text and using it in reference to any persons in this congregation. “The words were spoken to Daniel and we are not Daniels”—that is probably the shape which the objection will take in certain minds. And my reply is, If we are not Daniels, at least we should desire to be and we should remember that there are possibilities of our being such. In many parts of Daniel’s character we can, by Divine Grace, tread in his steps. Daniel is not set up far above us as one who cannot be imitated—he is an example whom it should be our joy to follow.

“But,” cries one, “we shall never reach to Daniel’s height of Grace.” I pray God we may. Under all dispensations there have been men of the class to which Daniel belongs. The antediluvian period produced an Enoch who “walked with God and was not, for God took him,” and he, like Daniel, prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord. In the Patriarchal period there was an Abraham who is called “the friend of God,” with whom the Lord communed in a most peculiar manner. In the later days, under the Law, was there not a David, “a man after God’s own heart”? And though his character was more faulty, yet still his nearness of fellowship with God, as we read of it in the Psalms, puts him in the same category.

If you tell me that all these, and many more whom I might mention, belong to the olden times and to the days of miracles, and so forth, I would remind you that nowadays the child of God, under the Gospel, has privileges which were unknown to the greatest Believers in former dispensations! Even John the Baptist, of whom it was said that none born of woman was greater than he—it is said, also, he was less than the least in the kingdom of Heaven. With the clearer light and richer indwelling of the Holy Spirit, instead of being inferior to Enoch, or Abraham, or David, or Daniel, we ought to excel all these!

And, further, I would also remind you that the New Testament dispensation produced a John—and is there a nearer facsimile of Daniel anywhere than John? The two, though so very different in positions and in circumstances, were in their disposition, in their walk with God, in their familiarity with the Most High, and in the extraordinary visions of the future with which they were indulged, so much akin that I might say that Daniel was the John of the Prophets and that John was the Daniel of the

Evangelists! Now, if there is one John produced under the Gospel, why not another? If two, why not 2,000 or twenty thousand?

“And why may I not be one of them?” each Christian may ask. The Spirit of God is not stinted. The dew from Heaven is not exhausted because it fell on Daniel’s branch and rested on John’s leaf. You may have it, my Brother, and under its fertilizing influence you may bud and blossom—and from every blossom shed around you the fragrance of fellowship with God! Moreover, if I waive the question of our imitating Daniel I would add that from another consideration I feel justified in using my text most freely—for every true Christian is, in some sense—and that a very deep and true sense, too, a “man greatly beloved.”

Though there are differences in the manifestation of the love of God, so that we may say there are elect ones out of the elect, yet all the elect are “greatly beloved.” There are choice spirits among the chosen, such as the 70 who were selected from the disciples, the 12 out of the 70, the three— Peter, James and John—out of the 12, and John out of the three. Election rises out of itself again and again, ascending like a pyramid. Yet, for all that, the common disciples, at the base of the pyramid, are “greatly beloved,” loved with an infinite love. The weakest babes in Grace are as truly loved as those who have come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

There are delicious spots where the sun’s light seems to rest most constantly, yet the sun of God’s love shines on all the field which He has chosen. The goodly land owned the superior excellency of its Carmel and Sharon, yet from Dan to Beersheba, every acre was blessed of the Lord. Every heir of Heaven is purchased with the same blood, written in the same roll of life, called by the same Spirit, preserved by the same Divine power and is ripened under the same spiritual influences for the eternal Glory—surely, then, every Believer is “beloved,” and “greatly beloved,” too! Great love has been shown in the salvation of each one of us and in our preservation to this day.

Therefore, if none of us should be bold enough to hope that the expression of the text could be applied to us in any peculiar and eminent sense, yet our faith, without presumption, dares to know that we are men greatly beloved, seeing we have been saved by the Sovereign Grace of God and made near to God by the blood of Jesus Christ. We shall, however, expect every Christian, as he recognizes the great love which he has enjoyed, to recognize, also, the great obligations which spring out of it. This is but common honesty—if we eat the bread of children, we must render the obedience of sons.

Now let us proceed to the words themselves. In them I see, first, a choice title, “O man, greatly beloved.” Secondly, a common infirmity very gently rebuked—“fear not.” And then, thirdly, certain very gracious consolations given to meet that infirmity—“peace be unto you, be strong, yes, be strong.”

I. To begin then, the text glitters with a CHOICE TITLE. Daniel is said to be a “man greatly beloved,” or as some read it, “a man of desires”—a desirable man towards God whom God desired to commune with—in whose society the Lord delighted. He was a “man greatly beloved.” Now the great love of God to Daniel is very conspicuously seen in his character. I shall not describe his character as the reason why God loved him, far from it, but I shall mention his character as being the effect of God’s great love to him.

God loved him greatly and therefore He made him this and that. The first token of the Lord’s great love to Daniel which we shall consider was this—God gave him early piety. From his very youth Daniel feared God. We do not know the time at which he was brought fully to know the Lord, but it must have been in his boyhood, for while he was yet a stripling we find him playing the man for the Lord God of his fathers. It is true his early days were spent in captivity. He was of the royal house of Judah and he was carried away to Babylon. But there is something significant in the fact that he was carried captive at the same time that the holy vessels were taken from the temple of Jerusalem. What if I say that he was, himself, one of the holy vessels? For he was, indeed, a vessel fit for the Master’s use and he and the golden vessels of the house of the Lord were in captivity together, yet still under the Divine care, so that they should not be profaned to unholy use.

My dear Friends, no one can ever overestimate the great privilege of being brought to God in childhood or youth! If it were only to be saved from the injury which a course of sin brings upon the mind. If it were only to escape from the regrets for the past which will arise when the conscience is in later days purged from sin. If it were only to have saved those precious hours of the early morning of life and to have used them in the Master’s cause. If it were only for those three reasons—and they are but part of a great cluster—they are something for which eternally to bless the special love of God!

I appeal to those who have been brought to love the Lord in riper days and those especially who have come to know him in old age. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, you love the Lord who has called you to Himself, but have you not often said in your heart, “would to God I had known Him like Timothy, at my mother’s knee”? And is it not at this time the dearest desire of your soul, that your children should not delay a decision for God so long as you did, but that they should cast in their lot with the people of God while yet the ruddy hue of youth is on their cheeks? I know I speak your very hearts. You, therefore, are witnesses to the fact that early piety is a choice blessing and he who has received it may think that he hears an angel say to him this morning, “O man, greatly beloved, when you were a child the Lord delighted in you.”

But, secondly, the great love of God to Daniel appeared in his early and thorough nonconformity to the world. He was placed in circumstances of peculiar peril, removed from every godly association, taken away from every sacred influence of holy hearth or gracious guardianship. He was carried into an idolatrous country and trained in an idolatrous court for a superstitious pursuit. Everything was done that could be done to make the young Hebrew forget the God of his fathers. His very name was

changed as well as those of the three right worthy companions of his captivity. They had grand names in the Hebrew, each one significant of some gracious Truth of God, but they were changed into mere Babylonian titles that they might forget that they were Jews and forget the name of God Himself!

Everywhere around them they saw idolatry, lust, and crime. There was nothing when they went abroad or when they stayed at home but what would suggest to them the abominations of the heathen. Yet here it was that while yet a mere lad, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” The meat and wine that would be brought to Daniel would not have been of the kind that should have been eaten or drank by an Israelite. The meat might have been defiled with blood or killed by strangling, in violation of the legal precept—and frequently the meat eaten by the Babylonians would be the flesh of an unclean animal.

The wine, also, would probably have been dedicated to the false gods by a libation of a part of it, and the meat would have been offered to idols— therefore Daniel determined to go too far rather than not far enough—and would not defile himself with the king’s meat, nor the king’s wine at all. It is always safest if you are at war with a deadly enemy to have a very high wall between you and him. There will be no fault in its being too high if he aims at destroying you. Any division which we establish between us and sin will never be too broad or too deep. Daniel, with surprising decision, determined that he would not defile himself with the king’s meat.

Now, this was rather a strong position for a child to take up—a mere school-boy shall I call him?—for he was then at the college of the soothsayers, being taught in the wisdom of the Chaldeans. He was but a scholar and yet upon this he was very resolute. Being resolute he was not imprudent—he did not court persecution, but he went to work with that gentle courtesy which is always so becoming a companion of firmness. The “Suaviviter in modo” should always go with the “Fortiter in re.” Gentle manners are a fit robe for firm principles. We read, therefore, that Daniel “requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself.”

Now, “God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” So that after expressing a fear that he might be injured in health by not eating the food provided, he allowed him to make a trial of it. The trial of a diet of vegetables and water turned out most satisfactorily. Daniel and his friends were found to be both better in health and stronger in mind than the rest of the young students in the college. Was it not a grand thing for this young hero to have taken such a stand? We may hope that he who begins well will go on well—but, oh, abhor, young Christian, all faltering at the beginning, all bargaining with the world, all trying to parley with evil, all attempting to see how near you can go to sin! If you are not at the outset thorough for God, I fear you never will be.

Christians ought to grow in Grace, but I am sorry to say that with many of them they go from weakness to weakness. And all, I fear, because there is not a sound beginning. Every builder will tell you the necessity of having the foundation laid well. Let the foundation of your religion be decision, resolution, sincerity, and thoroughness. Your half-and-half Christian makes a fine pretense at godliness, builds very rapidly and daubs with his untempered mortar only to secure a fall. But may God make us deep Christians, those who know what they know and mean what they mean—and mean for God and for His Truth to be decided by His help.

Daniel was a man greatly beloved because even early he was distinguished for his nonconformity to the world. In later life we find another sweet result of God’s love in his courageous trust in God. He was called on two occasions, at any rate, in his life, to exhibit the utmost conceivable courage. Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed a dream. Daniel had before interpreted a dream for him and therefore on this occasion he obtained admittance to the king. He heard the king’s dream, but the interpretation of it was one which foretold the most grievous ill to the tyrant! How should he tell him the dreadful tidings? Only let the monarch lift his finger and Daniel’s head would roll upon the floor!

All the empire of Babylon was under the absolute sway of the despot, Nebuchadnezzar, and yet Daniel did not hesitate to tell him that he would be insane and that his hair would grow like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws—and that he would be driven from the abodes of men! I think I see him, with fearless manner and voice, bidding the monarch break his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, that his tranquility might be lengthened.

Now, in these days, it needs no great courage to speak the Truth of God because no sudden death awaits the boldest messenger of Christ. We live in days of liberty in which we may believe what we please and say almost what we will, but it needed heroic courage, then, to come like a Nathan, saying, “You are the man,” not to a David, with Grace in his heart, but to one who had no fear of God before him—a Nebuchadnezzar who thought himself a God! And that was a brave deed on that dread night, when Daniel stood up in the presence of Belshazzar and all his court—while the princes and lords of the different provinces were gathered together—and there interpreted the handwriting on the wall. Remember, he was surrounded by a soldiery who could, in a moment, have put him to death.

And he stood before a young and proud monarch, licentious and imperious, who would make no account of human blood. And Daniel had to say to him, “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting; your kingdom is given to the Medes and Persians.” It needed no small spirit to be able to be the stern interpreter of a monarch’s final doom! When he had been young he had faced Nebuchadnezzar, and when he had grown gray with years, with the same calm and brave spirit he faced Belshazzar and rebuked him for his sins and for his proud defiance of the Lord God of Israel. He was a man greatly beloved to be such a lion as he was in the midst of all his foes.

Coupled with this, as another evidence of God’s love to him, was his wonderful endurance of prosperity. If I have already said that early piety is a great proof of God’s peculiar affection to a man, I think I may say that the power to endure popular esteem, success in life, wealth and rank is also a very special and peculiar token of the Divine favor. He was but a youth at the time when he went to Nebuchadnezzar and told him his dream and the interpretation. I suppose he was about 17 years of age when he sat in the king’s gate and was the head of all the king’s wise men in Babylon! Scarcely that number of years had rolled over his head when Ezekiel spoke of him as being well-known as the wisest man of his time.

Addressing the King of Tyre, Ezekiel said, “Are you wiser than Daniel?” Now, for a young man to be elevated to that position, we all know, or think we do, the dangers that must surround him. Even a man that has experience does not always find the lofty places of power furnish easy foothold for him—but for the young and inexperienced man to stand there he must be a man greatly beloved of God. And then remember that through 43 years or more of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Daniel was one of the great men of the kingdom! All through the reign of Belshazzar, on through the time of Darius the Mede we still find Daniel one of the greatest men in the Government.

Belshazzar had made him the third man in the kingdom, there being, I suppose, at that time two kings and, therefore, he could not be made the second—but he was made the next to the kings in all the empire. Yet never do you see him betraying any sense of his own greatness. His book is singularly free from any desire to set forth himself. Have not you often wondered where he was when the three holy children were put into the burning fiery furnace? I think if I had had the writing of the book of Daniel I should have wished to insert a verse or two to explain where I was. But Daniel is so forgetful of himself he does not exculpate himself or try to avert suspicion and leaves it open to us to think whatever we like.

We may be sure he was acting nobly, but he does not try to make us think so. He is nothing, the service of his people and of his God—this it was which absorbed all his thoughts. O, it is noble to see a man lifted up into the high places of wealth and position—made to wear a crown and scarlet robe—and yet, for all that, walking humbly with his God and fulfilling his duty without a flaw, even as those do who have not such high things to try them! I read this week of a vessel at sea which was overtaken by a storm and a mountainous wave, a very alp of water, went right over it, putting out the engine fires at once and sweeping away the wheel and the steering house, so that the vessel lay like a log in the trough of the sea.

Now many a man has been like that—a great mass of wealth and prosperity has come upon him, put out the fires of his former zeal, taken away all the steerage of his soul—and he has lain like a log tossed up and down between the waves of worldliness and pride and has become a total wreck. But Daniel was a man greatly beloved, for God set him on his high place and made his feet like hind’s feet. A further instance of God’s great love to him comes out in his firmness under trial. There will come to most men some special time in which they will be tested and it happened to Daniel in his old age. There were those who could not bear that he should always be in the front in political affairs and they plotted against him—but they found nothing against him except concerning his God.

They obtained a decree that none should pray during 40 days except to the king. But Daniel cared little for decrees—it was his custom, three times a day, to bow before his God with his window opened towards that dear country which still he loved, though he had been an exile from it these many years. And he, with that stern simple-heartedness which was so prominent in him, went to pray at the time he would have prayed if there had been no decree. He did not alter the window—neither to the putting of it up nor the putting of it down—and as he had been accustomed to do before, he bowed his knees and prayed.

The lion’s den was nothing to him—his duty was all and if the way of duty lay through the jaws of wild beasts, Daniel pursued it, still. And you know the result and how God vindicated His servant. Truly, I might have said, when he was thrown into the pit where the lions were raging, that the martyr was a man greatly beloved! And all confess that fact when they see him honored by Darius, brought up alive out of the pit where God had sent His angel to preserve him—then all who saw him confessed that he was a man greatly beloved! Let me add that here we ought not to forget that God’s Grace and love shone conspicuously in making Daniel a man of such continuous devotion. Every day witnessed his constant regularity in prayer. Not that he was a Pharisee and thought that one time was better than another, but because he probably felt what most of us have—that if we have not a time for prayer we may neglect it altogether.

Three times a day, whatever might occur—notwithstanding the immense pressure of business upon the statesman’s mind—three times a day he cried unto his God! And then he had his special times. Three weeks we find him spending in prayer and fasting. The top of his house witnessed to his regular devotions, but his special pleadings were by the lonely willows of the brook where he cried and wrestled with his God. And we find that as the result of this he was favored with manifestations from on high which he would never have received had his devotion been less regular or continued. It is no small token of God’s love to a man if the man lives in the spirit of prayer—if he delights himself in prayer and if year after year prayer has not become a monotony to him. It is by God’s Grace if prayer is real to him, yes, and if he so much hungers after more of it that he devotes lengthened seasons to its more intense exercise. If God privileges him to become mighty in prayer, then is he a man greatly beloved.

Power in prayer is one of the most Divine of the Lord’s gracious gifts. I could mention here, today, the name of one, a name well known to you, of one whose prayers God has heard these many years and helped him to feed thousands of orphans and send forth scores of missionaries. Whenever we think of him, we think of him as a man greatly beloved. And whenever I look upon a man who is powerful in prayer, who, by supplication, brings down blessings on his own family and the Church and his neighborhood, I know that there is to be found a man who is, indeed, greatly beloved.

I think that I have shown you that the outward signs of God’s love to Daniel were such as many of us have enjoyed, in a measure, and may enjoy still more, for there are some here who were saved in youth—some who early began to be decided for God. There are some here who have been brave for Christ and have not denied the faith—who have sustained prosperity and have endured trial, too—and who have, by Divine Grace, been taught to plead with God. Perhaps they will not recognize themselves, but we may be able to recognize them and call them men greatly beloved. In one word, there was one crowning token of God’s love to Daniel and that is the perfect consistency of his life.

Daniel seems to me to be as nearly as possible a perfect character. If anyone should ask me for what peculiar virtue I count him to be famous, I should hardly know how to reply. There is a combination in his character of all the excellencies. Neither do I think I could discover anything in which he was deficient. Sinner he was, doubtless, before the eyes of God— but he is faultless towards man. His was a well-balanced character. There is an equilibrium maintained between the different Graces, even as in John’s character, which is also exceedingly beautiful. There is, perhaps, a touch of loveliness about the character of John—a tender softness that we do not find in Daniel. There is somewhat more of the lion in the Prophet and of the lamb in the Apostle, but still they are, each of them, perfect after his kind.

All through Daniel’s life you do not find a flaw—there is no breakdown anywhere. There was a great occasion in which he might have broken down, but God helped him through it. There he was, a business man for a long lifetime, a man bearing the burden of State and yet never once any accusation could be brought against him of any wrongdoing. A man of large transactions will usually be chargeable with something or other of wrong performed through his subordinates, even if he, himself, should be strictly upright. But here was a man rendered by Grace so upright and so correct in all that he did that nothing could be, even by his enemies, brought against him except concerning his religion! A great mark of Grace was this—an ensign of piety far too rare.

Many are Christians and will, we hope, creep into Heaven, but, alas! alas! Alas—the less said about their inconsistencies the better! It is a special mark of a man greatly beloved, when he is consistent from the beginning to the end through the Grace of God.

II. But my time will fail me and therefore I must hasten, in the second place, to notice that Daniel became the subject of a COMMON INFIRMITY. He was full of fear on one occasion and therefore an angel said to him, “Fear not.” I am glad of this, because it teaches us that even the best of men may be subject to very great fears! I was pleased to read in our lesson, just now, of Daniel on his face and of Daniel dumb and so on, for it shows that he was touched with our infirmities and that great as God made him, he was nothing in himself and owed all his greatness to the Grace of God.

Those fears on the part of Daniel were not the result of personal trial just then. They came to him, indeed, when he had been highly honored by revelations from God. But his fears sprang from a sight of his Lord and from a sense of his own unworthiness! Just a word on that. You may be a man greatly beloved and, therefore, you may have a clearer sight of the Lord Jesus than other men have—and for that very reason you may feel a greater shame and confusion of face whenever you think of yourself. Remember how Daniel says concerning himself, “There remained no strength in me, my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.”

O Beloved, if the Lord ever favors you with much love and with nearness of access to Himself, you must expect the other side of it—that is to say, you must feel your own nothingness, baseness, unworthiness—and while you feel that I do not wonder that you almost wish you had never been born and feel as if the sooner this life was ended the better—feel as if you were unfit to do anything for God’s people, unfit even to bear Christ’s name! And yet, all the while you may be a man greatly beloved and may be eminently blessed.

Look at Job—when he is covered all over with sores he justifies himself in some measure—but the moment he sees his God what does he say? “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You; therefore I abhor myself.” It is sure to be so—great love from God will make you have great humbleness of soul and lay you low in the dust. Do I address a Brother who has been finding out, lately, more of the deformity of his own heart than he ever did before? Did he come up here this morning crying, “Alas! Woe’s me?” No, dear Brother, not, “woe’s you,” but, “O man greatly beloved.” Though you have found this out through a sight of your Lord, yet fear not, this is a blessing to you and not a curse!

Perhaps, too, Daniel’s great fears had been awakened by the disclosures that had been made to him of the history of the nations and especially of his own people. He had a peculiar anxiety for his own people. Did you ever get into that state and begin to look upon the world and upon the country and upon the Church—and then fall into a fit of trembling? I do assure you it is wonderfully easy to put on the garb of Jeremy, the weeping Prophet. If you look abroad even on this little island of ours, you see mischief everywhere coming to the front and error prevailing—and the cause of the Truth of God seems to be like a tempest-tossed ship—almost a wreck. Truly one might find plenty of room for weeping and lamentation!

And if we look at the world at large and see how infidelity spreads, “Woe is me!” we may well say. Yes, Daniel had seen the history of the world for a long period to come—therefore he was full of fear. And are you full of fear, too? Well, it is a part of the lot of men whom God greatly loves that they should bear the troubles of the times—that they should be like Christ on the behalf of their age—and should bear the sins of men upon their hearts and plead concerning them before the living God. I think, too,

that Daniel’s sorrow was occasioned, partly, by the repetition of those words to him—“The vision is true, but the time appointed is long.” It seemed to come over and over to Daniel. “The time is long.” I do not know any trouble that presses more heavily on my heart than that.

It seems to be a dreadful long while since God has worked a miracle— such a while since the Church has had any great thing done in the midst of her. Christianity only holds under its power a miserable minority of mankind—the number of evangelical Christians in the world is a contemptible fraction as compared with the mass of idolaters and Muslims, Catholics and the like. The true Churches do not seem to be growing and meanwhile the challenges of the infidel come to us and we do not seem to have the pluck to reply to them as they ought to be replied to. One thousand and eight hundred years and more have gone by—and no progress or scarcely any!

O Lord, how long! How long! How long! How long! And yet Jehovah is the Lord. Yes He is the only God and He could, in a moment, enlighten the darkness of mankind. And His Spirit could raise up men who should flash like flames of fire amidst the midnight of the times. Why does He tarry? This is the cry which the Church universally sends up wherever she lives near to God. And if any here have been favored to be beloved of God, I am sure this will weigh upon them, “How long Lord, how long? Why do You tarry?”

III. Now we close, in the third place, by noticing THE CONSOLATIONS which the angel brought to Daniel and which, in proportion as we are greatly beloved and the subject of like fears, he brings to us. He said to him first, “Peace be unto you.” So he says to every one of the beloved here—“Peace be unto you. Why are you fretting, worrying, tossed up and down in your mind? Peace be unto you.” Let peace be yours first because you are “greatly beloved.” Whatever is happening or not happening, you are greatly beloved. The Lord loved you before the earth was. He redeemed you with the blood of His own Son. He has called you into fellowship with Jesus—Peace! You are beloved—does not that give you peace? “Hush, my Babe,” says the mother, “lie still and slumber.” And the sweetest hush in all her lullaby is the mention of her own love. So, dear child of God, be still, be calm! You are beloved of Heaven!

And next, fear not, peace be unto you, God is still ruling—He ruled the world before you were born and accomplished all His will—He will rule it when you are dead and He will fulfill His own decrees. Why do you worry yourself? What use can your fretting serve? You are on board a vessel which you could not steer even if the great Captain put you at the helm, of which you could not so much as reef a sail, yet you worry as if you were captain and helmsman! O be quiet! God is Master—do you think that all this din and hurry-burly that is abroad means that God has left His Throne? No, man, His coursers rush furiously on and His chariot is the storm—but there is a bit between their jaws and He holds fast the reins— and guides them as He wills! Jehovah is still Master—believe it! Peace be unto you—be not afraid!

And whereas you are disturbed about the length of time—with what do you measure? With your own age of 70 years, or with days and weeks—do you measure so? Have you ever seen the measuring line of the Eternal and do you know that if this world were to last through millions of millions of years, yet it would be but a speck between the two eternities that should precede and follow? God’s life is not made up of ticks of the clock! He can wait, He can wait. He can let generations of wicked men follow one another, yes, He could for 10,000 years 10,000 times told, permit the devil to trail his chain around the world and yet at the end be more than conqueror, and the more glorious a conqueror because of the length of the battle!

It is a child’s fight that lasts but for an hour, but vast is the conflict of nations when they struggle with each other from year to year—when a campaign does but open the war, when another campaign does but kindle the strife and a third does but inflame the passions—and another brings forth all the fury of the combatants and only far on at the close comes the grand crash which ends all! Shall the wars of God be less in length than the battles of men? You have seen but one campaign, or perhaps but the first flight of the artillery which commences the fight—you have not seen the crossing of the bayonet that may yet be to come—for time of tribulation such as the world has never seen is yet in reserve. But rest you sure of this—it is all short to Him with whom a thousand years is as one day— and one day as a thousand years! Come down from the measuring place, child, come down! It is God that weighs and measures. Leave that alone and sit down at His feet and be still. Be still! It is all well! It shall surely end well. God is still Master!

Then he adds “be strong,” as if these fears of Daniel made him weak and as if it was important that he should be strong. Now, if there is any importance in us at all, and there is not much, certainly anything that we can do in our present place will require of us all our strength. And since our fears decidedly weaken us, for all practical purposes they should be shaken off. Therefore the angel says twice, “Be strong, yes, be strong.” And, Beloved, we ought to be strong in faith, for God deserves it. He has given us promises of our own security, of His own ultimate conquest and the triumph of His own cause—and God has never lied. Why, then, should we doubt Him? They that trust in Him have never been confounded. He deserves that we should rely upon Him and if things grew blacker—and the times were worse and true religion were almost crushed out and lived only in one solitary man’s heart—that man ought yet to believe that God would be conqueror, yet, and have no doubts, for why should even he distrust the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Infallible, the Immutable and true!

O Brothers and Sisters, while you have this ground and foothold for your strength, remember your work demands all your strength! How can you pray with these doubts about you? How will you teach others while you are doubting yourself? How can you perform your service when sighs

come from you? Soul, sweet Soul, is that what should stream from the worker for the Lord God of Israel? Be strong, then! Fall before the Lord in earnest prayer and ask Him to take away your fretfulness and make you, as you are greatly beloved, to be strong. Remember, Beloved, specially those of you who are at all prominent, that others will take their cue from you and if you speak with bated breath, with trembling language, others will be weak, too. Therefore, fear not—be strong, yes, be strong.

And remember, there is no cause for alarm. Have you not lived long enough to see that always when men have judged that things went worst they have been going best? There is an undercurrent which the eyes see not which is often stronger than the upper flow. And besides, if it were not so, have your never seen it, have not your fathers told you, that the darkest part of the night is that which precedes the dawning day? Have you never perceived that when true religion, either in your own soul or in the world, seems to have gone back that suddenly it makes a leap again? There will come waves upon the beach and each one will seem stronger than its fellow—but then there will follow one that sucks them all back and you might think the sea was retiring from its strength—yet the flood tide is coming in, coming even while that wave recedes so far.

All is working for progress, though there may seem to be a delay here and there. The stream rushes on like a mighty Niagara and you are there by the shore in a little eddy, revolving round and round in a tiny vortex. And you say the stream is rushing in the wrong direction—it has made no progress—“I am weary with this circular motion.” Ah, but you have never been in the broad current, or if your eyes have gazed upon it, it has been dazed with the sight of its breadth and length and you have not understood it! The Lord reigns! The Lord God Omnipotent reigns and Jesus sits at His side, while Truth, like His angel, follows at His heels, still mighty! The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall yet perform His Word!

And the Spirit that for a while has hidden His great might and concealed Himself in the secret chambers of His Church shall come forth and the day shall be in which the Lord’s Truth shall be declared among the people with power! Even with such power that the world shall bow before it and the song shall go up unto the Lord God Almighty—and He shall be worshipped from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same! O you virgin souls that have followed the Lamb up to now where ever He goes, follow Him still! Keep your garments unspotted from the world! Be rigidly faithful to the Truth of God and conscience. You are men greatly beloved, let not your spirits fail you. Let no man’s heart fail him because of Goliath that stalks before us! He is but a creature and will fade and die. Fear not, peace be unto you, be strong, yes, be strong! The Lord strengthen you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 10. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #609 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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NO. 609

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“But the people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many.” Daniel 11:32, 33.**

THE uninspired book of the Maccabees is perhaps the best interpreter of this passage in Daniel. The Prophet, we think, refers to the great persecution under Antiochus, when the followers of Judas Maccabees, knowing their God and keeping close to Him amidst general defection, refused to bow before the idols of Syria. These were strong, by God’s Divine Grace, and did great exploits—wonders of valor we read of in the history of Judas and his brethren, and wonders of heroic suffering never surpassed are recounted of the mother and sons and those other martyrs who, under tortures of the most amazing kind, held fast their faith even to the end. In that age there were some who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who felt the violence of fire and yet were not separated from their God by all that the foe could do.

We have a lesson to learn from the text before us, and we therefore leave the historical references and proceed to enter into the teaching of the text. It appears that the people who did all this were a knowing people and an understanding people. Those by whom the exploits were performed were not ignorant, but a people who knew their God. Those who helped to keep up the light of Israel in the midst of the thick darkness were not uninstructed, but were a people who understood.

Our subject this morning is knowledge, and especially the knowledge of the things of God. The matter is very urgent and important at this season when we are receiving so many young converts into the Church—many of whom need much teaching in the things of God. It lies heavily on my heart that it is my bounden duty to urge these young ones, since they know the elements of the Christian faith, to strive with diligence to learn more and more of the higher Truths of God. And if they have received some insight into the wondrous revelation of Divine love, I must urge them to press forward till they comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

The question is often put to us in a very general and vague manner, “Is knowledge a good thing or not?” We are expected to give an answer promptly and without reserve. And if we do so we shall very likely be caught in a trap. “Knowledge—is it a good thing in itself or not?” That depends upon several things. You might as well ask me whether air is a good thing. Why, of course, speaking loosely, it is! But then there is much bad air in old wells and cellars and so on, which will destroy life—and therefore you cannot expect me to say at once, if I know you are trying to

trick me—either “Yes,” or “No.”

Air is a good thing as a general rule of thumb. The lungs require it, man must have it—it is a good thing. So is knowledge. Knowledge heaves the intellectual lungs—it is a good thing. But then there is noxious knowledge, which it were infinitely better for us never to receive, just as there is pestilential air. Is food a good thing? Yes. But if you are alluding to the decayed meat which was seized in the market, or to adulterated drinks, I am not in such a hurry to answer you. I want to know what sort of food you are alluding to. Food, in the abstract, is a good thing, but not food universally—for putrid meats will engender disease and bring on ten thousand maladies and destroy the life which food is meant to sustain.

So is it with knowledge. It is the food of the mind. And yet there is a knowledge which is deadly, poisonous, infectious, full of all manner of mischief and they who know nothing of it are wise. Is water a good thing? Again I answer, “Yes,” in the abstract. So many watery particles are absolutely necessary to the building up and sustenance of the human frame that every thirsty man knows that water is good. Yet there is bad water. There have been poisoned wells—water stagnates and becomes putrid and injurious to life—water is good taken abstractedly. And there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in Paradise—mark that—but it ruined Paradise, mark that, too!

A man may know much and he may still stand in his integrity—but the chances are that while men are what they are, there will be a serpent in the tree of knowledge, seeking the ruin of souls. If you want to judge concerning the good or evil of knowledge, you must ask yourself, What is its source? To have one’s lips touched with a live coal is a choice blessing if the seraph brings that coal from off the altar of God. But there are tongues which are set on fire in Hell—and who desires to feel such accursed flame? You must know from where the coal comes before you may consent that it shall touch your lips.

Knowledge may be tested by considering its character. Some knowledge is like the light of the moon—clear, cold, barren, if not injurious to health. But heavenly knowledge is fructifying, healthful and genial, chasing away disease like the warm rays of the sun. You may make knowledge good or evil by the way in which you use it. If it is a torch, you may carry it with you to kindle the flame of Tophet’s fire, or, on the other hand, by that Heaven-lit torch you may, through Divine Grace, find your way to the gates of Paradise! Judge knowledge, therefore, with discretion and while you seek it as in the abstract an eminently good thing, yet be not in haste to plunge yourself into every abyss to find its bottom, nor into every burning crater to fathom its depth. I know enough of poison without drinking it and enough of sin without running into it.

This much by way of introduction—we come now to the text. Here we have knowledge of a peculiar kind referred to. Then its happy influence—it makes men strong to do great exploits. Next, we shall consider the means of its attainment. Fourthly, just a hint as to its danger. And fifthly, the duty of spreading it, contained in the thirty-third verse, “They that understand among the people shall instruct many.”

I. First, then, there is A SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO—“The people that know their God.” To know God is the highest and best form of knowledge. But what can we know of God? Nothing but what He has been pleased to reveal to us. He has revealed something of Himself in the Book of Nature and muck more in the Book of Revelation. And He has been pleased to cast a vivid light upon the Book of Revelation by manifesting Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world.

Those who know the Lord should believe in the unity of His Essence and Subsistence. “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” There should be no mistaken notions here—the unity of the Godhead is fundamental and mistakes here are fatal. We should know the Lord in the plurality of His Persons. God said, “Let Us make man in our own image.” Let not man be content until he knows something of the “Us” from whom his being was derived. Endeavor to know the Father. Bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son. Receive the kiss of His love. Let the ring which is the token of His eternal faithfulness be on your finger. Sit at His table and let your heart make merry in His Grace.

Seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of His Father’s Glory and the express image of His Person and yet in unspeakable condescension of Grace became Man for our sakes. Know Him in the singular complexity of His Nature—eternal God and yet suffering, finite Man. Follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of Deity and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know something of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, your All.

Forget not the Holy Spirit—endeavor to get as clear a view as you can of His Nature and Character, His attributes and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord who first of all moved upon chaos and brought forth order—who now visits the chaos of your soul and makes order there. Behold Him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus and then afterwards rests upon you who are as the skirts of His garments. Get a clear idea, then, of the Trinity in Unity. Do not reason about it. Do not try to understand it—remember, it is not your duty to comprehend, but to apprehend such Truths of God as these—you are to believe, rather than to reason.

One God in the Trinity of His Persons. Let us know Him and worship Him. Remember that those who do not now this, very seldom know much else about Divine things. It is a very remarkable fact that when the doctrine of the Trinity is given up, the other doctrines of the evangelical system are pretty sure to be cast to the winds. This doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems to be the place of standing or falling with public teachers and private Believers. Let us study to be well instructed in the Divine attributes and ask for Grace to know them all. Be not like those who dream of a God who is all love, and nothing else. These persons talk in maudlin sentences, as if they believed in an effeminate God who winks at sin and is

utterly destitute of one single atom of integrity or holiness.

Believe God to be what He most certainly is—a God terrible as well as benevolent who will by no means spare the guilty—and yet passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. See God in the suffering body and soul of Christ Jesus upon Calvary and you will understand how He is severely just in punishing sin in Him upon whom sin was made to meet and yet supremely gracious in providing such a way of escape for guilty souls! Do not be content with a maimed and distorted view of God’s attributes! Feel Him to be Omnipresent—let it be your delight to know that you have not to call upon Him as one who is afar off, but ever near at hand. Recognize Him as Omnipotent—know that there is nothing which He cannot do and therefore doubt Him not.

Forget not His absolute Sovereignty, but meekly submit to it. The failure of many men in their ideas about God is that they imagine Him to be subject to Law instead of being the Source and Fountain of all Law. They arraign His actions at their bar and forget His terrible reply! “No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” They have not heard the solemn voice, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

Although to perfection you cannot find out God, yet do not worship Him as did the Athenians under the title of “The Unknown God.” Endeavor to understand how Love unbounded meets with Justice unlimited and Sovereignty without control—how “holiness becomes His house,” and yet how tender-hearted affection towards His creatures ever dwells in Him. Do not worship ignorantly! Whatever else you do not know, do know the Character of your God. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.”

Then labor to know God in His actions. Study well the past. Do not be ignorant of the great work of creation! If you have the skill, look at that creation in the light of modern science so far as that light is really derived from facts and not from conjectures. Pry into God’s great works in Providence—begin your pilgrimage of study at the gates of Eden and travel onward to the present time. Float safely in your meditations with Noah in the ark! Study the wonderful justice of God in thus sweeping away the race of men. I have not time to linger on any one particular spot this morning—if I might, I should have selected the Red Sea.

Remember what Jehovah did at the Red Sea and by the brooks of Arnon! Tell how He made bare His arm and swept away His foes! Take Miriam’s timbrel and sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously! Or, if that contents you not, remember Og and Sihon, or exult over Sisera in Deborah’s song—“Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam.” Think of the deeds of God in later times when He smote Sennacherib and laid His hosts dead at midnight. Tell how He brought forth his People from the land of captivity with rejoicing and built up the walls of Jerusalem once more.

Let, especially, the actions of God concerning Christ be very dear to you. Fly back to the eternal Council—you will not be intruding if your faith can enter that great council chamber of eternity. Think of the Covenant, the Suretyship, the provision, the Almighty decree! See Jesus Christ coming forth from the bosom of the Father, amid the song of angels, to hang upon a woman’s breast. Trace the history of your Incarnate God— make the life of Christ be with you a household study—know every corner of it. Never let a question be asked of the youngest of you, concerning the life of Jesus, which you cannot answer!

The rhetorician studies the classics. The old Roman orators were familiar with Demosthenes and the Greek poets—so let the Christian make the life of Jesus his first study and with every single passage in it let him be familiar. Know the Savior from the weakness of the cradle to the triumph of His ascension, when, leading captivity captive, He mounted the Father’s Throne to reign forever. If you have mastered all this, seek to know something of the teaching of the Spirit of God concerning the plan of salvation. Do not be content to be saved in the dark—try to find out how it is that you are saved. You are on a Rock—but look at the Rock and understand why it is a Rock and how you came to be standing on it.

I believe that very much of current Arminianism is simply ignorance of Gospel doctrine. And if people began to study their Bibles and to take the Word of God as they find it, they must inevitably, if Believers, rise up to rejoice in the Doctrines of Grace. Bolingbroke was far gone in infidelity and yet when he met Mr. Whitfield one morning, he said to him, “Sir, if the Bible is true, Calvinistic doctrines such as you preach are most certainly taught in it. And though I neither receive the Bible nor Calvinistic doctrines—if you want to have these doctrines proved from the Bible at any time—my pen is very much at your service. I am persuaded it is so.”

Dear Friends, I would not have you merely unite with the Christian Church and say, “Yes, I believe in Christ,” but I want you—and here I speak to you who are lately added to the Church—I want you to know where this great scheme began! I want you to know how it is that the blood of Christ takes away sins. To know the fact is very precious, but to understand the reason of that fact is so comforting, so establishing, so every way to be desired that I would have you study much the Word of God till you get a clear view of the whole scheme. I want you to understand the reasons from election onward to final perseverance and from final perseverance to the second advent—the resurrection and the glories which shall follow—world without end!

I have thus brought out what I think is the idea of the text about the people knowing their God. But we must not overlook that little word “their”—“They that know their God.” It is not, “they that know God,” but, “their God.” To know anything of Him aright, you must get a firm hold of God—He must be your God. “There is no praying,” said one old man who used to be much in prayer, “till you come to a close grip.” There must be a blessed familiarity with God! You must know Him to be yours because He gave Himself to you in the Eternal Covenant—yours because He has

promised Himself to you in His Word—yours because you take Him by an act of simple faith.

You must know He is yours because you, every day, put yourself beneath His guidance and desire to be a soldier under His command. Yours to have and to hold through life, in death and in eternity, because He has laid hold of you and will hold you even to the end. “The people that know their God.” Ah, that is one of the choicest things a human tongue can ever say, “My God! My God!” Ah, Thomas, you learned a great lesson when, with your hand in Jesus’ side you could say not only, “Lord, God,” but “My Lord and my God!” O, may you all be among the people who know their God!

II. THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF THIS KIND OF KNOWLEDGE next requires our notice. The text shows that it strengthens, gives courage, energy, vigor, resolution, daring, success. They who know their God are strong and do exploits. The Romish church thinks a great deal of implicit faith—of the faith which cannot apprehend what it believes. Now we agree with Romanists in this—that we are to believe what we cannot comprehend—but we do not agree with them in the other—that we are to believe what we cannot apprehend. You remember the faith of the coal miner? “What do you believe?” “I believe what the church believes.” “But what does the church believe?” “Oh, the church believes as I believe.” “Well, but what do you and the church believe?” “Why, we both believe the same thing.”

Now Romanists may set great store by that kind of faith and they go the right way to induce it very often by denying the Bible to the common people or by neglecting education so that the masses are unable to read the Word when they can get it. If you say, “You believe as I believe and I believe as you believe and we both believe the same thing,” I tell you that you are no credit to your teacher, and the sooner you give up your faith the better! A man cannot believe what he does not apprehend. He may say, “I am prepared to believe it when I do apprehend it,” but as to believing what he has never been told, it is quite impossible.

If there are any dogmas of Mother Church which I have not heard of, I do not believe them and if I stand up and say I do, I am talking nonsense! If I say I am prepared to believe when I shall have been told, that may be—but I cannot already believe them—for belief must be parallel with apprehension! A man must apprehend a thing or he cannot believe it. Knowledge strengthens the spiritual man because, in the first place, it is that on which faith has to feed. Where there is faith, knowledge is a great gain. This will be clear to all of you who read attentively your Bible, because the words, “to know,” and, “to believe,” are frequently used in Scripture almost synonymously.

If you turn to the tenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel you will find at the thirty-eighth verse that the Savior said, “But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him.” And then in the first Epistle of St. John, in the second chapter, at the third verse, we have an expression which is tantamount to the one I have already referred to. “And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” We are sure of our faith and of our knowledge by walking in obedience to Him.

The source from which Christian faith comes proves the importance of knowledge. How does faith come to the Christian? By sitting still and looking at fifty or a hundred wax candles? By admiringly gazing upon a impassive Madonna at the corner of the street? By hearing language which I cannot comprehend repeated by men in a peculiar dress? Never, according to Scripture! How then? “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” There is the whole history of faith—the Word of God gives the teaching which blesses us with knowledge and then comes faith. The sight of the eye, religious awe, impressions of dread, emotions of wonder— these do not give faith—but hearing something which I can apprehend is the means of my believing!

Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being people who are enlightened and taught of the Lord. They are said to “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all Truths of God and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. They are not kept in darkness that they may believe, but put into the light that they may believe! Here is the difference between the religion of Christ and the religion of antichrist.

Moreover, there is provided in the Church of God an agency which proves that knowledge is to be the food of faith. To what end is the ministry ordained but this—“For the edification of the saints.” Are we not called teachers? That preacher who does nothing but excite the people—who teaches nothing and declares no definite doctrine—had better lay aside his office and take to some honest employment where he may do no more mischief. Teaching is what we need—a true minister is a teacher to his people, a steward of God bringing forth things, “both new and old.” You see, then, that if knowledge is under God the Holy Spirit, truly the food of faith, then in order to be strong—since faith is the very sinew of human strength—we must get much knowledge of the things of God. The people who know their God shall be strong in faith and shall do great exploits.

Think again, dear Friends, of the influence of faith upon all the other Graces of God. Love is the sweetest of all—but how can I love till knowledge gives me a view of Christ? Knowledge opens the door and then through that door I see my Savior. Or I may use another expression— knowledge takes the portrait of Christ and when I see that portrait, then I love Him. I cannot love a Christ I do not know, at least, in some degree! And if I know nothing about the excellencies of Christ—what He has done for me and what He is doing now—I cannot love Him! In Christ’s case to know is to love and the more I know the more I shall love.

Look at hope again. How can I hope for a thing if I do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but then. till I get knowledge of something in front of the glass, I can see nothing whatever. Knowledge takes away the impediment, and then when I look through the optic glass I can see the glory to be revealed. But I cannot hope for that of which I know nothing whatever! I must know there is a Heaven, or I cannot hope for it. Then, take patience. How shall I have patience unless I have heard,

as James says, of the patience of Job? Unless I know something of the sympathy of Christ and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which my heavenly Father gives me?

Knowledge gives me reasons for patience. I cannot stop on this point, but there is no one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. Knowledge becomes, then, of the highest importance. Again, from the connection of the text, it appears that many were led astray in the days of Antiochus. “Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that know their God shall be strong,” and so on. It seems, then, that to know God is a means of steadfastness.

Who are the people that are greatly troubled by new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up? Why, the people who do not know their God! Certain young folks say to me, “O Sir, I have read a new book—there is a great discovery made about development. Animals were not created separately, but grew out of one another by degrees of gradual improvement.” Go and ask your grandmother about it! And what does she say as she takes off her spectacles? “Why,” she says, “I was reading ‘There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.’ ”

Say to her, “Do you not feel alarmed about your faith?” “No,” she says, “if they were to discover fifty thousand things, it would not trouble me for, ‘I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.’ ” You think she is a simpleton, perhaps—she might far more properly think you the same! Every now and then there comes up a heresy—some woman turns “prophetess” and raves! Or some lunatic gets the idea that God has inspired him and there are always fools ready to follow any impostor. Who are those that go after them? Those who do not know God! Those who do know Him, say—

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

Brethren, if a truly godly minister has for six or seven years been teaching a people and he gives them the good, solid Truth of God and they receive it and understand it, I should not like to see the wolf come in! I do not believe he would do much mischief—for many strong men will be found to slay the intruder! But if there is a ministry which only consists of preaching up moral duties and creating the titillation of excitement, then, if the wolf comes, he may just glut himself with the blood of professors— for there is no strength in them to resist him! We want sound doctrine to give us stability. May God grant that we may be rooted and grounded in Christ, and that we may know the things which are revealed to us of God!

Only once more and then we leave the second point. Knowledge will clearly be seen by you to be a great means for enabling you to do great exploits if you think of its bearing upon usefulness. A Christian without knowledge, for instance, is an admirable man in the holiness of his life. But to what other end, to what other purpose can you put him? He must not enter the pulpit—if he is already there, he had better retire. He must not be a Church officer. It would be foolish to choose the feeblest among us to be our leaders! He is scarcely of any use in the Sunday school class—he may manage to hear the children read and to wile away the time—but if he were a true Christian instructor, he would open up the Scriptures and explain them.

Do not, any of you, feel grieved at what I am saying? I am speaking to those who have been lately converted! You are Believers—I am rejoicing in it—rejoicing that you are converted, however little your knowledge. But I want you to feel dissatisfied with your ignorance and to seek, in order to your usefulness, to know the ground and the reason for the things you believe and to understand, as far as you can, the deep things of God. Do not be content to be always children—you will never be men unless you are children first! Do not be content to be stunted in your understanding, but ask to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the sake of your own usefulness.

III. We come, in the third place, TO NOTICE HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE MAY BE OBTAINED. Time has fled and therefore we will not enlarge, but just give the outline. Search the Scriptures! Do not merely read them— search them! Look at the parallel passages—collate them—try to get the meaning of the Spirit upon any one Truth by looking at all the texts which refer to it. Read the Bible consecutively—do not merely read a verse here and there—that is not fair. You would never know anything about John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress if you opened it every morning and read six lines in any part and then shut it up again—you must read it all through if you want to know anything about it.

Get those books—say Mark or John. Read Mark right through from beginning to end. Do not stop with two or three verses, or a chapter—but try to know what Mark is aiming at. It is not fair to Paul to take his Epistle to the Romans and read one chapter—we are obliged to do it in public service—but if you want to get at Paul’s meaning, read the whole Epistle through as you would another letter. Read the Bible in a common-sense way. Do not read it on your knees, as I have known some people do—it is an awkward posture—get into an easy chair and read it in comfort.

Pray after you have read it as much as you like but do not make a penance of what ought to be a pleasure. And when you are reading it, if you come to a knotty point, do not skip it. You all have some Christian friend who knows more than you do—go to him and try to get the thing explained. Above all, when you have read any passage and understand it, act it out and ask the Spirit of God to burn the meaning into your conscience till it is written on the fleshy tables of your heart.

Next, use good helps to your Bible. I do not know better helps for the common mass of people than, “The Confession of Faith,” or the little Catechism. With the little Catechism and texts of Scripture, any Believer, however ignorant, can, in a very short time, get a good view of the things of God. I believe that the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism has more divinity in it than nine out of ten of the modern printings. And if any person would know and understand that, he need not be afraid but what

he will be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, provided the hope is in him.

Next, be sure to attend a teaching ministry. Do not be always after sweets. Do not be running after prophesying and novelties. Try to see the whole range of Scripture. Believe in Calvinism—but if there is a single Truth of God which only the Arminians hold, believe that, too. Do not put your feet into Chinese shoes to be squeezed after the current fashion into an orthodox shape! Be willing to have a broad understanding—receive anything which God has revealed and be content to take the whole of God’s Truth, whether you can make it into a system or not.

Then I should say, if you want to understand much, be much in prayer. Prayer cuts many a Gordian knot. Be much in communion with God. You cannot know God at a distance. Get close to Him—come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ—come very close to Him. The other night, in prayer, I remember, by mistake, quoting an old Scripture—that we might weep, like the priests, “between the porch and the altar”—and I was corrected by a Brother for it. He said, “We do not want to stand between the porch and the altar, because, in prayer, the proper place for a Christian is beyond the altar. The sacrifice is finished and we are to go through the court of the priests and enter into the Most Holy Place—into that which is within the veil, where our Forerunner entered for us.”

Endeavor, therefore, to get a good view of the types of Scripture. When you have made a mistake about them, be willing to be corrected, but try to understand the types by getting the substance in your own experience— that is the best way of knowing them. And, remember, there is one school to which you can all go—where you will all learn. Our Savior says, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God or not.” Practical holiness is a grammar school in which we may learn the Doctrines of Grace.

IV. And now I want to say ONE WORD BY WAY OF CAUTION and it shall be scarcely more than a word. Remember that knowledge of itself— with all its excellencies and virtues when God blesses it—has a danger in it to you. “Knowledge,” says the Apostle, “puffs up.” So it does. You may get proud of what you know and then God forgive you and deliver you from it! And, moreover, you may get so positive about what you know that you may have made up your mind never to know any more.

I know some of that kind—they know everything—every doctrine which is brought forward that they have not received already must be rejected because they have made up their minds that they have the whole of revelation by heart. They have “meted out Heaven with the span and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,” and think they know wisdom to perfection. Do not get into that state. Your knowledge may even make you haughty to the people of God. You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God. Knowledge is, after all, but a talent and Divine Grace is always better than gifts.

Try to get Divine Grace to make the gift right, and as you grow in knowledge which may prove to be the sails, humility will prove an admirable ballast. To this end I ask the help of the Holy Spirit, that what you know may be rightly known, for then it will not exalt you, but make you lie at the foot of the Cross. O that God might thus teach and thus instruct us all!

V. And now to close—here is THE DUTY OF SPREADING THIS KNOWLEDGE WHEN WE HAVE IT. “They that understand among the people shall instruct many.” It is a prophecy which is fulfilled, but it is also a suggestion of a duty which we have to carry out. Are we instructing many, those of us who know the Lord? “Well,” says one, “I am. I am endeavoring to do my best in the Sunday school, in the catechumen class and so on.” God speed you, dear Friend! God speed you in your good work! God speed you a thousand-fold more than you have yet learned to ask or even think! But there must be some here who are not teaching others.

Of course our business is to begin with teaching our own children. When the services used to be in the morning and afternoon in the olden times, the evening was generally spent with the children in teaching and catechizing. I do not think we in London could go back to the old plan. But I am not sure that the present one is an improvement, whether the children might not learn much more if the parents did give the Sunday evening constantly to their instruction. At any rate, no mother, no father—especially no mother—should suffer a Sunday to pass over her head, if she knows the things of God, without having her little ones around her and teaching them what she herself knows.

The Sunday school teacher does well, but he cannot relieve parents from the responsibility of teaching their own children. Others might take a wider range. Might you not get up Bible-readings at your house? If God has taught you a Truth which others do not know, could you not find others in your neighborhood who might be willing to come to your house and understand the things of God from you or someone else? If they will not come, have you not the instinct to get at them some other way? Cannot you so weave the common events of life into a means of Christian instruction that you are truly “all things to all men”?

Put in words edgewise, so as to instruct casual visitors. We have not a system of class meetings as among our Wesleyan friends. It would be a great mercy if we had something like they had. And it would be a good thing if the elders of this Church would constantly look after the younger ones. Get seven, eight, or nine to meet you as a class. Get a textbook and study it by the light of the Word of God. We have some admirable teachers here, but I believe we have some who might teach a great deal more, who are not doing it. Some of you are living at a distance—your work cannot be very well carried on in connection with this place. What does that matter?

I would as soon you taught elsewhere! So long as you are working for God, it does not matter whether it is here or there. If you are Christian people belonging to this Church, your first duty is here. But if from any other circumstance you cannot throw in your strength with us, why, do

it elsewhere! If you want to go elsewhere, of course we are sorry to lose you, but, we say, go, by all means, if you can serve God better! If you feel you must attend our ministry because it suits your mind, then come among us and aid our efforts to do good. Do, at any rate, teach what God has told you!

If God has lit your candle, try to shine and let other candles be lit by you. I have said much on this point and I close with this remark—there are some here who cannot be exhorted to learn and know much of God because they have not yet begun to know themselves. They do not know this simple Truth of God—“That Christ came into the world to save sinners.” They know it from theory, but that is of very little use. May they know it in their heart by saying, “Jesus, I am a sinner! Since You came to save sinners, I give myself to You. O save me! I trust You to save me.”

God bring you to this state and when you have received Christ, then endeavor, as much as lies in you—  
*“To teach to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior you have found.”*

May the Master bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.